Will the Real J.G. Ballard Please Stand Up?

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ABSTRACT

WILL THE REAL J.G. BALLARD PLEASE STAND UP?

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This dissertation examines the longer works of British colonial author James Graham Ballard. Specifically, it attempts to answer the long-deflected question posed over the decades to Ballard regarding the treatment of female characters in his fiction. Though espousing liberal feminist ideals at times, Ballard’s repeated use of the lamia/damsel archetype, often in the same female character, strongly suggests he believed otherwise. Using predominantly radical-cultural feminist criticism as a critical lens, specifically the works of Ballard’s long-time nemesis Andrea Dworkin, this study focuses predominantly on the thematic tetralogies of Ballard’s fiction: the ecological disasters of the 1960s, the “techno-barbarism” of the early 1970s, the faux messiah stories that stretched from the mid-1970s into the 1990s, and the final thematic period of detective fiction that dominated the final years of Ballard’s literary career. With Ballard’s two “autobiographies,” Empire of the Sun and The Kindness of Women (and the establishment of the lamia archetype in the Vermilion Sands short story collection published in tandem with the ecological disaster novels), female characters in Ballard’s fiction resemble Dworkin’s nightmares made manifest as they become the sexual equivalent to Chekov’s revolver. Ballard’s feet must be held to the flame, even if posthumously.
WILL THE REAL J.G. BALLARD PLEASE STAND UP?

BY

SCOTT STALCUP
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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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DEDICATION

To Mom, my long-suffering teddy bear Huggy, and Erin
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

J.G. Ballard’s novel *High Rise* charts the descent into barbarism by the tenants of a tower block. The novel, told in flashback, opens with Dr. Robert Laing roasting a dog on his balcony, recounting what started this descent into madness. A more in-depth discussion of the novel, as well as the thematic period to which it belongs in Ballard’s fiction, follows later in the study. Larger importance lies with the appearance in this novel of a trope that, from the 1970s onward, appears with the same frequency as the drained swimming pools in Ballard’s fiction: the female separatist cult that builds upon the lamia archetype present during the first quarter of Ballard’s literary career.

The inaugural appearance of these women comes via one of the many parties thrown as civilization disintegrates in the tower block. Laing spots a fellow tenant, a masseuse who lived with her mother on the fifth floor. Laing describes her as “one of the vagrants [. . .] who spent a large part of their time riding the elevators and wandering the long corridors” (32). Soon after, she finds herself set upon by the female members of the party. Laing remarks at their display, “[C]areful Laing, or some stockbroker’s wife will unman you as expertly as she de-stones a pair of avocados.” Ballard bibliographer David Pringle also notes this passage in his pioneering work *Earth is an Alien Planet* as well. Though Ballard treats both the fear of females and castration flippantly in this passage, Pringle views both as implicit in Ballard’s fiction (43).

During his lifetime, Ballard presented a conflicting figure. In interviews conducted over the course of his writing career, Ballard espouses borderline liberal feminist ideals. Andrzej
Gasiorek cites a quote regarding late twentieth/early twenty-first anxiety over males’ status. “Men are going to have to cope with the huge task of deciding who they are. And they are going to have intense competition from the world of women” (qtd. in 202). Neither Gasiorek nor Ballard assign any value judgment there, but other primary source materials indicate Ballard considered such competition as positive.

In the Conversations interviews anthology, if not continuing to espouse liberal feminist ideals, Ballard at least feels women capable of sharing the same foibles as men. Speaking after the 1984 re-election of Ronald Reagan with Mark Pauline, Ballard said, “Most people [in America] are secretly sorry Geraldine Ferraro [ . . . ] didn’t get elected [ . . . . ] Women are entitled to be as corrupt as men” (136). Ferraro predated current Vice President Kamala Harris as Democratic presidential candidate Walter Mondale’s running mate.

Ballard critiques the essentialist tendencies he viewed as returning in Reagan’s Christian Conservative America, saying “[There’s] a resurgence of the old feeling that a man can be sexually promiscuous, but a woman can’t – if she is, that woman is a slut” (137). Ballard took issue with this mentality that women needed to be “purer than snow.” He compared anyone’s failure to fit that description as being akin to “Mother Nature [with] V.D.” However, if Ballard feels this way, why does he treat females in his work in such misogynist ways?

Pringle’s writing partner James Goddard first asked Ballard in the 1970s why his novels never depicted a “sympathetic male/female relationship,” which Ballard countered with the question, “Such as in who’s novels? What other writer does that sort of thing?” Goddard cited Hemingway as an example, to which Ballard responded:

I suppose the relationship in To Have and Have Not, between the tough guy and his wife, is happy in a way. What I’m really saying is that sympathetic
male/female relationships—and your question is quite a pointed one—are not all that common in fiction, are they? The serious answer to your question is that my fiction is all about one person, all about one man coming to terms with various forms of isolation [. . .]. The protagonists of most of my fiction feel tremendously isolated, and that seems to exclude the possibility of a warm fruitful relationship with anybody, let alone anyone as potentially close as a woman. (25)

When asked again in a different interview by Lynne Fox, his explanation smacks of a cop-out. He states, “I’d almost say the conventions of imaginative fiction – do not allow warm personal relationships [. . . T]here are no warm personal relationships in Kafka or Edgar Allan Poe, or damn few in Ernest Hemingway” (183). Ballard enters a guilty plea, “People have criticized me for my portrayal of women, but that’s the price you pay for the sort of fiction I write. My women tend to be emblematic figures rather like damsels [or] enchantresses” (187).

In *Earth is an Alien Planet*, Pringle labels Ballardian women “frequently bitches of the first, second, or third order” (40). The most common female trope is represented by the “siren or *la belle dame sans merci* – those remote, beautiful and almost unattainable women” that appear during the first, science fiction-slanted period of Ballard’s fiction (41). Pringle sees this female, “[t]he lamia, the beautiful temptress, Keats’s snakewoman, or Coleridge’s ‘nightmare life-in-death’ [. . .]” as “the essential female figure in Ballard’s fiction. In a sense, all his women are aspects of the lamia” (42). In his work with Goddard, Pringle states that Ballard’s women “have never been ‘real’,” citing *Vermilion Sands* as an example wherein he considers them, “anima-figures direct from Jungian dreams” (65). At this point, a slight digression into the *Vermilion Sands* short story collection appears in order.
According to Jeannette Baxter, the characters in *Vermilion Sands* are “[l]ocked into a lifestyle of compulsive yet empty reiteration, events, characters, images, and motifs repeat obsessively and relentlessly across the nine stories [ . . . ] [T]he vagrant community of *Vermilion Sands* is as displaced as time itself” (“Visions” 95). Roger Luckhurst elaborates, “What to do with a text like *Vermilion Sands*, which contains a structural repetition of the same story which is itself about repetitive compulsion?” (34). In each, the male narrator, or other male characters become involved, and realize too late, they have been “inserted into a sequence of murderous events, which [have] already been enacted previously, and will be re-enacted again. They are only one male in a series” (170). They are only one male in the same way Ballard’s *femme fatale* is one female with both parties following the same dance steps across the stories in *Vermilion Sands* in which “[n]early all [the female characters] are possessed of a charismatic infamy resulting from deaths in the past” (171).

Luckhurst takes immense pleasure in joining the dots regarding the names of Ballard’s female characters with their real-life counterparts. Leonora Chanel hybridizes, unsurprisingly, Coco Chanel with Leonora Carrington, the Surrealist artist and Max Ernst’s mistress. Esmerelda Garland he considers “an obvious reference” to Judy Garland. Hope Cunard’s surname is a nod to the Modernist writer, Nancy Cunard. Luckhurst admits uncertainty regarding Raine Channing’s real-life parallel, thinking that perhaps she paralleled Dorothea Tanning, Max Ernst’s wife. As for Gloria Tremayne, she, both in her name and the environment of Stellavista, “clearly makes this a reference to Gloria Swanson’s [ . . . ] Norma Desmond” (170).
According to Gasiorek, “The textual representation of all the female figures draws overtly on a gendered symbolism based on the codes of myth, fiction, and cinema” (30). Gasiorek cites Pringle and his categorization of Ballardian females as fitting the “[lamia] prototypes [. . .], since the lamia is ‘the essential figure’ in his fiction.” Additionally, by using this gendered imagery, Ballard both exposes the self-defeating nature of male fantasies and “the vulnerability of masculine social identity” (30). Gasiorek labels the males in Vermilion Sands as “spectators of their own lives.” Given the heavy repetition noted by critics, discussion will be limited to “Prima Belladonna,” Ballard’s first published story in the Vermilion Sands collection; all the other stories present (slight) variations on the theme.

Ballard introduces his template siren in the person of Jane Ciracylides. Ballard’s narrator informs the reader, “[T]here was a good deal of mutant in her, because she had a rich patina-golden skin and what looked like insects for eyes, but that didn’t bother either myself or any of my friends, one or two of whom [. . .] have never been quite the same since to their wives” (31). Jane soon enters the workplace of the narrator, a horticulturist specializing in singing plants. Focusing on her appearance, he states, “Under [her] black beach robe, her skin was a softer more mellow gold, and it was her eyes that held me. I could just see her under the wide-brimmed hat. Insect legs waver delicately round two points of purple light [. . .]. I couldn’t take my eyes off her” (35). With this passage, Ballard summarizes the lamia figure that would dominate his longer and, although not treated in this study due to thematic emphasis and the sheer length their inclusion would result in, shorter fiction.

Jane is drawn to the Khan Arachnid orchid in what can only be described as a bizarre sexual relationship. The plant reacts to Jane in a way the narrator previously never witnessed.
Equally troubling is Jane’s reaction to it. “I [. . .] saw the woman staring intently at the plant, her skin aflame, the insects in her eyes writhing insanely. The Arachnid stretched out towards her, calyx erect, leaves like blood-red sabres” (37). The narrator believes the plant wanted to kill her. One of his friends, Harry, informs him, “If you ask me, it’s in an advanced state of rut. Why should it want to kill her?” (39). The narrator informs Jane of as much, saying, “Your voice may move men to strange and wonderful visions, but it throws that orchid into acute melancholia” (41).

Jane’s singing causes the plant to grow to three times its size, “leaves tumid and inflamed, its calyx large as a bucket, raging insanely” with Jane “[a]rch[ed] forwards into it, her head thrown back” (45). Though the narrator tries to take her away from this final showdown, she pushes him away. He flees and neither he nor the others see Jane again as the music dies down in what reads as both parties climaxing in orgasm. The next day, Jane disappears and the Arachnid dies soon after, with the story ending in what can only be described as a sexual showdown (47).

Describing the character of Jane, Gasiorek writes, “at once ominous and captivating, she is an image of inexplicable sexual potency with the capacity to destabilise social relations and a dream-figure who offers to re-enchant the world through the visions she induces.” Pity for all the men who might notch her on the bedpost that she is more interested in the Khan Arachnid. David Pringle believes Ballard merely rewrites her character through the entirety of Vermilion Sands. Upon examination of the evidence, one must render a guilty verdict (41-42).
In what might stand as a manifesto for Ballard, given his early/continued reliance on the lamia/damsel dichotomy, Andrea Dworkin described two definitions of women in fiction: the good woman, “a victim,” and the bad woman needing to be destroyed. The former “must be possessed” while the latter “must be killed, or punished. Both must be nullified” (Woman Hating 48). Earlier, Dworkin labels the good mothers in fairy tales as emblematic of sexist ontology, writing, “When she is good, she is soon dead [. . . ] she is so passive in life that death must only be more of the same [. . . ]. [T]he only good woman is a dead woman” (41). One sees Ballard repeat and reinforce the roles established in fairy tales, which Dworkin saw as “our childhood models, and their fearful, dreadful content terrorizes us into submission [. . . ] that not to be passive, innocent, and helpless is to be actively evil” (35).

Ballard was no stranger to Dworkin. Though she was close friends with Ballard’s friends Michael and Linda Moorcock, she was, according to John Baxter, “a bête noire” of Ballard’s. Baxter recounts a 1995 piece in The Observer on “odd bequests” where Ballard said, “I would leave Andrea Dworkin my testicles. She could have testicules flambes” (Inner 308). Dworkin’s stance as an anti-pornography crusader rankled Ballard, whose stance on pornography likely drained the blood from Dworkin’s face.

Of feminists in regard to pornography, Ballard bluntly stated,

I’m afraid I’m out of sympathy, particularly with modern feminists. If by bad pornography one means the portrayal of what would be criminal acts, I’m opposed to the distribution of that sort [. . . ]. The trouble is, when people start talking about pornography, one doesn’t know what they mean. (RE/Search 48).
In elaborating, Ballard digs his hole deeper:

One cannot restrain the human imagination. I mean, they disapprove if you enjoy taking pleasure in looking at a pretty girl – to them, that’s exploitative [. . .]. Large elements of exploitation exist in our relationships with one another [. . .]. I won’t say I think pornography should be encouraged, but in many ways I think we’re seeing a new kind of prudery. There isn’t as much pornographic material available to us as the modern communication landscape could, and should, be able to provide – I think there should be far more.” (48)

During an interview with Nicholas Zurbrugg, Ballard remarked that in a profile TIME magazine ran about Camille Paglia:

[She] appears to be pro-kiddy porn and snuff movies. I’m certainly not in favour of that, but if the acts themselves are legal, there’s no reason why they shouldn’t be shown [. . .]. If you go to a country like Holland, where hardcore material is freely shown, there are no signs that the social fabric is disintegrating. It’s quite the opposite. People’s ability to accept that sexual imagination as a part of everyday life seems surprisingly mature. Over there, there’s been an extremely powerful backlash against the truth. (297)

V. Vale’s RE/Search retrospective on Ballard published during the 1980s expanded on Ballard’s complicated, and controversial, stance on pornography and the relation to the Women’s Rights movement.

Recounting a conversation Ballard had with a former writer for the British version of Penthouse Forum who had since moved on to the Sunday Express, Ballard said

[She told me] “Sex is no longer a new frontier.” I thought, “Oh god, how terribly bad, how boring – do we have to forget about sex? It doesn’t count anymore?” What we need is to get away from the whole liberation of the late ‘60s [. . .] and early ‘70s [which] simply imposed a different set of grids on the map, a different grill, but shut out just as much light. There are vast territories to explore, but completely hidden. (21)

In specifying the period that argued for reform on racial, sexual and gender levels as “when it all went wrong,” Ballard goes beyond hinting at where his allegiances fall. He continues fanning the flames of paranoia, saying,
I can see the clock going back, although I don’t think it will happen quite so obviously. I think we could go into a new Victorian era easily, where the same prohibitions would apply. The pressure would simply come from a new direction, but the net result would be equally repressive. In a peculiar way, you can have a system of general sexual promiscuity and great repression at the same time. (22)

Seeming to tie his early work, with its emphasis on disasters and violence, to his middle and later periods, Ballard said in 1982, “Perhaps violence, like pornography, is some kind of evolutionary standby system [. . .] ? A widespread taste for pornography means that nature is alerting us to some kind of threat of extinction” (156).

When interviewed for SPIN magazine in the mid-1990s on what the end of the world would be like, Ballard responded:

I dream of: Dying in a car crash with Madonna. Having sex with Hillary Clinton. Appearing in Zapruder frame 313 with Jackie Kennedy [. . .]. Having all the whores in Moscow call me on their mobile phones. (qtd. in Wilson 49)

Here he reinforces not only his fascination with celebrities, but also his regarding females as sexual objects.

According to Joseph Lanz,

In most of Ballard’s work, sex is divorced from its reproductive function and becomes a function of everything else. Even manufactured items and politicians assume genital and anal characteristics. Ballard underscores the fact that sex depends on artificiality [. . .]. Works such as Crash and The Atrocity Exhibition are new forms of pornography that will one day be accessible to adults and children alike. They instruct us on how to use eroticism as a means of assimilating the repugnant and the horrifying. The mutilated bodies on highways and in Asian villages can quite conceivably have the allure of yesterday’s pin-up idols. (141)

Ballard represents one of the more polarizing authors from the second half of the twentieth century. Michel Delville wrote his book-length critical work on Ballard as a response to the charges levied against Ballard by critics Duncan Fallowell and Robert Platzner. The two
condemned Ballard’s fiction as lacking in “moral and emotional commitment” (qtd. in 5). Deville believes Ballard’s works act “as a forum for contemporary debates about regression, sexual deviance and the role of violence and radicalism in the arts” (6). Roger Luckhurst asks on the back cover of his The Angle Between Two Walls: The Fiction of J.G. Ballard, “Prophet or pervert? Samuel Francis believes Ballard to be ’a literary maverick, an imaginative radical, a transgressive, subversive writer unafraid to violate the taboos and to voice unspoken truths about the state of modern humanity’” (7). Will the real J.G. Ballard please stand up?

Literature Review/Rationale for Study

Despite a career that extended from the late 1950s up to his death in the early 2000s, Ballard’s work remains relatively unknown stateside. An agreement with Norton reached between his daughters Fay and Beatrice intended to distribute his works more widely available, but if one were to peruse the shelves of a larger or independent book shop, chances are the only books one would find are those which film adaptations of Ballard’s works were “based”: Crash, Empire of the Sun, and High Rise.

Book-length critical works on Ballard, despite an increase in the years since he succumbed to prostate cancer in 2009, remain similarly scant. Gregory Stephenson’s 1991 book Out of the Night and Into the Dream added only a third critical voice to Ballard studies after Pringle and Goddard’s seminal work and Peter Brigg’s 1985 text J.G. Ballard. Stephenson combined the close reading approach of New Criticism with Archetypal Criticism in his exploration of the themes in Ballard’s work. To focus on the strain of Archetypal Criticism,
Stephenson drew from Mircea Eliades’ discussions of flight and ascension, Joseph Campbell’s concept of the monomyth, Northrop Frye’s discussion of the quest-romance and lastly, Jung’s concept of the collective unconscious, individuation, and the “characterization of the shadow and the anima/animus archetypes” (3-5). All represent themes in Ballard’s work.

Roger Luckhurst’s 1997 text *The Angle Between Two Walls* examined Ballard’s works by approaching Ballard’s question “Does the angle between two walls have a happy ending?” in terms of Derrida’s *la brisure*, or that point in any structural system which renders the system both possible and impossible (xiii). When one applies *la brisure* to the canon of Ballard’s work, his novels occupy that space between wherein they escape analysis by any one critical discourse, be it psychoanalytical or feminist (xix). Though it would appear that by removing them from examination by other schools of criticism, Luckhurst still imposes a critical school onto the works by that act.

Andrzej Gasiorek’s *J.G. Ballard* from 2005 approached Ballard’s bibliography through Gasiorek’s own previous obsessions with realism and experimentation in postwar British fiction, placing a cultural-historical emphasis on Ballard’s works, emphasizing Ballard’s debts to the Surrealists and Pop Art. According to Gasiorek, “Ballard’s writing [. . .] has also been motivated by a strong analytic tendency, a drive to uncover and to understand the hidden logics that inform every day social life” (13).

Jeanette Baxter, a comparatively recent scholar in the field, contributed *J.G. Ballard’s Surrealist Imagination: Spectacular Authorship* in 2009. Baxter continues the examination of Ballard’s writing through the Surrealist influence. She claims, “Surrealism’s enquiry into the unconscious” played a significant role in Ballard’s transforming post-war science fiction (6).
Peter Brigg also notes the influence of the Surrealists upon Ballard touched on by other scholars, noting Ballard credits Dali with demonstrating “the death of affect.” Brigg defines the condition as one “in which the sheer weight of the horror of violence and confusions of emotional life have deadened human reactions” (16).

By contrast, Samuel Francis’ *The Psychological Fictions of J.G. Ballard*, published in 2011, sought to “occupy a hitherto inexplicably uncolonized” critical perspective in Ballard Studies. Francis’ work attempts to examine the cultural implications and value of Ballard’s “creative use of psychological theories to find new perspectives or ways of thinking.” Additionally, Francis seeks to determine what makes the psychological aspects of Ballard’s fiction so alluring (2).

Other scholars grabbed the baton passed by Francis’ study. One fourth of the 2012 anthology *J.G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions*, edited by the aforementioned Jeanette Baxter with Rowland Wymer, examines the works of Ballard through the psychological lens. The other essays in the collection focus on “Form and Narrative”, depictions of London in Ballard’s fiction, and “Sex, Geometry and the Body”. The last of these categories, though promising, devotes more ink to two of Ballard’s more well-known, to use a favorite phrase of Jon Savage’s, coined in relation to Ballard’s novels of the early 1970s, “techno-barbarism” works *The Atrocity Exhibition*, and its spawn, the novel-length *Crash*, albeit with the latter dominating the discussion.

A relatively recent entry into the canon of Ballardian criticism comes in Florian Cord’s 2018 text *J.G. Ballard’s Politics: Late Capitalism, Power, and the Pataphysics of Resistance*. While Cord’s project excites initially, given the uneasy truce between Marxism and Feminism’s
overarching ideologies, the selective nature of Cord’s study disappoints. For example, in *High Rise*, a novel which represents class-riddled England as a microcosm, he does not explore beyond a final thought of the text being an “interesting [object] of study in the context of an exploration of Ballard’s politics” (238). D. Harlan Wilson marks another recent entry, although his desire to ghettoize Ballard as a science fiction writer proves only the tip of the iceberg in the problems with his fanboy-in-criticism’s clothing screed.

The mistake made stateside, when and if it *is* made, is the continued ghettoization of Ballard as a writer of speculative fiction, or that more frowned-upon term, “science fiction.”

According to Goddard and Pringle,

> Any serious attempt to classify and distribute the works of J.G. Ballard among literary genres is difficult, for Ballard has produced work in such a wide spectrum of forms and types that it would be doing both the man and his writing a disservice to call him a ‘science fiction,’ [. . . ] ‘avant-garde,’ [. . . ] an ‘experimental’ or a ‘new wave’ writer. He is all these things and more. Above all, Ballard is a ‘contemporary’ writer. (1)

In 1975, Goddard and Pringle stated,

> Ballard is one of the very few writers of today who is attempting to produce a fiction for *now* – a body of work which does not employ any of the escape routes into convention, fantasy or history used by so many other writers of merit [. . . ]. For the last thirty years we have been living in J.G. Ballard’s world; we have experienced it, lost it, and he has given it back to us in the distorted mirror of his prose. (7)

Four-plus decades on, *what* does this say about Ballard *now*?

At the end of his study, Francis states, “Ballard writes fascinatingly about gender, and a discussion of his work, drawing on feminist critical theory could be productive” (186). My study takes up Francis on the proposition offered in examining the works of Ballard through the radical-cultural feminist lens. As one might suspect, given Dworkin’s inclusion in this critical
discussion of Ballard (and their mutual hatred of one another), the guiding strain of feminist criticism rests specifically (though not exclusively) with the radical-cultural branch. Should anyone attempt the accusation of employing a dated critical lens, Barbara A. Crow states, “Radical feminism does not start at one particular time in the mid-1960s nor does it end in 1975” (7). She believes the dismissive tone that greets radical feminism is due in part to “years of distorted and caricatured portrayals […] in mass culture,” represented most recently by Far Right “news” channels, and a “perhaps inevitable ‘taken-for-grantedness’” she views later generations as regarding this particular strain of feminism (1). The concerns of the radical feminist remain relevant today because, sadly, as the contemporary political climate illustrates, the same issues remain pertinent.

Ann Ferguson addressed the four main principles of the radical-cultural feminist camp regarding sexuality. First, ideologies of women as objects, supporting male-on-female sexual violence, dominate heterosexual relations. Secondly, any act that normalizes sexual violence against women should be repudiated by feminists. Thirdly, control over women’s sexuality should be taken back from males, with the emphasis being less on performance and more on intimacy. Lastly, an ideal relationship should be between two emotionally involved, fully consenting and equal partners rather than two partners whose roles are polarized in the relationship (qtd. in Tong 108). Ballard violates all of these principles in his fiction repeatedly.

Tenuous though it may seem at first, Dworkin, in Letters from a War Zone, writes, “A friend once said to me about heroin: ‘The worst thing about it is the endless repetition.’ One can say the same thing about pornography” (35). “[E]ndless repetition” is also chief criticism levied against Ballard’s work. Iain Sinclair proves particularly brutal. In his contribution to the British
Film Institute’s criticism series on David Cronenberg’s adaptation of Crash, Sinclair dismisses Ballard’s novels as variations on the same story, writing:

[All the texts . . . ] are part of one project, the same names reappearing . . . . The cast usually includes: a burnt-out doctor, a rogue scientist (with fabulous sexual charisma), a displaced journalist, a nurse, a psychiatrist, an air hostess, and a man in a flight jacket (combat vet). There is also an underclass of airport prostitutes, home pornography making, art and drug dealers and poets who don’t write. (49)

Finally, and perhaps most (un)importantly, all of the works also end with the main character heading for his (always his) personal form of oblivion.

Pringle predates Sinclair on the repetitive nature of Ballard’s fiction. With Crash as the odd exception, all of Ballard’s novels are written in the third person. Noting that critics and reviewers have made mention of it “often enough,” Pringle describes the central characters in Ballard’s novels as

all very alike and might as well be regarded as aspects of Ballard himself. His protagonists are always male, usually in early middle age, invariably middle-class professionals of one sort or another. A Ballard story with a female lead character, or even with a working-class protagonist, is almost unimaginable. (37)

Children remain nearly completely absent from his stories, as do the elderly, with a few odd exceptions. The cutoff age for a Ballardian protagonist is fifty. The “hero” is also always “white Anglo-Saxon” and their professions fall into, if not the default setting of doctor, “architects and research scientists of one type or another [forming] the remainder.” Their surnames are almost always two-syllable in form. Curiously, the only time one typically finds out a protagonist’s forename is when it is uttered by a female (75). Additionally, Pringle describes the Ballardian hero as:
fond of inspecting himself in a mirror or photograph; he generally has a distaste for his own body, although he rarely has any gross physical defects. On the contrary, he is usually well-muscled, a big man, tending to leaness rather than fat. Women find him attractive (Ballard’s heroes never have any hang-ups at all in that respect) [. . .]. (38)

Using *High Rise* as a case study, Pringle highlights the repetitive nature of Ballard’s stories. He labels Laing “the hero, the man with whom the book begins and ends, the one who survives” (75). He takes his place alongside Kerans, Ransom, Sanders, and Maitland from Ballard’s previous novels up to that point in Ballard’s career. Wilder and Royal, whose name Pringle believes are “a giveaway” are the recurring types of the jester and the king, paralleling Big Caesar and Strangman in *The Drowned World*, Quilter and Lomax in *The Drought*, and/or Seagrave and Vaughan in *Crash*. These “larger-(or lower)-than-life characters” end up dying (75).

In the introduction to the *Contemporary Critical Perspectives* on Ballard, Toby Litt outlines what he labels the “Ballard Writing Machine.” On Ballard’s characters, he writes:

> The BWM-men will have affairs with the BWM-women. These will start and end abruptly, without great difficulty or regard. Sex will occur but it will be less focused upon in the writing than those moments when the dreamworlds of the lovers coincide most closely [. . .]. I don’t believe any BWM novel features a couple who meet, marry and remain faithful unto death. The lovers are [. . .] too easily distracted for that; not immoral, just unfocused. (viii-ix)

One might take issue with the last part of Litt’s characterization, though the majority of criticism might also say less immoral and more *amoral*.

Litt continues:

> In Ballard’s writing, there are things [. . .] which function only to assert their own irrelevance. That the male and female characters are sexually attractive is [. . .] taken as *sine qua non* [. . .]. No female character can get pregnant, because that would impede the narrative flow, and if any woman does get pregnant, she must have an abortion immediately, silently” (ix).
Finally, “What can happen sometimes, without ever mattering, is love. Though it is very likely to be over before it is described as such. All emotions go nowhere unless they hasten destruction or self-destruction” (x).

No one, be it in interviews with Ballard or in the criticism of Ballard’s works, has taken the examination of his treatment of females as far as it needs to go, seeming instead to retreat into the tired lens of Surrealism’s influence. Given Francis’s statement, it seems no one has examined Ballard’s work through a feminist lens, full stop. This study addresses, across the four thematic periods dominating Ballard’s fiction, the expressions of his anxieties toward the shifting place of females (and as a result, males) in post-war society. The bully brush-offs when questioned in interviews, coupled with the depictions of the primary (and secondary) characters in his work require that Ballard’s feet be held to the flame, even if done so posthumously. For an author whose works illustrated alleged “myths of the near future,” when examining Ballard’s work through the radical-cultural lens, one sees the sad realities of the immediate present. Prophet? No. Pervert? Yes.

The first part of my study addresses Ballard’s eco-disaster tetralogy: *The Wind From Nowhere*, *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, and *The Crystal World*. Here begins the development of the Ballardian female first glimpsed in the *Vermilion Sands* short stories published in tandem with this period, defined by Pringle as the “lamia” (*Earth* 42). However, the women during this period are not simply relegated to that category, but also the damsel in need of rescuing, sometimes in the same person, reflecting the definitions of women in fiction defined by Ballard’s nemesis Andrea Dworkin (*Woman Hating* 48).
The characters of Patricia Olsen and Susan Maitland in *The Wind From Nowhere*, *The Drowned World*’s Beatrice Dahl, Miranda in *The Drought*, as well as Louise Peret and Suzanne Clair in *The Crystal World*, along with secondary female characters set a precedent very much in contradiction to a Dworkin-needling statement Ballard made in his review of Geoffrey Homes’ *Build My Gallows High* from 2001:

Feminist critics have faulted *noir* films for creating a series of female fantasy figures, the witches and enchantresses of old in modern dress. I prefer to think of [Barbara] Stanwyck and [Joan] Crawford as proto-feminist heroines, locked in a Darwinian struggle with the male world and using any means that would bring them victory, a triumph signaled by the hero’s self-willed death. *(Selected Nonfiction 249).*

With the exception of Donald Maitland and Steve Lanyon in the disowned *Wind From Nowhere*, the other Ballardian males, Dr. Robert Kerans in *The Drowned World*, Ransom in *The Drought*, and Edward Sanders in *The Crystal World*, all succumb to the aforementioned self-destruction due to the lamia/damsel Ballardian female.

Following the “interchapter/inner chapter” of Ballard’s “novels as advertisements” experiments, the second part, or Chapter Three, focuses on his “Techno-Barbarism” tetralogy, a name coined by British journalist Jon Savage (“J.G. Ballard” 106). If the first tetralogy reinforced the lamia/damsel dichotomy prevalent in science fiction since Gernsback’s era, this second thematic phase may be seen as where and when questioning Ballard’s treatment of female characters by critics begins as *The Atrocity Exhibition, Crash, Concrete Island*, and *High Rise* reflect the anxieties of males regarding female empowerment’s increase during the Second Wave. It is the last in this series where the band of violent female separatists, a trope Ballard would return to and modify throughout his career, first appears.
Across these four novels (which I do define *The Atrocity Exhibition* as, despite its origins as separate “condensed novels”), Ballard and his literary stand-ins, seem determined not to go down without a fight. From the objectified female celebrities in the backdrop of T-Man’s breakdown in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, to the females who represent differing levels of sexual conquest in *Crash*, to Jane Sheppard and the other “pink collar” workers in *Concrete Island* who moved out of the domestic sphere only to encounter adversity, to finally, the murderous frontier dress-wearing tribeswomen of *High Rise*, Ballard’s guilty plea of misogyny sits in plain view like Poe’s purloined letter, which proves an apt simile, given Ballard’s final phase (Stephenson 70).

Before that, Ballard’s third tetralogy, *The Unlimited Dream Company*, *Hello America*, *The Day of Creation*, and *Rushing to Paradise*, focused on central characters with delusions of being deities, so divorced from reality that all attempt to remake reality in their own image. This *faux* messiah builds upon (or tears down, depending on one’s perspective) the female antagonist. Not to oversimplify, but the lamia/damsel of the first phase joins the female separatists of the second phase and all congregate in worship of the *faux* messiah of the final text in this series, the deranged eco-warrior Dr. Barbara Rafferty.

Looming large during Ballard’s third phase was the sum of male fears made manifest in the person of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Ballard’s ambivalence (read: fixation) toward Thatcher crossed the line into disgusting, as illustrated by, among other things, his “What I Believe,” which included a segment on Thatcher engaged in intercourse with an Argentine soldier (*RE/Search* #8-9 176). Ballard saw multiple personae in Thatcher, ranging from nanny to gorgon, all of which fascinated him, as well as allegedly many males (Pauline 134). One sees
the expression of these roles in which Ballard cast Thatcher through her stand-ins during this period, be they Miriam St. Cloud in *The Unlimited Dream Company*, Professor Anne Summers in *Hello America*, Nora Warrender in *Day of Creation*, or the aforementioned Dr. Rafferty in *Rushing to Paradise*.

Thatcher’s entry into the professional sphere and ascending to one of the highest positions possible, illustrated Ballard’s statement to Will Self of men entering into a world where they would be in competition with females and having to decide who they were (313). The Ballardian females of the final thematic phase, and my examination, of Ballard’s longer works are no longer separatist in nature, but very much in competition with males, especially with regard to leadership positions, with Julia Kristeva’s discussion of women’s involvement in urban guerrilla organizations providing an apt lens (28-29).

Though not strictly a tetralogy due to the inclusion of the 1988 novella *Running Wild* and its establishment of the thematic template, this last phase of Ballard’s longer fiction stands under the umbrella of the detective novel. As alluded to earlier, with *Cocaine Nights, Super-Cannes, Millennium People, Kingdom Come*, and the aforementioned *Running Wild*, the focus is not on who did it, but *how* did they? Paula Hamilton and Elizabeth Shand in *Cocaine Nights*, Frances Baring and Dr. Jane Sinclair in *Super-Cannes*, Kay Churchill and Vera Blackburn of *Millennium People*, and Dr. Julia Goodwin and Sergeant Mary Falconer in *Kingdom Come*, Ballard presents the final face of the threatening lamia: the *suburban* guerrilla, as *Running Wild*’s Marion Miller, the child, is mother to these women. Arguably, in this final phase, Ballard found women’s movement most upsetting as their integration alongside males, made further in-roads toward equality, blurring the lines between the separate spheres if not smashing the spheres to pieces.
Ballard’s “Autobiographies”

Thirteen years before his passing, Ballard told Will Self, “It may be that *Vermilion Sands* is my last book [ . . . O]ne doesn’t necessarily write one’s books in their chronological order” (314). As *The Kindness of Women* formed the second half of Ballard’s attempt at something approaching an autobiography (shot through with Ballard’s fiction writing, mind), using Ballard’s rationale, *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* serve as an opening case study for Ballard’s treatment of females throughout his career.

In a 2007 interview with Hari Kunzru, Ballard considered *Empire* and *Kindness* as “novels that draw on my life without in any way trying to be a literal account of what I had for breakfast in 1935” (464). In 1999, Ballard told Iain Sinclair, “People think [*Empire*] is straight autobiography and therefore they can go back [ . . . ] through my early fiction and reinterpret it. ‘Oh, now we know . . . the swimming pools’ (“J.G. Ballard’s Cinema” 370). This echoes a conversation with James Vermiere from 1988 where he labeled *Empire* “the key that explains all of my earlier books” (232). Ballard gave numerous interviews during his lifetime, many of which appear in this study. At times, he came off guarded, particularly in his treatment of female characters. If *Empire* is the key, this study turns it in the lock and walks through the door.

Considering how close Ballard let *anyone* interviewing him get to the actual James Graham
Ballard across the multiple interviews conducted during his lifetime, many used for this study, one does and must proceed onward in hopes of succeeding.

_Empire of the Sun_

Peter Brigg describes _Empire of the Sun_ as an “emotionally potent semi-fantasy by Ballard’s use of the perception of a young boy as a means of achieving the [. . . ] understanding and presentation of the events” (107). Brigg views “Jim” as having “a boy’s amoral, unformed judgment and is immune in his egotism of boyhood from the suffering of others and even from most of his own pain.” John Baxter characterizes young Jim as a sexual naïf, imaginative but emotionally immature, more concerned with games and fantasies than people [. . .]. He note[s] the Chinese prostitutes in the streets of Shanghai but show[s] no interest in them, anymore than he does the girls in the camp, aside from a little flirting. (_Inner_ 269)

Based on his 1985 interview with Tony Cartano and Maxim Jakubowski, Ballard would agree with this characterization. He said, “I was behind bars, like being behind a camera – or some television spectator faced with reports on the Indochinese war, or Nicaragua” (220).

Ballard’s nanny, Vera Frankel, demonstrates none of the characteristics she will as Ballard’s first sexually objectified female in _The Kindness of Women_ counterpart. Rather, “[t]his moody White Russian had terrified him as he recovered from measles by telling him that she could hear the voice of God in Amherst Avenue, warning them from their ways.” Furthermore, she was “a calm girl who never smiled and found everything strange about Jim and his parents as strange as Shanghai itself” (_Empire_ 12).
Does the murderous band of female separatists appearing from *High Rise* onward have earlier potential roots than during the Second Wave of the Women’s Rights movement? One might think as much when examining Ballard’s description of the weeding women while young Jim plays in Chapter Three. Though the women ignored him (as they would Wilder before he died by their knives), Ballard, in the text, confesses that he “always felt a shiver of horror when he strayed too close to them. He could visualize what would happen if he fainted in their path” (29). Though his interactions with the women are, essentially nonexistent, asexuality or minimal sexuality characterizes Jim’s interactions with females in *Empire*.

After Jim is left alone to wander Shanghai in his narrative, he raids various homes, seeking food and shelter. Beginning first with his parents’ home, the disheveled brushes and perfume bottles hint at, but little more than hint, at the violence toward females later marking Ballard’s work. Additionally, “dozens of footprints in the powder, his mother’s bare feet whirling within the clear images of heavy boots, like the pattern of complicated dances set on in his parents’ foxtrot and tango manuals” mark the scene (62-63). Both suggest possible violence visited on a female, but neither passage depicts matters as explicitly as Ballard does elsewhere (62-63). Jim falls asleep in his mother’s room “rested by the scent of her silk nightdress.” In the deserted house of the Belgian dentist, Ballard encounters another female, nameless and voiceless, in numerous photographs throughout the house “posing like a handsome film star.” He falls asleep in the house between “silk sheets scented by [her] body” (81).

Once interred in the camp, Jim is housed with the Vincents, a young English couple with an ailing six-year-old son. Occupying the same quarters as Jim for three years, they endure an adversarial relationship exemplified in the turf battle where the Vincents wall him off from their
quarters with a bedspread and continued to shrink his quarters by moving the bedspread further. Despite this, or because of it, Jim still likes Mrs. Vincent, who he describes as “a handsome if frayed blonde, although her nerves were always stretched.” Jim knew if he died of starvation, she would find some rationale for not helping him (172).

Proving John Baxter correct in his assessment of the sexual naivete of Jim’s doppelganger in Empire, one notes the passage where “for several months, Mrs. Vincent had sometimes given [Jim] an unexpected erection.” This comic moment provides Jim with an opportunity to smuggle a second potato out of their quarters, but also illustrates the absence of sexuality in comparison with Kindness (185). Ballard summarizes Mrs. Vincent as “one of the few people in Lunguha Camp who appreciated the humour of it all” (240).

The Kindness of Women

Wilson contrasts Jim in Empire with his grown-up counterpart, stating “Empire’s young Jim has little interest in sex [whereas] Kindness’s adult Jim fixates on sex” (119). The sex scenes in Kindness feature primarily Miriam, Cleo Churchill, an obvious stand-in for Claire Walsh to anyone with even a glancing familiarity with Ballard’s biography, and Sally Mumford, who Wilson alleges to be based on Emma Tennent. Wilson labels their sexual relations as marked by the “forensic, techno-erotic language” that marked Crash (119-20). David R. Slavitt’s review states, “Jim jumps the bones of virtually every female who crosses his field of
vision in a series of couplings Mr. Ballard describes with a somewhat quizzical, almost clinical specificity” (qtd. in Wilson 120). This aligns with Dworkin’s 1983 statement:

In the world of male domination, there are no individual women who are unique persons. There is only a generic she [. . . ]. She is the hole between her legs. Her nature justifies whatever men need to do to make that hole accessible to them on their terms. She is valued insofar as men value entry into her. For the rest, she is decorative. (Letters 175)

Wilson tries to rationalize the Ballard of Kindness, stating “[the trauma of war and the death of his wife] push [Jim] in the tenuous, sometimes haphazardous directions and he relies on the ‘kindness of women’ to help him through the mire of his past while catering to his needs in the present. Many of these needs are sexual” (Wilson 119). Where in Empire he held zero interest in sex, Jim in Kindness gorges himself on it.

Reacting to John Baxter’s biography, Wilson goes full-blown white knight. Baxter characterizes Ballard as a “slimebag at heart” that “in coming clean about his life, the genial Jim Ballard had elected to talk dirty” (Inner 298). Wilson responds that the sex scenes in the text occupied a small percentage overall, and asks, “[I]f he really wanted to ‘talk dirty’ [. . . ] what was stopping him?” (120). Compounding matters, Wilson believes “most of [Ballard’s sex scenes] appear in Crash and Kindness.” Can Wilson see the fornicating for the trees?

According to Wilson, “Whoever [Ballard’s sex object] is, she is as much a mother figure as a sexual object, and her kindness resides in her capacity to attend to the needs of his mind and body” (122). Does the latter dominate? Does the former even enter into it?

When first seen in The Kindness of Women, Ballard’s Russian governess, here named Olga, is depicted wearing the fur coat of Ballard’s mother and posing in the mirror, the epitome of teenage vanity, “frown[ing] at me through the glass as if I were an uninvited visitor” (5). Jim
remarks, “Already I had noticed that the White Russian governesses possessed a depth of female mystery that the mothers of my friends never remotely approached” (6). Furthermore, “As I lay in bed at night she would sometimes undress in my bathroom with the door ajar [. . .]. [T]his was her way of proving to herself that I no longer existed” (10).

Describing Peggy Gardner, a fourteen-year-old girl also interned at Lunghua with Jim, he focuses on her physical form and his awkward non-response to her. He states, “I leaned against Peggy, glad to feel her strong wrists and smell the cold, reassuring scent of her body. She was always trying to wrestle me, for reasons I was not ready to explore” (26). He finds her recent tendencies of imitating the missionary Mrs. Dwight depressing. He prefers the “strong-willed girl who stood up to the boys in his class, rescued the younger children from bullies and had a certain thin-hipped stylishness with which I had still to come to terms” (28). He labels Peggy “my closest friend, far closer now than my mother and father could ever be, however hard the missionary women tried to keep us apart” (48).

As with Olga, Ballard focuses on the material in his essentialist description of Peggy. While waiting for her parents to return, Jim presents her with gifts he purchased from Sincere’s, chiefly make-up and nylon stockings (61). He writes, “Through the rouge and lipstick, a vivid woman’s face appeared, more beautiful than all the prostitutes at the Park Hotel. I wanted to embrace her and thank her for everything she had done for me.” He has to wait a while.

Ballard reconnects with Olga after the war, when he finds her working in a casino. Ballard assumes she spends her days “fighting off American sailors in the backs of Nanking Road pedicabs” (64). Three years on from when she was his governess, Ballard remarks, “A rush of ideas filled my head as she worked her thigh into my leg. The war had accelerated
everything and I felt that I was surrounded by moving trains all beyond my reach. I wanted to have sex with Olga, but I had no idea how to approach her” (65).

During his time at university, Ballard informs the audience,

Women dominated my years at Cambridge – fellow medical students, the cheerful Addenbrooke nurses I took drinking on the Cam, and the moody demonstrators in the Physiology Department [. . . ] but none more than Dr. Elizabeth Grant [. . . ]. I saw her naked every day, and I knew her more intimately than any other woman in my life. (71)

The punchline to this distasteful joke rests with Dr. Grant being Jim’s study cadaver. Unable to speak, destined to be reduced first to four sections, a term spent on each one’s dissection, she drew the attention of the other students who “had probably never seen a naked body, let alone that of a mature woman” (74). He describes the dissection in language one might associate with a strip tease, writing “she seemed to undress in a last act of self-revelation” (77). In a macabre way, one can almost hear David Rose’s “The Stripper” while reading!

Peggy returns, having spent her first years on the mainland “in a world without men. Behind her handsome stride, I could see the self-confident spinster who had taught Peggy at her boarding school. Stylish but well-buttoned, she sailed through the young demonstrators who tried to flirt with her” (74). He resigns himself to Peggy being his “first love, but sadly not [his] first lover.”

When the reader, and Jim, meet Miriam, the literary stand-in for Ballard’s wife Mary, automatically, Jim assumes that Miriam, though still school-aged, was involved sexually with Dr. Richard Sutherland, her supervisor. He says, “[h]er loosened school tie, creased tunic and the laboratory stain on her cotton shirt gave her a kind of disheveled glamour. Had she just left the unmade bed I could see in the inner office?” (81). Four pages later, Jim gets her in bed.
Post-coitus, Miriam refers to herself as Dr. Grant’s rival for James’s attention. When she asks how he might dissect her, Jim replies:

“Dissection is a kind of erotic autopsy. We could start with the cervical triangle [. . .].” I kissed the small mole under Miriam’s chin [. . .]. “Or a nasal resection [. . .].” I pressed my tongue into her nostril with its scent of decayed lavender [. . .]. “Or what about an augmentation mammoplasty, not really necessary in your case . . . .” I ran my lips from the musky sweet hollow of her armpit to her full breast with its heavy nipple. (85)

Jeanette Baxter describes their sexual intercourse as “disquieting [. . .] the way in which Jim dissects Miriam imaginatively in an erotic autopsy” (Surrealist 163). Additionally, the “medical lexicon at work here is reminiscent of the dictionary of mechanistic terms which suffuses those passages in The Atrocity Exhibition and Crash in which the female body is deconstructed by a quasi-scientific, quasi-pornographic gaze.”

The remainder of the paragraph continues in a similar manner, breaking down Miriam by her body parts and in doing so, also erases her identity in the same manner in which Dr. Grant’s body was reduced by the scalpel to a “heap of fatty sticks” (Kindness 92). Adding insult to injury, Ballard wondered if “this spunky young woman had been [Richard’s] gift to me” (90).

Fanning the flames of Jim’s ego, David Hunter, another POW from Lunghua, tells him “You’d look great in a USAF uniform Jim [. . .]. You could lay all the girls who haven’t been laid by the boys in USAF uniforms” (99). David informs him of their upcoming night with two prostitutes. He says, “When you fuck Yvette and Brigid, promise me you’ll think of Miriam” (106). Brigid, who Jim discovers is in her second trimester, is also broken down into parts, twisting the knife further via her occupation as a prostitute. “Her small, detergent-chafed hands, with their smell of lipstick, semen and rectal mucus ran across my forehead [. . .]. A flicker of
concern crossed her eyes and then faded into the vast indifference that separated her from all men” (109; emphasis added).

In the first impression of Sally Mumford, Ballard describes her as “a blond-haired young woman with an ivory-white skin [wearing] high-heeled beach shoes and the bottom of a cream bikini. Her face had a look of slightly shop-soiled elegance, as if she had neglected herself for too long in some intimate way” (142). While attending a bullfight with Sally, Jim fantasizes about her “rip[ping] away her silk dress, leap[ing] the barricade, and mount[ing] the horse with her white legs, arms clasping the torera’s waist as she galloped out of the arena” (147). In a later exchange where Jim attempts to secure pot from Sally, she informs him “It’s good for sex.” He comments, “She was waiting for me [to reciprocate her advances] but I felt curiously gauche, as if I were effectively a virgin with no experience of women [. . .]. Another woman’s body was an unfathomed mystery, let alone another woman’s emotions and needs” (151).

After Miriam’s (read: Mary’s) death, Jim feels cut off from other women. He wrote, “Only Senor Roble’s German-speaking secretary was still herself [. . .]. I wanted to take her wrists and raise her elbows so that I could inhale the scent of her armpits, press my fingers into her natal cleft [. . .]. I wanted to prove that at least one woman still existed” (156). A few sentences later, noting how she took the stairs instead of joining him in the lift, “In her mind my wife’s death had let a rapist loose upon the world.” Is Ballard’s self-assessment via the secretary that far off?

The woman with whom Jim has sex after Miriam’s passing, at least in his literary stand-in form, is her sister, Dorothy. Ballard marks the build-up with a tedious inevitability in passages such as “the echo of Miriam’s bones in her sister’s face, and the Cambridge crispness in
her voice, made me feel that I [ . . . ] had returned to a parallel world that tried too hard to mimic its original,,” as well as, “I put my hands on her waist, desperate to embrace her [ . . . ]. Dorothy with her firm hips and comforting breasts was wholly alive” (159; 161). After the act, Ballard describes Dorothy’s marital infidelity with him as having “met her obligations to her dead sister, calming the widowed husband and reminding him that Miriam endured within our affection and shared memories” (163). Spurned by Peggy Gardner in his advances, Jim’s next conquest arrives in a recently separated mother of his children’s classmates. Suggesting depth where none exists, Jim has her say, “[A]t least we’ve met before. These days you have sex straightaway and the wooing starts later.” Matters quickly shift back to the physical with her stating, “Good. Something does seem to be happening. Now, can you remember what to do next?” (172)

Chapter Nine marks the return of Ballard’s next conquest, Sally Mumford. He remarked, “I always looked forward to seeing her. She excited me in the way that Miriam had done, and I envied Lykiard his close hold over her wayward imagination” (176). When Jim wonders “How could I manoeuvre her away from Lykiard?” the answer comes in a suicide attempt by Sally after catching Lykiard having sex with another woman at a music festival (181). Saved from drowning, she has anal sex with Jim:

She knelt on the carpet, her chest and shoulders across the cushions. Spitting on her fingers, she pushed the saliva into her anus with one hand, testing my penis with the other. I hesitated to enter her, nervous of tearing her scarred anus, but she pressed my penis into her [ . . . ]. She buried her face among the teddy bears and brought her wrists behind her back, inviting me to force them into her shoulder blades. I moved carefully [ . . . ] as she shouted to me, an eager, desperate child.

“Bugger me, Daddy! Beat me! Pixie wants to be buggered!” (184)

From here, Jim labels Sally “my guide to a new world.”
Sally’s casual infidelities drive her from Jim ultimately and into the arms of David Hunter (211), though she assures Ballard, “I’ll always let you fuck me” (213). After an attempted head-on collision by Hunter with Sally and Jim, in a callback to the accident fetishists of *Crash*, she keeps her word:

> When I caressed [her breasts] she watched me in an expressionless way, as if she wanted to be violated by a machine. She held my head a few inches from her nipple, tracing a sign on her breast, the diagram of an undreamed mutilation [. . .]. Her fingers scratched at my chest, trying to draw the bandages from a wound [. . .]. When I came she pressed her breast to my mouth, as if returning to me all the blood that I had lost in the sex-death that filled her dreams. (221)

A useful digression comes when Jim attends a film festival organized by Dick Sutherland, who actually did exist. Afterward, Sutherland states, “It’s interesting, that scientific films unsettle you more than hard-core porn.” Ballard responds, “But pornography is really very chaste – it’s the body’s erotic dream of itself” (236-37). Dworkin would disagree.

Did Jim feel the same way during his time with Carmen, a prostitute in Rio who filmed their sex act? He remarks, “Lying between her thighs, I was little more than an extra recruited from the hotel terrace of Copacabana” (245). Additionally, “When I came, [. . .] Carmen nodded matter-of-factly. She took her breasts from me and disengaged her vulva from my penis, a technician turning off a life-support system” (246). His tone almost sounds wounded, but if so, misplaced, given how he treats every female in the text.

After a car crash ends with David and Sally under psychiatric care and a hapless female cellist dead, Dick Sutherland involves both in his productions, films that bridged science and pornography. One might view Sutherland rather than Ballard acting as Ballard’s mouthpiece when, in an aphorism out of a *RE/Search* interview, Ballard states, “One thing we can say for
certain about the future of sex – there’s going to be a lot more of it. Already we can see that new forms of social structure will emerge to cope with the sexual imaginations. What you and everyone else think of as the pornographic mind may well allow us to transcend ourselves and, in a sense, the limits of sex itself” (260-61).

Sally’s involvement in Sutherland’s productions lead to a further decline in her already fragile psyche. In this segment of the text, Ballard seems to drive into the suburbs of compassion toward females involved in pornography, though he is only passing through. She expresses initial enthusiasm for the productions, “amazed by the [ . . . ] cathedral-like interior of her own vagina, moisture bending on its cavernous walls like jewels dripping in a grotto” (261). Yet when seeing how the cameras break her down into individual segments and body parts, it “led to a growing numbness, a fading sensitivity” as she

turn[ed] the pages of the men’s magazines in the waiting room [. . . ] find[ing] parts of her anatomy between the covers [. . . ]. A progressive dismemberment of herself was taking place [. . . ] she never fully reintegrated herself and would wander the streets in her heroin daze searching for the lost parts of her face and lips. (262)

On a visit to Peggy Gardner, Jim experiences his conquest of her body finally. Peggy slapping him in the face seems the entry into the two finally taking the plunge. He writes, “I kissed her, for the first time since we sat along together in the Grand Theatre in Nanking Road. I could feel her tongue tasting the blood in my mouth” (266). He tells her he wanted to do this three decades ago, to which she replies, “Poor boy, you couldn’t have managed it then” (268). Cleo Churchill (read: Claire Walsh/Churchill) reads as the penultimate conquest in Ballard’s second “autobiography” (in contrast with his actual autobiography Miracles of Life.) “Old friends by now, we had never become lovers – in a boozy and reflective mood I had once
described this to her as a technical omission, to which she replied with a raised eyebrow, a shrewd smile and silence” (313). After the death of Dick Sutherland, the two rectify this situation:

I carried the zip down to the base of her spine and let her dress fall forwards from her shoulders onto the floor. “Think of it this way – I’m really dressing you, but you’re seeing the film run backwards.”

“So it’s all the fault of the projectionist? If only I’d told my mother that . . .” [ . . . ] She held my penis in her hands, rolling it gently between her palms, her fingers drawing on my scrotum [ . . . ]. When I kissed Cleo’s nipples a battalion of lovers bent their heads [ . . . ] I drew her beside me, kissing her thighs and hips. (315-16).

However, as it began, so it ends with Olga Ulianova, Ballard’s nanny. Now Olga Weinstock,

Her body was even older than mine, but her face was that of the White Russian teenager who had first looked after me [ . . . ]. By making love in this California hotel we would prove to each other that the wounds [of World War II] had healed. (338-9)

Although the description is less graphic than Jim’s other conquests, Ballard writes:

She held my wrists in the same firm grip she had used half a century earlier to steer me towards the bathroom [ . . . ]. She began to undress me as if preparing me for a party, her fingers never leaving my skin as they moved around my body. [ . . . ] The film of our life rushed backwards through the projector, devouring itself as it hunted for some discarded moment that held the key to our earliest selves. (339)

Were it their earliest selves, Jim would not have such an interest in sex.

Accepting the premise that Ballard’s novels were written out of order, the females appearing in Ballard’s “autobiographies,” particularly *The Kindness of Women*, set the tone for Ballard’s treatment of females throughout his works. Female characters parallel Chekov’s revolver. When a female appears, Ballard’s literary stand-in will have sex with her or has already *had* sex with her and will have sex with her *again*. Dworkin stated, “Fucking is the means by which the male colonializes the female, whether or not the intended goal is
impregnation [. . . ] it is regarded as a an act of possession” (Letters 119). Over the course of his longer works, Ballard’s literary stand-in finds the grip on his possession growing flaccid as the world progresses, while his anxieties remain static.
CHAPTER TWO: ECO-DISASTERS

In their pioneering critical work on Ballard from 1976, James Goddard and David Pringle state,

Ballard is one of the very few writers of today who is attempting to produce a fiction for now—a body of work which does not employ any of the escape routes into convention, fantasy or history used by so many other writers of merit [. . . ]. For the last thirty years we have been living in J.G. Ballard’s world; we have experienced it, lost, and he has given it back to us in the distorted mirror of his prose. (7)

As Ballard explains in Miracles of Life, his final stab at an autobiography, “My first decade as a writer commenced with a period of sustained change in England as well as in the U.S.A. and Europe” (192). He elaborates, “[C]hange was in the air, affecting the nation’s psychology for good or bad. Change was what I wrote about [. . . ]. Invisible persuaders were manipulating politics and the consumer market, affecting habits and assumptions in ways that few people realized.” How effective he appears regarding writing about change in this first part of his career proves debatable, however.

Though Goddard and Pringle considered Ballard’s ecological disaster novels to constitute the second third of his career, with his short stories comprising the first, this no longer holds true in the nearly fifty years since the publication of J.G. Ballard: The First Twenty Years (2). Ballard wrote his short stories in tandem with his novels throughout his career, and it was the combination of the short stories with his novels than enabled him to write full-time. What constituted the second third for Goddard and Pringle constitutes the first quarter for this study:
The Wind From Nowhere (1961), The Drowned World (1962), The Drought (1965), and The Crystal World (1966). Of this period, Goddard and Pringle believed the disasters within are “personal and liberating.” Rather than treat the disasters in a serious manner, they argue the novels “are about man conspiring with nature for his own ends” (4). It is this period, with Ballard’s focus on science fiction, where he remains pigeonholed stateside, when he is acknowledged at all.

This period proves troublesome on multiple fronts. In addition to the tendency for Ballard to be dismissed as a science fiction writer, while his works begin to react to the shifting political landscape of the period, he sets few of the stories in this grouping in England proper, though in the case of The Drowned World, it is floating on top of England for most of the text, rather than taking place in it. Ballard explained to Goddard and Pringle in the mid-1970s,

By the time I came to England at the age of sixteen I’d seen a great variety of landscapes. I think the English landscape was the only landscape I’d come across which didn’t mean anything, particularly the urban landscape. England seemed to be very dull, because I’d been brought up at a much lower latitude – the same latitude as the places which are my real spiritual home as I sometimes think: Los Angeles and Casablanca [. . .]. I mean, the angle of light, density of light. I’m always much happier in the south – Spain, Greece – than I am anywhere else [. . .]. England was a place that was totally exhausted. The war had drained everything. It seemed very small, and rather narrow mentally, and the physical landscape of England was so old [. . .]. That’s why the SF of John Wyndham [. . .] I can’t take [. . .]. They don’t seem landscapes that are psychologically significant, if that means anything (9).

He returned to the thread later in the interview, saying, “Not having spent my childhood and adolescence in England, I received a very big shock when I got here in 1946 and found it was a closed little island, containing a whole lot of lesser islands – the world of English professional life. Professional middle-class life of those days was incredibly narrow. I just couldn’t breathe
in it. That’s one of the reasons I started writing SF – one could get away from all this sort of thing (16-17).

But does he? Gregory Stephenson categorizes Ballard’s ecological apocalypse novels as “represent[ing] a response and a rebuke to the scientific-materialist orientation of our age [ . . . ]. They further serve to awaken our consciousness to a new awareness of our identities, interpreting our equivocal and unsuspected motives, and examining the secret recesses of our psyches” (62).

Ballard stated he was writing about the changes taking place in the latter part of the twentieth century, and it is in this segment of Ballard’s career one sees in the secret recess of his psyche, and the beginnings of the image that appears throughout the whole of his literary career: the Ballardian female.

James Goddard first asked Ballard why his novels never depicted a “sympathetic male/female” relationship. Ballard countered with his own question, “Such as in who’s novels? What other writer does that sort of thing?” Goddard cited Hemingway as a possible example. Ballard replied,

I suppose the relationship in To Have and Have Not, between the tough guy and his wife, is happy in a way. What I’m really saying is that sympathetic male/female relationships – and your questions is quite a pointed one – are not all that common in fiction, are they? The serious answer to your question is that my fiction is all about one person, all about one man coming to terms with various forms of isolation [ . . . ]. The protagonists of most of my fiction feel tremendously isolated, and that seems to exclude the possibility of a warm fruitful relationship with anybody, let alone as potentially close as a woman. (25)

In his solo work, Earth is the Alien Planet, Pringle labels Ballardian women “frequently bitches of the first, second, or third order” (40). The most common of the Ballardian female is represented by the “siren or la belle dame sans merci – those remote, beautiful and almost unattainable women who haunt Vermilion Sands and others of Ballard’s more magical
landscapes [...]. [T]his is a type which first emerges in one of the earliest stories, “Prima Belladonna” (41). Pringle sees this female, “[t]he lamia, the beautiful temptress, Keats’s snakewoman, or Coleridge’s ‘nightmare life-in-death’ [...]” as “the essential female figure in Ballard’s fiction. In a sense, all his women are aspects of the lamia” (42).

In what might stand as a manifesto for Ballard, given his early (and continued) reliance on the lamia/damsel dichotomy, Andrea Dworkin describes two definitions of women in fiction. She labels the good woman “a victim” and the bad woman as needing to be destroyed. The former “must be possessed” while the latter “must be killed, or punished. Both must be nullified” (Woman Hating 48). Earlier, Dworkin labeled the good mothers in fairy tales as emblematic of sexist ontology, writing, “When she is good, she is soon dead [...] she is so passive in life that death must only be more of the same [...]. [T]he only good woman is a dead woman” (41). For Dworkin, Ballard repeats and reinforces the roles established in fairy tales, which Dworkin saw as “our childhood models, and their fearful, dreadful content terrorizes us into submission [...] that not to be passive, innocent, and helpless is to be actively evil” (35).

Before the New Wave of science fiction, to which this period of Ballard’s fiction belongs due to accident of chronology if nothing else, the genre, typified retroactively as “space opera,” remained formulaic and, as a result, heteronormative. Rob Latham cited Philip José Farmer’s contrasting of what was, and what could have been, in the genre. In theory, an unlimited range of subjects presented itself to the writer. Revealing the male dominance within the field, Farmer stated:

[The writer] avoided any sex except for the inclusion of the dummy figure of the professor’s daughter or an occasional superfemale who was almost
always evil [. . .]. Perhaps the hero and the [heroine] kissed as the story ended, and red Mars sank in the background, but this did not take place often. (qtd. in Latham 254).

New Wave science fiction contrasted with the chaste, heteronormative relations that typified the era of Hugo Gernsback and e.e. “doc” smith before it. A previously unknown sexual openness marked New Wave. Within the canon, Latham noted authors engaging in feminist criticism of the aforementioned “normative gender roles” citing the shorter works of Alice Sheldon, who wrote under the pseudonym James Tiptree, Jr., as well as Joanna Russ’s “The Female Man” (262).

Latham considered the feminist element in New Wave science fiction as acting as the conscience of the movement. Feminist authors balanced the aesthetic freedom of the genre with some measure of a morality check. More explicitly, feminist science fiction authors “served as a counterweight to the more or less explicit misogyny of the sexual revolution” (263). Ursula K. LeGuin demonstrated said tightrope walk in which writers were engaged.

LeGuin viewed both the lack of censorship and introduction of sex into science fiction positively. However, with great power comes great responsibility. She urged male science fiction writers to give their female characters depth. Authors needed to move beyond the “Dale Ardens” that populated the genre during earlier generations. Females needed to be more than “a pair of Styrofoam boobies” (qtd. in Latham 263).

Unsurprisingly, Ballard presents a conflicted stance. On one hand, Ballard told Lynne Fox that women writing science fiction “moved in and changed it.” Furthermore, “Women may succeed in bringing Science Fiction back to reality.” Before one celebrates this victory, though, Ballard qualified, saying, “[But] I’ve got a feeling that [. . . t]here no longer needs to be
something called Science Fiction” (184). Certainly, when examining Ballard’s work, particularly his later works, the dystopias that characterized previously possible futures appeared as present conditions. Anderzej Gasiorek describes “an air of stasis hang[ing] over” Ballard’s work in the 1970s. However, this exists prior to his techno-barbarism tetralogy. The utopias that typify feminist science fiction do not exist “and a brooding sense of failure, despair and rage predominates” (107). Does Ballard, then, prove LeGuin correct?

Pringle catalogues the principal females of this first period Ballard’s fiction (although perhaps “female” singular seems more appropriate), representing the lamia: Beatrice Dahl of The Drowned World, Miranda in The Drought, and the Jungian fragmentation of Louise Peret and Suzanne Clair in The Crystal World. If one adds the characters of Patricia Olsen and Susan Maitland from Ballard’s first, disowned, novel The Wind From Nowhere, one sees not only Pringle’s thesis proven, but the groundwork laid for Ballardian women through the rest of his literary career.

*The Wind From Nowhere*

Ballard’s first ecological disaster piece, The Wind From Nowhere, published in 1962 differs from the rest of his canon of the period which, as stated previously, depart from the formula of the British disaster novel. In later novels, Ballard’s characters confront, nay, *embrace* catastrophe. The Wind From Nowhere aligns with the World War born preservation of the
British way of life, of “Keep a stiff upper lip. There’ll always be an England” (Baker, “Geometry” 15).

Ballard repeatedly denigrated the text throughout his life. He explained, “I thought I’d use all the clichés there are, the standard narrative conventions and I sat down at the typewriter and I wrote the book” (qtd. in Brigg 43). He dismissed the novel as “a piece of hackwork.” In a 1973 interview with Peter Linnett, Ballard said,

[The novel] was really done as a kind of joke. At the time I wrote it [. . . ] my wife and I were extremely short of money. The one thing I wanted to do was to be able to give up my job as an editor of a scientific magazine so that I could write a decent novel” (50).

That much, the piece did enable Ballard to accomplish.

At the suggestion of his wife Mary, Ballard took a two-week holiday to write the novel. Initially titled “Reap the Whirlwind,” Ballard claimed he wrote the piece direct to the typewriter. According to John Baxter, it was one of the ways Ballard distanced himself from what intended to be nothing more than a quickie novel (Inner 110). With an eye toward the American market, he split the characters between United States military and British scientists typified by Maitland and Lanyon, clichés of the boffin and enlisted serviceman type respectively (111). What begins as a minor annoyance to air and sea vehicles, as the wind speed increases by five miles per day, culminates in the destruction of vegetation and any humans out in the elements. Cities collapse either directly due to the wind or indirectly by the sea water blown by it battering coastal structures (Brigg 44).

Of the female characters in the novel, John Baxter writes,

One would [. . . ] expect a few likeable characters. But while Lanyon does strike up a romance with reporter Tricia Olsen, it is perfunctory and cancelled out by the dysfunctional relationship [of Donald Maitland with]
his spoiled heiress wife Susan, of whom Ballard disposes from the terrace of her high-rise apartment. One senses his glee as she’s snatched by the wind and sent bowling, doll-like, head over heels across the rooftops. (Inner 113)

Indeed, “glee” does seem appropriate, if sadistic in describing what can only be called Susan’s execution in the text.

Suddenly, the wind caught her [. . . ] It whirled her back off her feet against the door frame, then spun her head over heels into the open air [. . . ] catapulted her through the up draught rising from the street, [bounced her] off the roof of the Embassy Building and then [spun her] away like a smashed doll into the maze of rooftops beyond. (Wind 86)

Even before being blown out of the window, Susan, in Ballard’s description, resembles a victim of sexual assault.

Her hair clung in a matted net around her face, gray with dust and dirt. She still wore the cocktail dress [Maitland] had last seen her in. The full skirt was torn and stained, the net underskirt trailing at her heels. One of the shoulder straps had gone and the front of the dress hung down loosely, revealing her scratched, dirty skin. (85)

Given this earlier description of Susan, the aforementioned glee seems all the more plausible.

According to Dworkin, central to the conceit of sex as “conquest and possession, dominance and submission, is that the woman has real power: She is only the apparent victim; she is only seemingly powerless” (Right Wing 208; emphasis added). “[Men] act on what a woman, or any sex object, has provoked. She provokes what she wants.” She was “asking for it.”

Maitland is completely ineffectual in his relationship with Susan, as illustrated by his leaving their home without telling her at the novel’s opening to go to his apartment in London. He imagines it would be regarded as “nothing more than an excuse for another party or another sports coupe, whichever seemed the most interesting” (Wind 8). His London apartment had been Susan’s, and she still pays rent on it. For this, “[s]ometimes [. . . ] he counted himself lucky that
he was married to a rich neurotic” (10). Ballard’s use of “rich neurotic” reminds one of Barbara Burris’s remarks about the nervousness of the Left directed at feminists, “uttering such lines as ‘So what makes you think you’re oppressed, you white middle class chick?’” (“Fourth World” 327-28). Burris notes the order of defining words, ending with “chick” in the same manner Ballard closes with “neurotic.”

On return to the apartment, he finds himself without a key and forced to break in, whereupon he finds Susan with Peter Sylvester, her latest lover, a “would-be racing driver” (Wind 12). Ballard writes, “At least, he always complimented himself, he had lasted longer than any of her other beaux. Most of them were tossed aside after a few weeks” (12-13). Maitland admits that the marriage was happy for two or three years, initially “[b]ut gradually she discovered that the trust fund provided by her father supplied her with a more interesting alternative, an unending succession of parties, and Riviera weekends” (13). But matters changed as Susan’s twenties passed into her thirties:

[H]e had recently noticed a less pleasant note intruding into her personality. Dark-haired and petite, her skin was still as clear and white as it had been ten years earlier, but the angles of her face had begun to show, her eyes were now more somber. She was less confident, a little sharper, the boy friend of the moment was kept more on his toes, thrown out just those few days sooner. What Maitland really feared was that she might suddenly decide to return to him and set up again the ghastly ménage of the months before she had finally left him -- a period of endless bickering and pain. (13)

The winds put his fears to rest.

The only other major female character in The Wind From Nowhere is Patricia Olsen. Brigg describes her condescendingly as Lanyon’s “lady-love” with all of the throwbacks to Dale Arden present and incorrect (44). Initially, she is referred to as “a girl from NBC,” which denies her both a name and her status as an adult (41). This reflects Dworkin’s statement that “All
forms of dominance and submission [. . . ] are tied irreversibly to the sexual identities of men and are derived from the sexual model” (Our Blood 11-12). Ballard describes her face as “strong and full-lipped, with wide intelligent eyes that examined the commander with frank interest” (42). Well, at least her eyes are intelligent.

Only when she takes the initiative to introduce herself does the audience find out her name is Patricia Olsen, having arrived from the Paris bureau (Wind 42). When their carrier is capsized by the wind, the members of the party have to run for the nearby barracks. Lanyon, true to character, rescues Olsen, lest she go the way of Susan. One sees Lanyon’s objectification of Olsen when Ballard writes:

He grinned at her suddenly. She smiled back, eyeing him with a long steady gaze, one he felt no hesitation in returning. With her blue coat and clear white skin against the drab background of the basement wall, she reminded him of the Madonna in the gilt frame over the altarpiece in the wrecked church. The woman’s hair had been black, but her robes had glowed with the same luminescent quality as Pat’s ash-blonde hair. (49)

Ballard equates Olsen with the Virgin Mother, the converse of Susan Maitland’s whore, the two archetypes desired by the Ballardian male.

When Ballard returns to Lanyon and Olsen, the text suggests the likelihood they had sex:

With his free hand Lanyon stroked her blonde hair, sweeping it back gently over her small neat ears, then kissed her carefully on the forehead, trying to keep his four-day stubble away from her skin. Pressed against him, she felt warm and comfortable, wearing his leather jacket around her shoulders while her own coat covered their legs, buttoned up around them.

Lanyon looked down and watched her face, her eyelids moving occasionally as she reached toward the surface of consciousness, her full lips slightly parted in a relaxed smile, wide smooth cheekbones still unblemished by the dust storms. (91)

When she finally wakes up, she is engrossed in her vanity, combing her hair in her compact.

Ballard informs the reader, “She had lost her handbag and make-up but her lips were full and
red, her skin a honey cream, and she looked fresh and vital, even though she had been through the last five days with little to eat and a minimum of rest” (94). Here Olsen embodies Susan Brownmiller’s statement that “A man may keep his nose to the grindstone, but a woman had better stop now and again to powder hers” (228).

When Ballard introduces the character of Hardoon, it proves difficult, given the previous administration in American government, not to regard Ballard’s description of Hardoon as prescient, when he writes of him as a “[s]hipping and hotel magnate [ . . . ] something of a power-crazy eccentric” (Wind 152). Mention of Hardoon Tower only solidifies the unfortunate association more. When Maitland and Hardoon meet, Hardoon’s “mad scientist” moment arrives shortly thereafter when he says, “Nature herself in revolt, in her purest, most elemental form. And where is man, her prime enemy? For the most part vanquished, utterly defeated, hiding below ground like a terror-stricken mole, or wandering about blindly down dark tunnels” (163). This is not the only time Hardoon feminizes Nature in the text. He will do so again during the final showdown against the gales.

With seemingly unlimited resources, Hardoon has constructed a pyramid during the global hurricane, “a gesture which to him represents the assertion of human reason and potency against the refractory fury of the natural world” (Stephenson 42). As stated earlier, of interest is the essentialist language Hardoon uses in his statement of defiance against nature:

I alone have built upward, have dared to challenge the wind, asserting Man’s course and determination to master nature [ . . . ]. Only I [ . . . ] have had the moral courage to attempt to outstare nature. That is my sole reason for building the tower. Here on the surface of the globe I meet nature on her own terms, in the arena of her choice. If I fail, Man has no right to assert his innate superiority over the unreason of the natural world. (Ballard, Wind 298)
Hardoon feminizes Nature, employing “her.” By equating Nature with unreason or emotion, Hardoon establishes the logical male/emotional female dichotomy.

Of course, Hardoon, the stubborn male, does fail. The wind topples the pyramid and buries it under mountains of dust. Before this, however, Ballard gets one final jab in at Olsen. With Hardoon’s tower crumbling and the “heroes” running for their lives to escape the symbol of Hardoon’s ego with all of its phallic representation, “a block weighing fifteen or twenty tons was slowly tilting down over them. Seeing it, Patricia Olsen began to scream helplessly but Lanyon managed to steady her a moment, looking around desperately for some way of escape” (184).

Their exchange of “No, Steve! Please, I can’t!” and “Darling, you’ve got to!” makes one pray the block puts them, and the reader, out of their collective misery, but instead, Ballard says, “[Lanyon] twisted her arm roughly, dragging her with him, holding the ragged ledge with his free hand before pushing her over[.]” Yet, the block recoils into the wind before she can fall (185). Thereafter, according to Stephenson, “as if having made its point, the wind at last begins to subside” (43).

The Drowned World

In an uncredited interview with German magazine Munich Round-Up from 1968, Ballard describes the situation in The Drowned World as:

the return of the entire planet to an era of the great Triassic forests, which covered the earth some 200 million years ago. I tell how human beings likewise regress into the past. In a certain sense, they climb down their own spinal columns. (11)
Earlier, Ballard discussed *The Drowned World*’s inspiration in a 1963 essay reprinted in *A User’s Guide to the Millennium*. “[T]he image of an immense, half-submerged city overgrown by tropical vegetation, which forms the centerpiece of *The Drowned World*, is in some way a fusion of my childhood memories of Shanghai and those of my last ten years in London” (199).

Set in 2145, the novel anticipates the concerns over global warming that dominated the ecological movement from the 1970s onward. Increasing temperatures have resulted in the melting of the ice sheets. Humankind finds “safety” at the poles. England has regressed to a prehistoric state with all of the exaggerated foliage and devolving animal life one would imagine present and correct. It *should* be noted, however, that Ballard had no political aims in writing *The Drowned World*. Ballard’s own ends, chiefly financial as his family was perpetually short of money, took precedence over any intent of political activism (Baxter, *Inner* 115). Initially a novella that Ballard sold to *Science Fiction Adventures*, he immediately set about to expanding the piece to book-length after the sale (121).

Ballard credits *The Drowned World*’s publication in 1962 with enabling him to resign his post at *Chemistry and Industry* to become a writer full-time. Although, that might have proven short-lived as Ballard recounted meeting with Victor Gollancz, the “patriarch of English publishing.” Ballard said,

> As we sat down in the Ivy, he boomed in his loud voice, [“]Interesting novel, *The Drowned World*. Of course, you stole it all from Conrad.[”] The Ivy was a haven of senior journalists and I saw heads turning. I thought: My God, this grand old man is going to sink my career before it’s launched. (qtd. in Baxter 191-92)

Ballard professed not to have read any Conrad at the time of writing *The Drowned World*.

Delvile sees a flaw in Gollancz’s logic, pointing out that Ballard deviates from Conrad with his
protagonist. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow returns to civilization. Kerans, rather, goes further down his spinal column, returning to the primordial, or at least pre-uterine state, though self-destruction is entailed by him doing so (8).

John Baxter’s study also notes Ballard’s plea of “not guilty,” though “he obviously [read Conrad] later” (*Inner* 117). Baxter sees some truth to this, veering close to Delville when he wrote, “Many of the critics hadn’t read it either, or not recently, since the parallels were not as obvious as they remembered.” During the 1980s, Ballard expressed mock concern that:

> If the phone rings, it’ll probably be Joseph Conrad saying, “Mr. Ballard, you stole it all from me.” But to be fair to myself, Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* is not the least bit interested in the river [. . .]. The river is just something that gets Marlow [. . .] up to Kurtz’s station (qtd. in Baxter 117).

A flimsy contrast, perhaps, but the Ballardian male is obsessed, at least in this tetralogy, with the landscape.

The Ballardian male of *The Drowned World* is Dr. Robert Kerans, a name Ballard borrowed from John Kerans, ill-fated captain of the *HMS Amethyst*, which had been involved in the Yangtze Incident of 1949. Ballard’s Kerans is stationed at the drowned London to monitor the water levels and temperature. Unlike the rest of the research team, Kerans is drawn to the submerged city where he moves into a suite located at the top of the Ritz. To no surprise, Kerans becomes the lover of the Ballardian female, Beatrice Dahl.

Sharing her name with one of Ballard’s daughters, Beatrice, according to John Baxter, represents:

> a parade of anhedonic Ballard heroines, sleek, provocative, but inhospitable like the nudes in Delvaux or the models of Helmut Newton, court photographer of Eurotrash[ . . .]. She is the sleeping, or at least the drowsing beauty of this submerged city[ . . .]. Women such as Dahl are the equivalent of [favorite Ballardian trope, the] empty swimming pool.
To function, they need to be filled, but nobody is equal to the task, so they lounge, bask, and shrug off the occasional sexual approach as if it were a troublesome mosquito.  (*Inner* 116)

Examining the criticism of *The Drowned World*, a large percentage of the focus has been given to the character Beatrice Dahl.

Roger Luckhurst describes her as “crucial, not least for the audacious name she is given,” citing Pringle’s characterization of the Ballardian female as the lamia. Luckhurst views her as “hover[ing] at the edges of the novel,” though given her position as an object of desire in the text, one disagrees with this characterization of Dahl. Luckhurst notes how she shares her name with Dante’s guide through Paradise, while at the same time taking on a different form of revelation when she is compared to Pandora in the novel. While embodying the female guide, she might also be viewed as embodying the “death drive” (57).

When Ballard introduces Beatrice, the reader should pay attention to her physical absence as well as the essentialist light in which she is cast. The water level’s continued rise calls for imminent evacuation of the area. Kerans is told “You’ll have to convince her [. . .]. At present, she refuses point-blank to go. She doesn’t realize that this time is the end, that there’ll be no more holding units[. . .]. I told her that and she just walked away” (*Drowned* 26). Adding insult to irrationality, Ballard writes:

> Kerans smiled bleakly, visualizing the familiar swirl of hip and haughty stride. “Beatrice can be difficult sometimes,” he temporised[. . .]. It would probably take more than three days to change her mind[. . .]. “She’s a complex person, lives on many levels. Until they all synchronise she can behave as if she’s insane.” (27)

Further objectification takes place when she is finally introduced in the text.

> Beatrice Dahl lay back on one of the deck chairs, her long oiled body gleaming in the shadows like a sleeping python. The pink-tipped fingers of one hand
rested lightly on an ice-filled glass on a table beside her, while the other hand turned slowly through the pages of a magazine. Wide blue-black sunglasses hid her smooth sleek face, but Kerans noted the slightly sullen pout of her firm lower lip [. . . ].

The Colonel paused at the rail, looking down at the beautiful supple body with ungrudging approval. Noticing him, Beatrice pulled off her sunglasses, then tightened the loose back-straps of her bikini under her arms. Her eyes glittered quietly.

“All right, you two, get on with it. I’m not a strip show.” (37)

Who could tell though? Samuel Francis cites the comparison of her body to a python when he writes, “The Drowned World represents Beatrice precisely in terms of erotic fantasy” (71).

Tracey Clement builds upon this characterization of Beatrice, stating that not only is Beatrice the Eve of this new Eden, but “she is the insidious serpent as well” (61).

Colonel Riggs, to give him his name, notes his responsibility as military governor for her well-being which Beatrice greets with “Oh God,” coupled with “some further, less polite imprecation under her breath.” When Bea asks Robert why he is there, his response is a less condescending “I missed you,” which garners him a “Good boy. I thought perhaps that the gauleiter here had been trying to frighten you with his horror stories” (Ballard, Drowned 38).

The reader should note Dahl’s choice of reading material, an ancient copy of the fashion magazine Vogue, retrieved from cold storage. The alleged obsession of the Ballardian woman with beauty in the popular consciousness remains a repeated theme in his “character,” as his later works will illustrate.

When Riggs explains the rising rain belts, followed by the rising temperatures, skin cancers, iguanas and scavengers she would encounter if she stays in the Ritz, Beatrice responds, “toss[ing] her long, black hair over one shoulder, ‘I’ll keep the door locked, Colonel,’” at which
point Kerans snaps, saying, “These self-destructive impulses may be amusing to play with now, but when we’re gone they won’t be so funny” (38-39).

After Riggs leaves, Beatrice asks Kerans about the likelihood of him staying with her, should she decide to stay regardless. Kerans answers her,

“Trying to tempt me, Bea? What a question. Remember, not only are you the most beautiful woman here, but you’re the only woman. Nothing is more essential than a basis for comparison. Adam had no aesthetic sense, or he would have realised that Eve was a pretty haphazard piece of work.” (40)

Beatrice chastises him for his frankness, but then Ballard draws attention to her physical appearance, writing “She swept her hair back off her forehead with both hands, her long supple body gleaming against the sunlight” (25). The effect of Beatrice’s physical beauty holds a potentially deadly effect for Kerans. “Kerans had still not made up his mind – once away from Beatrice his indecision returned (ruefully he wondered if she was deliberately trying to confuse him, Pandora with her killing mouth and witch’s box of desires and frustrations [. . . ])” (43).

As stated earlier, Luckhurst noted this comparison of Beatrice to Pandora, as did John Baxter (Inner 88).

Further objectification of Beatrice occurs when, seemingly in an act of voyeurism, Kerans views her through her blinds, “moving about quietly [. . . ] a black towel in a single twist around her midriff [. . . ] tired and withdrawn, greeting him with a half-hearted wave” (Ballard, Drowned 63). When she disappears, Kerans goes to search for her, finding her “sitting on the bed, the tumbler of whiskey resting on her knees.” When he attempts to take the tumbler from her, Ballard puts the drunken words of his fantasy in her mouth when she says, “Leave me alone, Robert [. . . ]. I know I’m a loose, drunken woman, but I spent last night in the time jungles,”
referring to the collective nightmare of a giant pulsating sun that affects all involved in the expedition, including Robert Kerans, eventually (64).

Kerans lectures her, saying,

This bedroom smells as if you’ve had an entire penal battalion billeted with you. Take a shower [ . . . ] and pour that drink away. Scotch breakfasts may be an old Highland custom, but they’re murder on the liver.

Beatrice only requires half an hour to sober up. When next seen, Ballard sits her on the patio, painting her nails blue, “towel clasped to her breasts” (65). Riggs hails Kerans concerning the disappearance of Lieutenant Hardiman. Kerans informs her “They’re going to pick me up here [ . . . ]. You’d better get dressed or out of sight. The slip-stream will strip your towel away like tissue paper” (66). As final slap in the face, Kerans says, “Riggs has got enough to contend with now.”

Beatrice warns Kerans that he too will experience the same nightmares she has. When he does, he

Realised the courage and self-sufficiency Beatrice had displayed, brushing off the least show of sympathy. And yet Kerans knew [ . . . ] he had been reluctant to give Beatrice any real sympathy, cutting her questions about the nightmares as short as possible and never offering her treatment or sedative. (87)

Yet for all of Ballard’s treatment of Beatrice, she does show the occasional flash of character development out of step with the Ballardian lamia/damsel. After Riggs’s departure, Beatrice declares, “Thank God he’s left [ . . . ] darling, he was insufferable. All that stiff upper lip stuff and dressing for dinner in the jungle – a total lack of adaptability” (95-96).

Ballard informs the audience of Kerans’s inner thoughts, writing, “Much as [Kerans] needed Beatrice Dahl, her personality intruded upon the absolute freedom he required for himself
[...] each of them would have to pursue his or her own pathway through the time jungles” (97). Kerans contradicts himself only a chapter later when Ballard writes, “with Beatrice, despite their superficial estrangement, there was an intact underlying union, a tacit awareness of their symbolic roles” (100). With the introduction of this text’s version of Hardoon in the person of Strangman, Beatrice retreats into full “Dale Arden” mode. When she sees the herd of alligators accompanying Strangman’s craft, she puts her hands to Kerans’s shoulders and head against his shirt, crying, “Robert, what’s happening? [...] There are thousands of [alligators]!” (104).

The digression into Beatrice’s appearance that follows is brilliant for this study!

Beatrice stood beside him, fingering the collar of the jade silk shirt she wore over her black swim-suit. Although the apartment was beginning to look ramshackle and untidy, Beatrice continued to tend her own appearance devotedly. On the few occasions when Kerans called she would be sitting on the patio or before a mirror in her bedroom, automatically applying endless layers of patina [...]. Her hair was always dressed immaculately, the make-up on her mouth and eyes exquisitely applied, but her withdrawn isolated gaze gave her the waxen, glacé beauty of an inanimate mannequin. At last, however, she had been roused. (105)

Has she though? She develops not a jot beyond the object of beauty there to be saved by the Ballardian male.

If Beatrice is Dale Arden, then Strangman fulfills the brief of Ming the Merciless.

Introducing Strangman in Chapter Eight, Ballard writes when describing his interactions with Beatrice

He leaned around on one elbow and smiled at Beatrice, who sat with her hands discretely covering her bare knees, like a mouse observing a particularly fine cat. “And what about you, Miss Dahl? You look a little melancholy. A touch of time sickness, perhaps?” (109)
Beatrice responds, “We’re usually rather tired around here [. . .]. By the way, I don’t like your alligators.” In a film adaptation, one could insert Melody Anderson and Max von Sydow from Dino de Laurentiis’s *Flash Gordon* in the parts of Beatrice and Strangman and lose nothing.

Strangman is a predator. Kerans, seeing Beatrice beside Strangman, despite her discomfort, says he “began to feel an intense distaste for the man” (112). Strangman believes Kerans is an avenue for him to gain access to Beatrice. When he learns that the members of the expedition rarely see one another, he attempted bribery through food and drink which Beatrice repeatedly refuses, frightened by his alligators and, unsurprisingly for a British colonial, his army of one-eyed mulattoes (114). Strangman and Beatrice’s exchanges increase the flesh-crawling reaction during a dive into a submerged planetarium. When Dr. Alan Bodkin, a senior scientist in the London expedition, asks sarcastically, “When does the gala begin?” Strangman responds, “There are no bathing beauties here[ . . .]. Wait a minute, though, I mustn’t be ungallant and forget the beautiful Miss Dahl[ . . .]. Come, my dear, I’ll make you queen of the aquacade, with an escort of fifty divine crocodiles[ . . .]. You’ll be a Venus descending to the sea, made twice beautiful by your return.” (119-20).

She recoils when he tries taking her hand, “frowning with repugnance at his oleaginous smirk” (120).

Later in the text, Kerans, whether by accident or by design, snags his air hose while down in the planetarium (129). In the aftermath, Strangman continues his pursuit of Beatrice, apparently to no avail as he informs Kerans, “Women are like spiders, they sit there watching you, knitting their webs” and “She keeps talking about you, Robert, confound her” (134). When she concedes to attend one of Strangman’s parties, Ballard devotes his (and Strangman’s) attention to Beatrice’s appearance. “She wore a full-length blue brocade ball dress, the turquoise
mascara around her eyes making her look like some exotic bird of paradise” (136). When Strangman displays his painting, “The Marriage of Ester and King Xerxes,” wherein Ester bears a small, yet noticeable likeness to Beatrice. Strangman casts her in the role of Ester, subduing the floodwaters in the same manner she subdues the king (137-38).

Yet it is Strangman who subdues the waters and when Beatrice and the others realize what is going on, she yet again retreats to “Dale Arden” mode, when she cries, “Robert! Stop it!” She continues in this vein after Strangman’s obligatory “mad scientist” moment where he explains his plan to drain the lagoon. Beatrice declares, “Robert, he’s insane. What are we going to do? [. . . ] It’s all so hideous [. . . ]. It’s like some imaginary city of Hell. Robert, I need the lagoon” (142-43). In this passage, Beatrice, according to Barbara Burris, ticks multiple boxes on how females were defined for thousands of years, as “weak [. . . ], passive, emotional [. . . ], childish, dependent, [and] submissive” (352).

According to Sebastian Groes, London in The Drowned World is “precisely the kind of system that seeks to enslave” (84). One sees in the character of Kerans the collapse of society. Money is meaningless as are capitalist trappings. The converse of Kerans is Strangman, whose boat is loaded with the relics of former civilization (84-85). He embodies a re-establishment of the old order, which Groes sees illustrated in Strangman’s attempted seduction of Beatrice with the necklace. Ballard writes, “Deftly, he strung the strands around her neck, regarding the effect with pleasure. The entwined weeds among the sparkling stones against the white skin of her breast made her look like some naiad of the deep” (Drowned 148). Here Groes illuminates yet another instance of Ballard objectifying women, via his literary stand-ins, turning Beatrice Dahl into a siren.
With the lagoon drained, Beatrice seems to acquiesce to Strangman, locking herself away in her bedroom during the heat of the day, yet emerging to join him in his nightly parties, “numbly beside him in her blue evening dress, her hair studded with three or four tiaras [. . .] her breasts smothered under a mass of glittering chains and crescents like a mad queen in a horror drama” (151). Ballard says Strangman regards her “almost as if she was a tribal totem, a deity whose power was responsible for their continued good fortune but none the less resented.” Yet, she springs to life when Strangman’s paranoia at the attempt by Kerans’s Dr. Bodkin to reflood the lagoon threatens her life as well as Kerans’s life, flinging the jewels at him and throwing herself bodily at him, as she exclaims, “You white devil, can’t you leave us alone?” (154).

Strangman separates the would-be Adam and Eve, taking Beatrice captive aboard his ship while Kerans, now in “Flash Gordon” mode, is taken to be tortured by Strangman’s guards. Though beaten, he escapes to find Beatrice in the saloon aboard Strangman’s craft, “Her blue brocade dress spread out like a peacock’s tail, [. . .] Kerans thinks that Beatrice had been drugged – her expression was vacant and blank, like the mask of a wax dummy” (171). Note how repeatedly Ballard has stripped Beatrice of her humanity based on her appearance throughout the text. When aroused from her torpor, Kerans notes her “elegant profile [. . .] her sleek carmine mouth and lacquered nails, almost bemused by the heady scent of perfume and the brocaded rustle of her gown” (171). Yet Kerans lays blame on the same attire for inhibiting their ability to escape the way he gained entry initially and, to add insult to injury, Beatrice breaks a heel on her slipper as they attempt to run from Strangman and his goons (174).
Though seemingly “saved by the cavalry,” Riggs sadly informs Kerans of the backhanded service Strangman performed in the draining of the lagoon, despite all of the violence, both physical and psychological, he visited upon the persons of Kerans and Dahl (180). In the end, Kerans decides to reflood the lagoon, risking violent retribution from Riggs as a result (186). In her parting words to Kerans, Beatrice says, “Darling, where are you going[?] I’m sorry I can’t be with you.” Although choosing destruction over the New Eden proposed by Beatrice, Kerans, still in “Flash Gordon” mode, says, “Towards the sun. You’ll be with me, Bea” (187).

When critics grouped *The Drowned World* with disaster novels, Ballard, ever the contrarian, disagreed. Baxter cites a period interview with Charles Shaar Murray in which Ballard argued:

> If you look at the Book Marketing Council’s list, you’ll see that John Wyndham’s *Day of the Triffids* is there. Now it’s a fine novel, a classic example of the English kind of Home Counties catastrophe fiction, a very polite society where [...] people struggle together in the face of an external threat as they did during the Battle of Britain[...]. My novel turns all that upside down. The hero embraces the catastrophe as a means by which he can [...] fulfil his own nature[...]. That’s what *The Drowned World* is about. That’s what nearly all my fiction is about. (qtd. in Inner 123).

If one accepts Ballard’s explanation, then the repetition of protagonist specifically and plot generally in subsequent novels *The Drought* and *The Crystal World* should surprise no one.
The origin of the disaster in *The Drought* results from the planet’s oceans being coated with a “polymer” that prevents evaporation from taking place. This disruption of the water cycle means no clouds, and by extension, no rain. While a few of the planet’s inhabitants stick close to rivers and lakes, many flock to the oceans where plants on the shore desalinize the water.

Brigg describes the characters in *The Drought* as ranging from “less acute eccentrics, such as Quilter’s tough old mother, to the more ‘normal’ characters whose natures become exaggerated in less spectacular fashion” (51). The unnamed mother of Quilter appears as the first female in the text. She lives in a “ramshackle barge outside the yacht-basin” (Ballard, *Drought* 17). Ballard’s physical description does the old woman no favors,

> her faded red hair blown around her black shawl, muttering at people going down to the water’s edge [. . .] beaked nose flashing to the left and right like an irritable parrot’s as she flicked at her dark face with a Chinese fan.

Mrs. Quilter appears a red herring though, when, while Ransom, the Ballardian male, empties the dust from his rain gauge, one of the main females in *The Drought*, Catherine Austen appears, “a woman in white beach-robe [. . .] fifty yards from him. She walked with the unhurried step of someone who [. . .] feels that all of the time in the world lies before her” (27). As Beatrice Dahl lives alone in the Ritz, Catherine also lives alone after the death of her father, the curator of the Mount Royal zoo. Ransom would often see her walking along the bank of an evening, “remote sister of the lions, her long red hair reflected in the liquid colours of the water at sunset” (28). When he calls out to her when going past her house, she never answers him.
Catherine approaches him, seeking water. During the conversation with Catherine, Ransom, like Kerans to Beatrice before him, asks her if she intends to stay there or leave for the coast. Ransom’s description of Catherine focuses on her hips as he describes her walking to the edge of the jetty, “[her] white gown sweeping from her hips to the dusty boards,” along with her proposal that the two start a new Eden, like Kerans and Dahl before them. Catherine tells Ransom, “I need you here” (29).

Later in the text, Ballard writes, “Ransom reflected that however isolated a man might be, women at least remained his companions, but an isolated woman was isolated absolutely” (50). By this logic, Catherine remains incomplete and unfulfilled. Doubtlessly Ransom thinks himself up for the task of removing her isolation, along with her beach robe. She, however, does not represent Pringle’s “bitch of the third order.” That honor goes to Miranda Lomax.

Samuel Francis sees Miranda Lomax as possessing the “characterization of the capricious Jungian anima [. . . ] and is specifically associated with the embodiment of the anima to which Ballard repeatedly returns in his fiction, the lamia” (79). The ghastly description of Miranda Lomax matches her greeting to Ransom of “who the hell are you?” (Ballard, Drought 65). Ballard describes her face as a perfect replica of her brother’s, the androgyne (and Hardoon parallel) Richard Lomax, with her

puckish cheeks, hard eyes, and the mouth of a corrupt Cupid. Her long hair, white as the ash now settling on the lawn outside, made her look prematurely aged, and she was in fact like a wise, evil child [. . . ]. Ransom always felt a sharp sense of unease [around her], although superficially she was attractive enough. Perhaps the physical appeal, the gilding of the diseased lily, was what warned him away from her. (65-66)

As with her future mother-in-law, Mrs. Quilter, Ballard describes Miranda as being “like a witch, waiting for the casual chance” (66). Recalling the description of Susan before being snatched up
by the gale in *The Wind From Nowhere*, Miranda has a similarly disheveled appearance.

Ransom notes her beach robe’s dirty cuffs and collar as well as “the soiled top of the slip she wore loosely around her breasts [. . .] already she was beginning to look as derelict and faded as her plants” (66). He figures that once she ceases to serve her brother’s purposes, Richard Lomax will lose interest in her. Miranda reminds Ransom of “the spectre that appeared at all times of extreme exhaustion – the yellow-locked, leprous-skinned lamia who had pursued the Ancient Mariner” (71). Though Pringle sees this archetype throughout Ballard’s works, Ballard actually *uses* the descriptor in relation to Miranda Lomax in *The Drought*.

The inevitable “Will they or won’t they?” question dominates Catherine and Edward’s relationship. Given the trend that marks Ballard’s treatment of females this early into his literary career, the reader expects as much. Ransom visits her zoo and, in a callback to Kerans’ attempt to reason with Beatrice, tries to convince Catherine to destroy the animals. To Ransom, she appears only to be prolonging the inevitable. Lomax is only giving her water to keep the animals alive so that he can use them for his own ends. She tells him, “I don’t intend to destroy these animals and as long as there’s food and water, I certainly can’t destroy them” (75). Gregory Stephenson characterizes Catherine as

personify[ing] the positive qualities inherent in the drought, its potential for liberation and renewal, its apocalyptic character[ . . . ]. Her association with lions throughout the story suggests her identification with the forces of nature, instinct, and the unconscious. Her survival [ . . . ] and the wild freedom of her life with her lions serve to affirm the irrepressibility of the psychic energies of which she is the embodiment. (56)

Like Beatrice Dahl, she shows a glimmer of empowerment, yet Ransom remains unbowed as he tries to think of a way to leave Mount Royal and to take Catherine with him, deciding that “the landscape around them was no longer a place for the sane” (Ballard, *Drought* 92).
In the third part of the text, Ballard proves this point, returning his focus to Miranda Lomax. In the years that have passed since her initial introduction in the narrative, Miranda Lomax’s appearance has only worsened:

Her long white hair reached to her feet, enclosing her like a threadbare shroud, and her face had the same puckish eyes and mouth. But what startled Ransom was [ . . . s]he was now as fat as a pig, with gross arms and hips, hog-like shoulders, and waist. Swaddled in fat, her small eyes gazed at Ransom from above her huge cheeks [ . . . ]. She was wearing, almost modishly, a black nightdress that seemed designed expressly to show off her vast corpulence. (210)

To cement the disgusting physicality of Miranda further, it is revealed that she and Mrs. Quilter’s son, also identified as Quilter, resorted to cannibalism in the ten years since Ransom and the others departed Mount Royal, though she assures Ransom those days have passed, saying, “‘[A]n awful lot stayed behind. After a while they thinned out.’ She patted her stomach reflectively. ‘Ten years is a long time’” (213). In this light, Stephenson views *The Drought* as a “grotesque parody of [Shakespeare’s] *The Tempest*.” Miranda has become “depraved and debauched and is reduced at last to breeding Caliban’s monstrous offspring” (54). What of this terrifying, old world and such mutants it has in it?

With Quilter, Miranda conceived three children, all with “the same brachycephalic skull [ . . . ] downward eyes and hollow cheeks” that made them resemble “the children of the congenitally insane” but “their pupils were full of dreams” (Ballard, *Drought* 213-14). Baker views the mutant offspring of Miranda and Quilter as suggesting a change in the next generation and how it confronts this changed landscape. Would Ballard agree with Baker’s description of “better adapted,” considering the children are products of at least one mentally challenged parent? (“Geometry” 18).
One wonders if the insanity mutates into an airborne disease when Ransom decides to situate himself in this community as father of the idiot/genius children, brother and second son to the Quilters, and Miranda’s partner. This makes no sense. Yet, Ransom continues focusing on Miranda’s physical corpulence:

Her sleek face and giant body covered by its black negligee made her look like a large seal reclining on the floor of its pool. Each day her features seemed to be smaller, the minute mouth with its cupid lips subsiding into the overlaying flesh [. . .]. Looking at her great seal-like waist, he thought of the dead fishermen whose bodies had helped to swell its girth, drowned here in its warm seas, unnamed Jonahs reborn in the idiot-children. (230-31)

Richard Lomax’s draining of the reservoir snaps Ransom out of it. In Ransom’s last sighting of Catherine Austen, she waves from a distant dune before taking off with her lions. Throughout the piece, she has remained “withdrawn and enigmatic [. . . ] living inside herself much in the same way that Ransom does” (Brigg 51). Ransom decides to go into the desert, that “inner landscape he had carried in his mind for so many years” as the novel ends (Ballard, Drought 235-37).

From a critical standpoint, The Drought appears the “runt” of the litter when one examines the dearth of material written about the text, though as an upside, a fair percentage of the criticism focuses on Miranda Lomax. Perhaps the small amount is due to the method by which Ransom seeks out his inevitable destruction, compared to the novels on both sides of the text chronologically. In Ballard’s last eco-disaster, The Crystal World, Joseph Conrad’s ghost returns to haunt him via the Ballardian male traveling up river to the Ballardian female, into the heart of garnet.
Brian Baker summarizes *The Crystal World*, which was originally titled *Equinox*, as a novel where “the protagonist travels into the heart of the ‘psychic disaster area’ [ . . . ] where time has come to a stop” (“Geometry” 18). With *The Crystal World*, Ballard turned his attention to Allotropism, “the capacity of some minerals, because of their crystalline structure, to alter their nature” for the last of his global disasters. He first used the trope in his 1957 short story “Mobile” (Baxter, *Inner 92*). As with Gollancz’s reaction to *The Drowned World*, critics drew foggy comparisons to Conrad, seemingly based only on the journey up-river. “I don’t think I’m allowed to forget *Heart of Darkness,*” Ballard said in the 1980s (qtd. in 117). According to Baxter, critics missed the influence of Graham Greene’s *A Burnt-Out Case* represented in Ballard’s use of lepers, the French bureaucrats, and the abandoned structures within the story (137). Ballard alleges that he wrote the novel in a drunken haze (152).

The last of Ballard’s eco-disaster tetralogy opens with Dr. Edward Sanders having received a letter from his former lover Suzanne Clair, drawing him to Port Matarre, located in the African interior where a strange mineralization of the planet has begun to occur. In the letter, Ballard catalogues Suzanne’s physical attributes, barraging readers with multiple images that reflect Pringle’s characterization of Ballardian females. She describes herself as “becoming excessively Byzantine – [wearing her] hair to the waist even at the clinic and [affecting] a melancholy expression” though admitting that “for the first time in many years my heart sings” (12). Though in the rest of the letter Suzanne speaks on behalf of her husband Max as well, the reader would not be wrong in reading the first person singular instead of the first person plural
in lines such as “Both of us wish you were here” and “We remember you often,” given the
Jungian division of the psyche Ballard employs in the story with the two main female characters
of Suzanne and Louise Peret.

Gregory Stephenson sees Jungian psychology at work in the descriptions of both women,
echoing the repeated sentiment of Louise as the light embodiment to Suzanne’s dark other (58).
From this Jungian perspective, my examination of both women proceeds. Ballard informs the
reader that Sanders and Clair’s affair lasted for two years, “kept going only by inability to
resolve it any way” (Ballard, Crystal 13). According to Peter Brigg, Sanders visits them “partly
to sort out his feelings for Suzanne” (52). The Clairs had departed Fort Isabelle rather abruptly
three months earlier. For Sanders, “Suzanne’s somber beauty had become identified in his mind
with this dark side of the psyche, and their affair was an attempt to come to terms with himself”
(Ballard, Crystal 13-14). Ballard continues this motif throughout the text, particularly in
Sanders’s relationship, for it is only one relationship with a divided person, Suzanne and Louise.

When Ballard introduces the Frenchwoman in the text, Sanders “[has] a sudden glimpse
of Suzanne Clair” (17). Though Louise is in her early twenties, at least a decade Suzanne’s
junior, she possesses the “same wide hips and sauntering stride, [and] the same observant gray
eyes.” Her white suit seems utterly out of place in Port Matarre. When the two are the sole
diners in the hotel restaurant, Sanders notes her resemblance to Suzanne again, “[p]erhaps
because of her raven hair, or the unusual light in Port Matarre, her smooth face seemed paler in
tone that Sanders remembered Suzanne’s, as if the two woman were cousins separated by some
darker blood on Suzanne’s side” (22).
Louise describes her position as a freelance journalist, too coincidental not to be a callback to Patricia Olsen in *The Wind from Nowhere*, given Ballard’s limited prop trunk, which draws Sanders’s attention all the more as he previously avoided eye contact with Louise due to her resemblance to Suzanne, as well as the sunglasses Louise wore, “which seemed to emphasize the strange contrasts of light and dark in Port Matarre” (27). To further the Jungian fragmentation mentioned by Stephenson, Sanders later tells Louise how the sunglasses divide her face in half (35).

As Sanders conquered Suzanne, he emphasizes Louise’s *doppelgänger* status further by having sex with her:

Sanders stood up and took Louise’s arm. Perhaps because of her resemblance to Suzanne, he seemed to understand her movements as her hips and shoulders touching his own, as if familiar intimacies were already beginning to repeat themselves[ . . . ]. Sanders looked down at her, aware that for once all the inertia of sexual conventions, and his own reluctance to involve himself intimately with others, had slipped away[ . . . ]. Knocking her glasses to the floor as their hands brushed, Sanders held her in his arm, freeing himself for the moment from Suzanne Clair and the dark image of her face that floated like a dim lantern before his eyes. (37-38)

Ballard reintegrates the two halves of Louise and Suzanne via Sanders’s sexual gratification, but, whose psyche is truly the fragmented one? Ballard returns post-coitus to the equation of the female with serpent as he did with Beatrice in *The Drowned World* while describing the mineralization of the forest. He writes, “Louise’s white body glittered in a sheath of diamonds, the black surface of the river below spangled like the back of a sleeping snake” (39). While employing the contrast of the black river with Louise’s immaculate whiteness, the conflation of the female with the serpent remains.
Condescension follows conquest as Louise remarks that Sanders makes the secondary character Ventress sound “very sinister,” at which Sanders laughs in response, telling her, “My dear, Louise, you have a Bluebeard complex – like all women” (51). Additionally, though unspoken, after their discovery of the recently deceased, jewel-encrusted corpse in the river, Sanders “sensed that the physical bond between them was slipping [. . .]. Yet Sanders feels reluctant to let her go. However fragmentary their relationship, it offered at least an alternative to Suzanne” (54-55). At least?

Sanders continues to merge the two women in his mind. Later, the two depart for Mount Royal. Sanders, while walking the perimeter of an abandoned plantation, sees a woman in a white mantilla looking down from an upstairs window. Sanders runs to the location only to find Louise with the remnants of a white curtain about her head. She asks, “Did I frighten you? [. . .] What’s the matter – did I remind you of someone?” Sanders replies, “Perhaps you did” (61).

When Sanders reunites with Suzanne Clair, her appearance, coming last in the eco-disaster quartet, reads in an unfortunately anti-climactic fashion. Ballard writes, “Instead of coming forward to greet him, she had retreated into the darkness of the lounge, and at first Sanders wondered whether some residue of their old embarrassment still remained.” Similarly anticlimactic is her physical appearance as “[s]he was wearing a night robe of black silk that made her tall figure seem almost invisible against the shadows in the lounge, the pale lantern of her face floating like a nimbus above it” (145). The reader and Suzanne Clair have already met, several times before.

When examining Suzanne Clair’s feelings on the mineralization of the jungle, a straight line may be drawn back to Beatrice Dahl for anyone who cares to trace it. In Suzanne’s
exchanges with Sanders, she appears narcotized by the effects of the forest. When told that Edward feels trapped in the forest, she expresses envy. Max Clair states that Suzanne spends a great deal of time wandering the forest, which properly animates her. She says, “A few mornings when I went out before dawn my slippers were beginning to crystallize – my feet were turning into diamonds and emeralds! [. . .] Edward, we could never leave here now” (147). She needs the forest as Beatrice needed the lagoon.

In another arguable intrusion of the gothic, besides the divided psyche, Suzanne says she sleeps during the day to keep the dispensary open, as well as to see the forest better during the night time (147-48). With this vampiric cast to Suzanne’s personality, Ballard reveals the horror that Suzanne’s prolonged exposure to her patients has led to her contracting leprosy.

The faintly quizzical smile that had hovered about her mouth since his arrival was [. . .] almost beckoning to him.

As he drew closer to her, he realized that this slight upward inclination of the mouth was not a smile at all, but a facial rictus caused by the nodular thickening of the upper lip. The skin of her face had a characteristic dusky appearance, which she had managed to hide by her long hair and a lavish use of powder. Despite this camouflage, he could see the nodular lumps all over her face [. . .] he recognized the beginnings of the so-called leonine mask. (148-49)

According to Brigg, even though she has been working with lepers herself for years, Sanders believes irrationally that he has infected her (53). When Sanders goes to embrace her before going away for the night, he turns away at the last minute in a suitably ambiguous reaction of half attraction and half revulsion, regarding Suzanne as an object of terror. According to Baker, the symptoms of leprosy echo on a smaller scale, the equally attractive but also revolting mineralizing forest (“Geometry” 18).
As a result, the reunion of Louise and Sanders reminds one of the reunions of Victor and Elizabeth Frankenstein or Jonathan and Mina Harker, with Louise again appearing as the saving angel to Sanders:

After the antiseptic odors and the atmosphere of illness and compromise with life, Louise’s brisk stride and fresh body seemed to come from a forgotten world. Her white skirt and blouse shone against the dust and somber trees [. . . .]. Feeling her hips against his own, Sanders almost believed for a moment that he was walking away with her for ever from Mount Royal. (Ballard, Crystal 157)

Ballard persists when Sanders tells Louise that she makes the area seem “less like an unmade grave.” Louise’s response troubles the reader when she asks him, “Are you still testing yourself, my dear? A woman likes to know her proper role at all times, this one most of all” (159; emphasis added). Is Louise happy being Sanders’s sex object as long as that role is defined properly? It seems to be the case. Getting no response from Sanders, she asks about Suzanne, pointing to her room where the blind remained drawn. She says, “I thought you said she was asleep. Or do the vampires here fly by day?” (159) When Sanders opens up, he explains that while Louise had yet to meet Suzanne, she was Louise’s “exact opposite, very elusive and shadowy.” He tells her, “When you arrived this morning [. . . ] it was as if you’d stepped out of the sun” (160). Ballard milks matters a bit when, while adjusting the blinds back in his quarters, Louise with her white skin and pale suit “became suddenly dark” (161).

In his next interaction with Suzanne, she appears even less corporeal, with her robe against the black velvet curtain placed against the window. For Sanders, she seems invisible and “even the white powdered mask of her face seemed a veiled blur” (163). She seems even more enthralled with the forest when Max mentions the Army taking a group of sick and dying lepers out into the forest to be subjected to “instant mummification,” which Suzanne sees as “far more
splendid[...]. Like a fly in the amber of its own tears or a fossil [...] making a diamond of its body for us” (163). Her appearance, coupled with her obsession with the mineralizing jungle, suggests none too subtly of Suzanne’s death drive.

Sanders sees her out walking across patches of grass experiencing mineralization. He saw that her shoes and the train of her robe were beginning to crystallize (165). When Sanders goes to meet Suzanne, Ballard solidifies her lamia cast further. As she presses her body to Edward’s “[h]er waist and her shoulders were like ice, the silk robe chilling his hands” (166). He attempts to look in her face but she holds fast, avoiding any eye contact. She tells him she comes there nightly and that Max “never understood what [the forest] means. You do, Edward, I could see it straightaway” (167).

Suzanne leads Sanders to a second floor room in a deserted hotel. Ballard describes Suzanne opening her robe with “the placid gestures of a wife returning home with her husband.” Sanders contrasts, and conflates, the “functional but sunlit chalet” where he and Louise had sex with the crumbling ruins and Suzanne’s essentially walking corpse in a manner similar to Victor’s dream that fuses his fiancée Elizabeth with his mother Caroline in *Frankenstein*, “[h]er breasts[...] like goblets of ice” (168). When he informs her of his intentions to leave Port Matarre, she at last shows him her face and asks, “[D]o you know to whom you – made love to?” Sanders replies, “It may sound hollow comfort, but I carry those lesions as much as you do” (169). She flees from Edward into the forest (173). Sanders pursues her, but only catches sight of her once as the dark-robed lead in a parade of lepers (198). According to Brigg, “she flees into the forest[...] presumably to stop for eternity the decay of the disease and replaces its
ravages with crystal beauty” (53). Sanders ends up with his arm encased in crystal, thereby sealing his ultimate fate (Ballard, Crystal 178).

Sanders is saved from joining Suzanne in a crystal tomb, if only momentarily, by Max and Louise’s intervention. After Sanders’s return from the forest, his and Louise’s relationship inevitably disintegrates. Though acting as his nursemaid, Louise retreated behind her sunglasses again. How could he blame her, though? The effects of his arm becoming mineralized during his time in the forest had succeeded in rendering Edward as much a part of the forest mentally as Suzanne doubtlessly is physically by now (205-6). He notices that Louise and Max had been spending more time together, with Louise replacing Suzanne in Max’s mind. As Sanders heads up the river at the end of the novel to his own instant mummification, Louise stands beside Max Clair, as they watch him leave, on the police jetty (208; 210). “Balance” is restored, apparently as Sanders chooses “to find himself in the suspension of time and leaving Louise with no regret” (Brigg 53).

In both The Drought and The Crystal World, Brian Baker saw the collapse of modern systems, possibly even a return to an earlier period predating civilization in a manner similar to the prehistoric return in The Drowned World (“Geometry” 18-19). Furthermore, John Baxter credits these last two novels with making speculative fiction, or at least certain types thereof, respectable from a critical standpoint. According to Baxter, “[Ballard’s] style and preoccupations [were] so atypical that in accepting him, a critic wasn’t also committing to space opera and ‘Little Green Men’ since it was so obvious that Jim himself held them in no less contempt” (Inner 153).
Yet, does Ballard advance that much away from space opera? Despite the baby steps of Patricia Olsen and Louise Peret occupationally and the brief flashes of female liberation exhibited by Beatrice Dahl and Catherine Austen during this period, the dominant mentality regarding female characters in Ballard’s novels remains the damsel and enchantress there but for the hero, the villain, or both to conquer sexually. The fears expressed by LeGuin appear absolutely legitimate as the rollbacks to prewar status quo regarding male and female spheres parallel this period of Ballard’s fiction. According to Brownmiller, “Well into the Sixties, [. . .] it was conventional in books, movies, and psychoanalytic writing to ascribe success, achievement, and especially destruction, in women to motherhood denied and nurturance thwarted” (229).

But as Ballard noted, he was writing during a time of change. During his next phase, Suzanne Clair would remain entombed in the forest and Miranda would either eat or be eaten by her children. However, the changes in the political landscape would see the professional class characters of Patricia, Louise, Beatrice, and Catherine shifting to the lamia endpoint of Ballard’s dichotomy during his techno-barbarism period.
Running in tandem with Ballard’s eco-disaster tetralogy was a series of “advertisements” foreshadowing the thematic content of the techno-barbarism tetralogy dominating Ballard’s writing during the first half of the 1970s. John Baxter cites a conversation Ballard had with Martin Bax wherein Bax said if Ballard wanted his novels to succeed, he needed to publish them as advertisements. Ballard thought some of his stories could also work well if presented as advertisements, with the visual image carrying the narrative. If published on billboards along the motorway, one could reach the widest audience possible (Inner 169).

Before examining these “novels,” David Bouchier provides contextualization regarding females and advertising, referring to the latter as a “deadly enemy” for women. Females in advertisements were portrayed as “silly creatures, totally engaged in the unserious business of cleaners and cake mixes.” Their sole existence, outside of the domestic sphere, was to serve as sex objects. Furthermore, “[W]omen’s bodies can be used to sell anything and the sexual appeal of a woman and the material appeal of an object can all too easily be confused in people’s minds” (24). Pornography demonstrated that this worked both ways.

Between 1967 and 1971, five “Advertiser’s Announcements” appeared in familiar publications such as Ambit and New Worlds (Baxter, Inner 169). The first, “Homage to Claire Churchill” featured Churchill’s face in close-up with text conflating her/the body with an automobile accident, asking “At what point does the plane of intersection of these eyes generate
a valid image of the simulated auto disaster?” (J.G. Ballard: RE/Search 8/9 148). The second, “Does the angle between two walls have a happy ending?” featured a still photograph of a woman masturbating, taken from Steve Dwaskins’ film Alone (Baxter, Inner 169). In the lower right corner, Ballard wrote, “Fiction is a branch of neurology: the scenarios of nerve and blood vessel are the written mythologies of memory and desire” (RE/Search 149). The third, “A Neural Interval,” depicted a still of a woman from a bondage magazine, arms shackled at her sides and a large ball gag obscuring her face. The text in the upper left reiterates the theme of violence on the body, reading “In her face the diagram of bones forms a geometry of murder. After Freud’s exploration within the psyche it is now the outer world of reality which must be quantified and eroticized” (150). “Placental Insufficiency” hits the audience over the head in melding sex and violence with a naked woman, who bears no small resemblance to Claire Churchill, brandishing a rifle. Although partially obscured by the white text laid over the car boot, the lower part reproduced in Vale’s RE/Search issue devoted to Ballard remains legible. Ballard wrote, “Each afternoon she would take me into the garden of the trailer park. Undressing herself, she made me memorize the trajectories of her body” (151). Closing out the series, Churchill reappears in “Venus Smiles.” Ballard photographed her naked, save the odd fleck of seaweed picked up while swimming off the coast of Brighton (Baxter, Inner 148). Allegedly unaware Ballard snapped the photo, an outraged Churchill stole Ballard’s only copy until the aforementioned 1984 collection published by Vale.

Could any of these be considered “novels”? Ballard is not here to give an answer and even if he were, would it be genuine or what the inquirer wanted to hear? The content, however, remains consistent with the material that would dominate the second period of Ballard’s longer

In Ballard’s techno-barbarism quartet, he presents women as sex objects, objects of violence, and the trope that joins the drained swimming pools as a repeated image throughout the remainder of Ballard’s literary career: the band of violent female separatists. He catalogues the masculine anxieties felt during this period across the novels: Women will no longer serve men’s needs. Women will seek retribution for misdeeds committed by men. Women will become intellectually equal to men. Men will become enslaved by or destroyed by women. From Ballard’s perspective, society would devolve into chaos as social institutions disintegrated.

With this in mind, it is easy to see why Peter Brigg mistakenly labels these novels as disaster novels. However, the categorization fails since Ballard veers toward realism in this phase, expressed in the mundane structures of an England still rebuilding after World War II, specifically the motorways and tower blocks slowly replacing the terraced houses of the nineteenth century. Stylistically, Brigg views *Crash, Concrete Island* and *High Rise* as owing a debt to *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Brigg states, “What is presented as allusion or in the strict shorthand explanations of Dr. Nathan in *The Atrocity Exhibition* is expanded against the consistent backdrop scenery of the conventional novel, or rather against conventionally presented backdrops given shocking new meanings in the trilogy” (69).

Ballard’s focus during this period was, according to Sebastian Groes, a reflection of Ballard’s ambivalence toward the motorways, as expressed in *Crash* and *Concrete Island*, written at a point in time when the initial public anxieties concerning the “motorway revolution” were actually on the wane (123). As for *High Rise*, Ballard’s novel focused on the “utopian but
miscconceived and under-funded tower block projects” of the postwar 1950s and 1960s (125).
According to Groes, this period should be regarded as “an attempt to understand the ways in which contemporary social relationships are mediated and distorted by new forms of urban space at a highly specific moment in the post-war period” (124). Were these the only anxieties plaguing Ballard, though?

From 1945 to 1959, the Women’s Movement in Great Britain had lapsed into dormancy. As a result of the social upheavals of the 1960s and early 1970s, chiefly the fragmentation of the anti-nuclear war movement, that period ended. The lamia/damsel dichotomy that dominated Ballard’s first period which, in turn, marked Ballard’s work as a throwback to the pre-New Wave of science fiction no longer worked as the “back to kitchen” mentality of the postwar nadir faded. With this in mind, the suggestion by Groes that Ballard be regarded as more of “a literary anthropologist” exaggerating current sociocultural trends makes greater sense during this period than continuing to ghettoize him as a science fiction writer (“Texture” 123).

With celebrities such as Jayne Mansfield, Marilyn Monroe, and Jacqueline Kennedy in the background of the main character’s nervous breakdown in The Atrocity Exhibition, Ballard presents an update/downgrade of the objectified female from his first period (Sanchez 1012). Each of the female characters in Crash represents different levels of sexual conquest, as discussed by Gregory Stephenson (70). With the character of Jane Sheppard, as well as Robert Maitland’s wife, mistress, and secretary in Concrete Island, Ballard presents the gamut of female roles, running from caregiver catering to the needs, particularly sexual, of the male, to the females who shook off the shackles of matrimony and the domestic sphere, only to face derision from the male patriarchy. With the roving tribe of murderous females in High Rise, one sees the
fears of the patriarchy made manifest during this period of the shifting female roles in British society.

Historical Context

The Second Wave arose in part due to the involvement of many in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) during the 1950s. After 1960, the possibility of global thermonuclear annihilation at the hands of the United States and the Soviet Union appeared imminent due to the combination of the Cuban Missile Crisis, a rising Soviet influence in Africa and the Middle East, and the threat to West Berlin. Also, the policy of military escalation favored by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson mobilized large numbers of politically aware youths. While England acted only in a supporting role in such events, its support of the United States met with condemnation from left-wing activists. Though a Labour politician with an ostensibly leftist platform, Prime Minister Harold Wilson never had any intention of supporting or adopting disarmament. While he did not give direct support to the efforts in Vietnam, he failed to condemn the large-scale bombing of the country by American forces. Here the rot set in for Labour in the coming decades (Pugh 316).

From the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, the waning threat of nuclear war brought a decline in membership in CND. As a result, activists split into two camps. Those who did not take up Green issues went into the women’s liberation movement. The publication of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminist Mystique* in 1963 served as a catalyst. Her condemnation of the myth of
the happy housewife and mother sold a million copies in England and the United States by the
close of the decade. In 1966, Friedan became one of the founders of the National Organization
for Women (NOW). However, many felt that NOW remained too entrenched in the political
realms to effect any real or sweeping change, despite its positive reception by the President and
Congress. Radical feminism became the dominant ideology of the movement with the first
groups beginning to meet in 1967, and the phrase “women’s liberation” beginning to achieve
usage.

The British equivalent of the Second Wave in America began the following year, when
middle-class feminists united with low-paid female workers, who carried out industrial actions
that brought embarrassment upon the Labour government as well as trade unionists. Groups
such as the International Marxist Group, the International Socialists, and the Revolutionary
Socialist Student Federation created journals such as Women’s Voice and Socialist Woman
containing articles focusing on the oppression of females in the capitalist system. 1969 saw
organizations like the London Women’s Liberation Workshop spreading into the provinces. In
February 1970, the first national conference of the women’s liberation movement met at Ruskin
College, Oxford, with six hundred delegates in attendance (317). Some seventy groups existed
in London alone in 1969, spreading through the rest of Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland
(Kent 340).

As stated earlier, the women’s liberation movement in England sprung initially from the
peace movement in the 1950s. Leaders such as Diana Collins, Edith Summerskill, and others
protested against the H-bomb. Following the founding of CND in 1958, women such as Peggy
Duff and Jacquetta Hawkes occupied high-profile positions. However, the female participants in
CND felt their roles being marginalized. By the beginning of the decade, the women’s branch of CND ceased to function as a separate group. With the dwindling participation in anti-nuclear organizations, focus for women in the peace movement shifted from violence on the global scale represented in the bomb, to violence on the personal scale, represented by verbal, mental, and physical abuse by male partners (Pugh 318).

Another respect in which the British and American women’s movement differed was the British focus on class over race. Liberal feminism also lacked any British counterpart to Friedan. Thus, the British women’s liberation movement found its roots in the various Socialist and Marxist groups, though many of the feminists felt alienated initially “by Marxist analysis and by the heavily masculine ambience of the Labour movement” (318). Shifts in the New Left during the 1960s placed more focus on how the ruling class maintained its control via capitalism’s influence, which aligned more closely with the feminist outlook. All told, the women’s movement in England appeared less divided ideologically and more focused on a “socialist-revolutionary approach” than its American counterparts (319). It was not just about equality before the law. Rather, the Second Wave sought liberation from concepts of “femininity” that locked them into “stifling, unfulfilling, slavish positions” (Kent 340). The system needed either complete overhaul or total destruction.

Despite this radical slant that the second wave took in England, it still shared the same methods with liberal feminism, focusing on marches, debates, journals, and the like to educate the public on their cause. Direct acts included strikes by women workers and other more disruptive instances. In November 1970, one hundred women organized a demonstration outside
the Miss World pageant. Other campaigns included picketing sex shops and adult cinemas (Pugh 319).

As stated earlier, one of the failings of NOW for certain feminists rested with its working closely with the political system. For many of the radical feminists of the day, it made the best sense to bypass the political structure. This led to the establishment of self-contained communes that excluded males, both in the physical sense, by denying male membership, as well as the by shunning organizational hierarchies that characterized patriarchal political structures. Amanda Sebestyn explained:

> [W]e wanted to leave men no matter what, we started squatting so we could live with other women, we acquired of necessity new “male” skills of plumbing, electricity, carpentry and car maintenance, setting up our own discos and then forming bands to dance to. We cut our hair very short and stopped wearing “women’s” clothes, we stopped smiling and being nice (qtd. in Kent 341-42).

Out of such organizations arose “consciousness raising,” wherein women engaged in dialogue discussing their experiences with sexism (Pugh 319). Though such organizations verged on anarchy in being so decentralized, these groups did have focus on the national level after the national conference in 1970, particularly in its four main goals of equal pay, equal opportunities for employment and education, access to birth control and abortion, and free twenty-four hour child care (320).

After the 1971 march to from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square to present a petition to the prime minister, actions took place on a more local, grassroots level in the form of women’s centers, refuges, play groups and other forms. Though some women’s groups received grants from the local government, many operated in private homes or abandoned properties. Erin
Pizzy’s Women’s Aid Centre, formed in 1971 in Chiswick, gave light to the problem of male violence, leading to similar centers being established throughout the United Kingdom (320).

In 1969, Parliament instituted the divorce reform which enabled women to exit marriage after three years due to irreconcilable differences. By the early 1970s, ten percent of couples filed divorce petitions, representing a three percent increase from the figures twenty years previous. By 1974, nineteen percent of marriages ended in divorce after ten years. Despite this avenue for escape, physical violence in and out of wedlock remained an issue for females. Ninety centers modeled on Pizzy’s arose by 1976. The same year witnessed the establishment of the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act. However, the need for women’s refuges remained. Feminists recognized that many females failed to report instances of rape. As a result, the first rape crisis center opened in London in 1976. Also in 1976, the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act lessened the trauma of contacting the constabulary to press charges and highlighted the unfair nature of the courts which let guilty men go free or with lighter sentences out of concern for the damage it might do to their careers. Lastly, feminists argued that pornography encouraged violence against females as well as constituted a form of violence itself. Protests took place in Soho, Leeds, Manchester, and other areas against sex shops and cinemas engaging in these exploitative acts (326). The growth of the Gay Liberation Front after 1971 led to the formation of another goal, namely the end to discrimination against lesbians and the “right to define one’s own sexuality” (328).

Equal pay remained elusive. Despite its name, the Equal Pay Act of 1970, which saw implementation five years later, only saw women earning fifty to fifty-two percent of the wages earned by men during the first three years of its existence. From 1970 to 1972, Marxist and
Socialist groups campaigned for improvement of wages for extremely low-paid females and encouraged them to join unions. Over the next two years, “dozens” of strikes took place among low-paid female workers. 1974 saw the establishment of the Working Women’s Charter campaign, “a ten-point programme which covered wages, conditions, promotion, training, child care, maternity leave, family allowances and contraception” (330).

*The Atrocity Exhibition*

If Ballard resembled Janus with his forward-looking face’s eyes blinded during his eco-disaster period, that no longer appears the case in the techno-barbarism period. The categorization by Pringle and Goddard of Ballard as writing about “the now” fits utterly, given the reactions expressed by Ballard in his four novels during this period about the upheavals, both ideologically and geographically, England was undergoing during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Chronologically and stylistically, Ballard’s techno-barbarism period begins with his experimental short story collection *The Atrocity Exhibition*. In it, one witnesses many of the sexist charges of which Ballard’s writing stands accused. In an interview on August 29, 1983 with V. Vale, Ballard noted, “[B]ack in the Sixties, when my first books came out, they did reasonably well. Berkley used to publish them. Oddly enough, I think it was *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash* which just nailed the lid down on my coffin!” (*Conversations* 255).

Maria Devereux observed that *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash*, the novel it spawned, share a common theme of violence enacted upon celebrities. For example, *Crash*’s main character Vaughan seeks to take his own life as well as Elizabeth Taylor’s, the *object* of his
obsession, in an elaborately orchestrated car crash (Ballard, *Crash* 7). Ballard responded “I pick cultural icons who – many of the cultural icons I pick have themselves been the victims of horrific violence” (Devereux 201). Ballard elaborates on this point in the 2002 introductory note to the second Flamingo Press edition of the text:

> Most of the film stars and political figures who appear in *The Atrocity Exhibition* are still with us, in memory if not in person – John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor. Together they helped to form the culture of celebrity that played such a large role in the 1960s when I wrote [the book]. (*Atrocity* vi)

The Kennedy assassination looms large over Ballard’s work and “in many ways the book is directly inspired by his death and represents a desperate attempt to make sense of the tragedy, with its huge hidden agenda” according to Ballard (34). According to Andrzej Gasiorek, despite Ballard’s exaltation of the 1960s as a wonderful time, his position in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, which treats Kennedy’s assassination, the war in Vietnam, and other, for lack of a better term, atrocities, is that the decade was “uncompromisingly bleak” (66).

Two titles from *The Atrocity Exhibition* that jump off the page are “You: Coma: Marilyn Monroe” and “Plan for the Assassination of Jacqueline Kennedy.” Ballard presents two female icons of the 1960s, both associated with President Kennedy and both victims of violence, either by drug overdose or by sitting next to Kennedy when an assassin killed him. By referring to both as “icons” rather than human beings, Ballard commits the first cardinal sin against the radical-cultural feminist view on sexuality. He reduces Monroe and Kennedy to the status of objects. In an interview with Iain Sinclair, Ballard admitted to subjecting public figures to a mythologizing in which they participated, willingly or otherwise. He stated, “I think anyone in the public eye is—horrible phrase—fair game [. . .]. If they are that famous, they have already
incorporated themselves into our dreams” (qtd. in Baxter, *Inner* 130). Why do Ballard’s dreams look more like nightmares?

For the revised, annotated 1990 edition published by RE/Search, Ballard added three plastic surgery-themed pieces: “Princess Margaret’s Facelift,” “Mae West’s Reduction Mamoplasty,” and “Queen Elizabeth’s Rhinoplasty.” Ballard’s defensive tone increases in the aforementioned Deveraux interview when speaking of the pieces. He says, “[T]hey’ve submitted themselves to more violence with the knife [. . . ] without any encouragement from me!” (202). One finds it difficult not to wince when, later in the interview, he equates the plastic surgery with a scientific form of pornography, saying “[The plastic surgery pieces] are as obsessive, and if you like, *flesh-obsessed* as any hardcore porn” (205). By equating pornography with science, he violates the second point raised regarding the radical-cultural feminist’s view on sexuality. According to Ann Ferguson, “Feminists should repudiate any sexual practice that supports or normalizes male sexual violence” (108).

Curiously, of all the condensed stories making up *The Atrocity Exhibition*, “Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan” occupies much of the scholarly discussion of the work. The Reagan piece caused *The Atrocity Exhibition*’s first stateside printing to be aborted. Two weeks before it was due, Nelson Doubleday, according to Ballard in *The User’s Guide to the Millennium*, ordered the entire edition destroyed due to “Ronald Reagan” conflicting with Doubleday’s right-wing political views (261). Earlier, a similarly sad fate befell “Ronald Reagan” in England. In 1968, poet Bill Butler, the first to publish the Reagan piece, was tried in court and fined on obscenity charges. Butler, an American-born gay poet living in Brighton, published a limited number of copies, viewing the piece as a gay activism text written by Ballard (Baxter, *Inner*
According to the marginal notes in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, he published the work as a separate pamphlet, and when his Unicorn Bookshop in Brighton was raided, the piece was used as evidence in the case against him (105). Ballard did not help during his questioning by Butler’s solicitor. When asked how he might defend the work as not being obscene, Ballard responded that it *was* obscene and written with that in mind (182). Additionally, pressure had been placed on the Arts Council by the US Embassy to cut funding to *Ambit* who first published the Jackie Kennedy sex fantasy (Ballard, *User’s* 261).

Turning attention to the text’s content, one sees an encapsulation of Dworkin’s statement in *Our Blood*:

> In literary pornography, the pulsating heart of darkness at the center of the male-positive system is exposed in all of its terrifying nakedness [. . .] [S]exual sadism actualizes male identity. Women are tortured, whipped, and chained [. . .] bound and gagged [. . .] all of this to establish in the male a viable sense of his own worth. (102)

*The Atrocity Exhibition* serves as a bridge between the “ads” Ballard developed and what would form *Crash* as the themes of the condensed novels that made up the text would be expanded upon in Ballard’s later work, particularly the themes of automotive violence combining with sexual gratification, particularly the wife of “T-Man” (referred to as such due to his constantly shifting name) who dies repeatedly in the “novel” (Wilson 76). In “The Exploding Madonna,” Ballard writes:

> For Travis, the ascension of his wife’s body above the target area, exploding madonna of the weapons range, was a celebration of the rectilinear intervals through which he perceived the surrounding continuum of time and space. Here she became one with the madonnas of the billboards[ . . .]. (*Atrocity* 16)

Note that she lacks a name. Ballard focuses on possession by, in this instance, Travis. It is *his* wife’s body instead of *her* body. However she is not the only female in the text. Catherine
Austin fares no better with Travis, now Talbot, describing her not as complete but as components,

Her naked body was held forward like a bizarre exhibit, its anatomy a junction of sterile cleft and flaccid mons. He placed his palm against the mud-coloured areola of her left nipple. The concrete landscape of underpass and overpass mediated a more real presence[ . . . ].

Dehumanization continues into the next “chapter,” where Ballard writes, “Already she had the texture of a rubber mannequin fitted with explicit vents, an obscene masturbatory appliance” (19).

In “Journeys to an Interior,” Karen Novotny’s body is described as part of a list format, as in part three: “Contour: the unique parameters of Karen’s body – beckoning vents of mouth and vulva, the soft hypogeum of the anus” (24). This continues in “The Unidentified Female Orifice”:

Karen Novotny (1) stepping from the driving seat of the Pontiac, median surface of thighs exposed, (2) squatting on the bathroom floor, knees laterally displaced, fingers search for the diaphragm lip, (3) in the atergo posture, thighs pressing against Talbot, (4) collision: crushed right tibia against the instrument console, left patella impacted by the handbrake. (26)

Dr, Nathan remarks in “Unusual Poses,” “[I]t is hard to tell whether the positions are those of Miss Novotny in intercourse or as an auto-crash fatality – to a large extent the difference is now meaningless” (27). Indeed, when the body has been reduced to its component parts, and in both instances, subjected to violence by the T-Man, the difference is meaningless.

In one of her many deaths in the text, Karen Novotny’s body is described as “armless[ . . . ] hanging face-down from the rear window. The burning fuel [tracing] a delicate lacework of expressed tissue across her naked thighs” (28). He describes her smile as “fractured[ . . . ] spread across the windshield” (29). When not described in relation to a car crash, T-Man equates
Ballard enters a guilty plea, fully aware of what he is doing in not only breaking her body down into its components but equating it with the beach.

Arguably the most horrifying instance of dehumanization of Karen Novotny comes with “The Sex Kit.” Given her name by T-Man, the “kit” contained the following:

(1) Pad of pubic hair, (2) a latex face mask, (3) six detachable mouths, (4) a set of smiles, (5) a pair of breasts, left nipple marked by a small ulcer, (6) a set of non-chafe orifices, (7) photo cut-outs of a number of narrative situations – the girl doing this and that, (8) a list of dialogue samples, of inane chatter, (9) a set of noise levels, (10) descriptive techniques for a variety of sex acts, (11) a torn anal detrusor muscle, (12) a glossary of idioms and catch phrases, (13) an analysis of odour traces (from various vents), (14) a chart of body temperatures (axillary, buccal, rectal), (15) slides of vaginal smears, chiefly Ortho-Gynol jelly, (16) a set of blood pressures, systolic 120, diastolic 70 rising To 200/150 at onset of orgasm[ . . . ]. There are one or two other bits and pieces, but together the inventory is an adequate picture of a woman, who could be reconstituted from it. In fact, such a list may well be more stimulating than the real thing. (54)

Fans of pornography would doubtlessly agree, flocking to sex shops to purchase “reconstituted” women.

With “Elements of an Orgasm,” Ballard continued, in list format, the statement of intent that he would employ going forward with the composition of Crash. One knows not where the body female and body automobile have their beginnings or endings or if the descriptions of the components form anything approaching a complete state for either:
In the annotations added by Ballard, when V. Vale committed to issuing a definitive edition of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Ballard attempts an explanation of this segment, writing, “The sex act is the emotionally the richest and most imaginatively charged event in our lives [. . .] but it’s still easier to describe the tango [. . .] than to recount in detail an act of love” (63). Ballard’s writing only supports his failure therein.

Reviews of *The Atrocity Exhibition* proved less than positive when the book finally did see stateside publication. In *The New York Times Book Review*, Paul Theroux declared the work “a stylish anatomy of outrage, full of specious arguments, phony statistics, a disgusted fascination with movie stars and the sexual conceits of American brand names and paraphernalia.” Additionally, turning his attack to Ballard specifically,

> Man is more than warm meat, but Mr. Ballard’s attitude is calculated. He says love when he means sex, and sex when he means torture, and there is nothing so fragile as sorrow or joy in the book. It is not his choice of subject, but his celebration of it that is monstrous. (qtd. in Baxter, *Inner* 229)

Publishers took note. Reviews such as Theroux’s, combined with the Doubleday debacle, scared off publishers in America. As a result, Ballard told his agent not to bother seeking publication in
America for his last works. Had *The Atrocity Exhibition*, with its “condensed novels” tracking the nervous breakdown of its central character, failed to scare off publishers, Ballard’s next novel would destroy all hope of American reception until *Empire of the Sun*’s publication the following decade.

*C*rash

*C*rash presents a first-person narrative by a character named simply “Ballard,” differentiated here in quotes to avoid confusion with the author. “Ballard”’s own automobile accident provides a gateway into “a world of injuries and personality distortions of the victims of similar crashes” where he encounters the charismatic figure of Vaughan, a man whose fixation on crashes and the bizarre “sexual and erotic implications” thereof leads “Ballard” to being involved with a cavalcade of stunt drivers, automobile accident victims, and researchers into crashes (Brigg 68). Vaughan’s obsession leads to his death in a botched automotive murder-suicide involving the actress Elizabeth Taylor.

Though originally “Crash!” one of the short stories that made up *The Atrocity Exhibition* (97-99), *Crash*’s parentage, and subsequent birth as a novel, is complicated. The conflation of the flesh and the automobile with sex preoccupied Ballard. Baxter noted a conversation between Ballard and British writer Charles Platt at a London party. Ballard informed Platt of his plan to stage a car crash in which Claire Walsh (at the time going by her maiden name of Claire Churchill despite her divorce from Michael Walsh) would be his “star.” It would, according to
Ballard, be an “act of love [. . . ] or, at least, of passion” (*Inner* 187). At this point, Ballard placed his palms on Claire’s cheeks and asked Platt, “Look at this beautiful face. Can’t you just imagine the shape of a radiator grille superimposed?” (qtd. in Baxter 187).

In addition, Ballard’s idea developed into a novel out of an “experiment” the author, conducted in the form of an art “happening” between the publications of the two works. As Ballard explained to Jon Savage:

> I’ve never been to [a party] where everybody got so drunk so quickly . . . . [We had] a crashed Pontiac and a couple of English cars that’d been in massive collisions. As we were setting up the show, where people would walk into the gallery without realizing what was going on, they’d see these crashed cars, and you’d get a kind of hysterical laugh. At the actual opening party, I’ve never seen people getting drunk socially with so much more aggression and belligerence – I got nearly attacked [p]hysically by a reporter from the [*New Society*]. I had a topless girl interviewing people [. . . ]. It was all too much. Everybody got overexcited, the girl nearly got raped in the back of the crashed Pontiac [. . . ]. Something about putting these crashed vehicles on display focused certain areas that most people kept quietly concealed. Their ambiguous feelings about cars and car crashes, obviously were released! (“J.G. Ballard” 107)

Clearly, this idea had been gestating for quite a period in Ballard’s mind. As Theroux said, love when Ballard means sex. Sex when he means torture.

Brigg cites a statement made by Ballard about *Crash* to which Brigg rightfully responds negatively. Ballard believed “*Crash* [. . . ] is an example of a kind of terminal irony, where not even the writer knows where he stands – quite a difficult trick to manage, incidentally – some of your readers might try it” (qtd. in 74). Brigg views this as ironic in itself because “it hides the author’s true attitude while at the same time revealing that he is fully conscious of the implications of situations presented in the novel” (74). As with “Ronald Reagan,” Ballard knows the novel is obscene and he wrote it with that intent. As a result, the novel became a huge
success in France. This success, according to David Pringle, “is understandable, since the novel fits well into the tradition of intellectual pornography [ . . . ] which that nation has fostered” (12).

“Ballard” informs the reader, “Through Vaughan I discovered the true significance of the automobile crash, the meaning of whiplash injuries and roll-over, the ecstasies of head-on collisions” (Crash 10). Pringle describes Vaughan as “the first fully conscious practicioner of a new sexual perversion involving the motor car” (28). However, this conjunction of flesh with technology in a union of the perverse existed for “Ballard” well before his accident or meeting with Vaughan. Two months prior, on a trip to Paris, he states:

I had become so excited by the conjunction of an air hostess’s fawn gabardine skirt on the escalator in front of me and the distant fuselages of the aircraft, each inclined like a silver penis towards her natal cleft, that I had involuntarily touched her left buttock. (41)

Earlier in Crash, “Ballard” discusses the lesbian relationship between his wife Catherine and her secretary Karen in great detail. During “Ballard” and Catherine’s sexual act, “[Catherine] asked me to visualize her in intercourse with another woman – usually her secretary Karen, an unsmiling girl with silver lipstick who spent the entire office party before Christmas staring motionlessly at my wife like a pointer in rut” (33). Catherine, according to “Ballard,” became so obsessed with Karen she found herself unable to achieve orgasm “without an elaborate fantasy of a lesbian sex-act with Karen” (35). “Ballard” felt assured that Karen and Catherine had sex, but “we had now reached the point where it no longer mattered, or had any reference to anything but a few square inches of vaginal mucosa, fingernails and bruised lips and nipples.” One could dismiss this breaking down into anatomical parts as Ballard’s medical training bubbling to the surface, but something far more sinister appears at work.
When comparing *Crash* to *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Pringle writes, “What makes *Crash* so different from the *Atrocity Exhibition* is the greater sexual explicitness and the long descriptions of injuries and mutilations – all of which seem divorced from ‘normal’ human feelings” (28). Unfortunately, Pringle hobbles his argument when he justifies the novel’s tone as an artistic product of Ballard’s medical background. He states, “The novel is written less in the language of pornography than in that of the medical textbook, conveying a strange union of flesh and machine” (28). He gives Ballard too much credit. Examine Chapter Four’s penultimate paragraph:

I nodded sympathetically, my hand on her thigh below her skirt. Her pleasantly promiscuous mind, fed for years on a diet of aircraft disasters and war newsreels, of violence transmitted in darkened cinemas, made an immediate connection between my accident and all the nightmare fatalities of the world perceived as part of her sexual recreations. I stroked the warm belly of her thigh through a tear in the crotch of her tights, then slipped my forefinger around the coif of blonde pubic hair that curled like a flame from the apex of her vulva. Her loins seemed to have been furnished by an eccentric haberdasher. (46)

Recalling Dworkin’s remarks, the reader finds no human beings in this passage. Rather, Ballard barrages the reader with a series of body parts sans emotion. This also fits with Rosalind Coward’s definition of pornography as “a display of images which confirm mens’ sense of themselves as having power over women” (310). *Nowhere* in this passage does one see a complete woman. Here Ballard stands in direct ideological opposition to the Second Wave, glorifying that which they rightfully saw as oppression that needed eradicating.

Seemingly flip-flopping throughout his discussion of Ballard as to the pornographic content, Pringle states, “The characters in *Crash* treat each other like erotic dolls or masturbatory
devices; the women are little more than mannequins” (Pringle 41). Pringle cites the post-
accident reawakening of “Ballard” and Catherine’s relationship as an example:

[S]he seemed completely at ease with me for the first time in many years. My crash was a wayward experience of a type her own life and sexuality had taught her to understand. My body, which she had placed in a particular sexual perspective within a year or so of our marriage, now aroused her again. She was fascinated by the scars on my chest, touching them with her spittle-wet lips. These happy changes I felt myself. At one time Catherine’s body lying beside me in bed had seemed as inert and emotionless as a sexual exercise doll fitted with a neoprene vagina. (Ballard, Crash 51; emphasis added)

Though matters, at that moment, have “improved,” previously Catherine appeared so dehumanized to him he equated her with an inflatable sex toy. Again, no complete woman appears to be seen here.

Ballard has now presented three emotionless relationships with females in the text in his wife Catherine, her secretary/lover Karen, and the unnamed air hostess whom he fondled. What about the other females in the text? Prior to his accident, “Ballard” had sex with his mistress Renata. After the crash and his recovery, she becomes another female integrated into his fusion of the physical and the technological. After parking the car at the site of the crash, “Ballard” unbuttoned her raincoat, placing his hand on her previously hidden thigh, kissing her throat. He reminded her, “I saw you just before the accident [. . . ]. Do you remember? We made love” (56). She responded, “Are you still involving me in your crash?” She knows the answer but did she know just how far [“Ballard”] involved her? Looking out at the junction where earlier “Ballard”’s driving resulted in vehicular homicide, he states, “The anonymity of this road junction reminded me of Renata’s body, with its polite repertory of vents and cleavages, which
one day would become as strange and meaningful to some suburban husband as these kerb-stones and marker lines were to myself.”

“Ballard” meets Helen Remington, the widow of the man who died in “Ballard”’s car crash. Offering her a ride, “Ballard” projects his own “auto-erotic” perversity onto her in his observation during their journey to London Airport.

Holding herself well away from me, she leaned back against the door pillar, surveying the interior of the car with a critical eye, this apparent resurrection of smooth vinyl and polished glass. She followed my hands as they moved across the controls. The pressure of her thighs against the hot plastic formed a module of intense excitement. Already I had guessed that she was well aware of this. By a terrifying paradox, a sexual act between us would be a way of taking her revenge on me. (72)

As their journey continues, so does “Ballard”’s arousal:

I followed the queue of cars, already thinking of how she would behave during sexual intercourse. I tried to visualize her broad mouth around her husband’s penis, sharp fingers between his buttocks searching out his prostate [. . .]. As she read the fire instructions on the [fuel tanker] I stared at her firm calves and thighs. Had she any notion of the man, or woman, with whom her next sex act would take place? I felt my penis stirring as the lights changed. (73)

Again, no human beings or emotion appears in this passage. Ballard presents a series of disconnected body parts for the sole purpose of his, read male, sexual gratification.

She might not know with whom she would have sex next, but “Ballard” does. He would be the one. When the two have sex, Ballard goes into graphic detail, spread over the course of five pages, reiterating his initial desire of the project he wished to carry out with Claire Walsh, the joining of the flesh with machine which results in loss of the female’s humanity. Though it is impossible to reproduce the whole of the account here, a sample from the text reads:

Elements of her body, her square kneecaps below my elbows, her right breast jacked out of its brassiere cup, the small ulcer that marked the lower arc of her
nipple, were framed within the cabin of the car. As I pressed the head of my penis against the neck of her uterus, in which I could feel a dead machine, her [cervical] cap, I looked at the cabin around me. This small space was crowded with angular control surfaces and rounded sections of human bodies interacting in unfamiliar junctions [. . .]. (80)

If he could not film the hybridization of the automobile with his partner Claire Walsh, Ballard the author could at least write the script in great detail.

This hybridization comes to full fruition with the introduction of the character of Gabrielle later in the text. “Ballard” read about her in a medical report courtesy of Vaughan. The young social worker’s sports car collided with an airline bus “at the entry to the airport underpass not far from the site of my own accident” (97). Of course, “Ballard” would discuss her accident in relation to, and in subservient position to, his own. Moving through the progression of photographs snapped by Vaughan, “Ballard” comes to the last group depicting Gabrielle wheelchair-bound. Not only does “Ballard” view this as a transformation for Gabrielle but as an evolution, particularly a sexual evolution. According to “Ballard”:

This agreeable young woman, with her pleasant sexual dreams, had been reborn within the breaking contours of her crushed sports car. Three months later, sitting beside her physiotherapy instructor in her new invalid car, she held the chromium treadles in her strong fingers as if they were extensions of her clitoris. Her knowing eyes seemed well aware that the space between her crippled legs was constantly within the gaze of this muscled young man. [. . .] The crushed body of the sports car had turned her into a creature of free and perverse sexuality, releasing within its twisted bulkheads and leaking engine coolant all the deviant possibilities of her sex. (99)

Though “Ballard” allegedly refers to Gabrielle, one realizes he speaks for all those for whom the car crash let slip the imp of the perverse, chiefly himself.

Returning to Helen Remington, the car crash that stripped her of her husband also unleashed, if one believes “Ballard,” an unashamed nymphomania with a string of multiple
partners. After Helen and “Ballard”’s first sexual encounter, she moved on to “the junior pathologist at Ashford Hospital” after which her men came fast and furious, including the husband of one of her fellow doctors, a radiologist in training, and the service manager at her garage. All of her affairs, she recounted to “Ballard” “in an unembarrassed voice,” took place within the confines of the automobile:

[They took place] either in the multi-storey car-park at the airport, in the lubrication bay of her local garage at night, or in the lay-bys near the northern circular motorway, as if the presence of the car mediated an element which alone made sense of the sexual act[ . . . ]. Only in the car could she reach orgasm. (120)

According to Gregory Stephenson, “The partners with whom [“Ballard”] engages in sexual intercourse during the period following his accident may be seen as increments on an ascending scale of obsession. With each partner [ . . . ]“Ballard” exceeds an inner boundary, triumphs over a sexual inhibition” (70). Though he speaks of Helen, “Ballard” might as well be referring to himself. Renata, Helen, Gabrielle, and all the others represent another sexual conquest for him. As the female anatomy and the automobile have already been conflated in Ballard’s mind, both in real life and that of his literary double, the mechanical has taken over completely. The females might as well be in a showroom with Ballard taking each for a joyride, redlining the engine and then totaling them. Ballard returned to car crashes one more time in this tetralogy, continuing his criticism of feminist politics of the period with Concrete Island.
Concrete Island represents Ballard’s attempt at a modern-day Robinson Crusoe. He tells the story of Robert Maitland, well-to-do architect/stereotypical 1970s swinger who crashes his Jaguar while traveling at a high speed, ending up on a deserted piece of land outside of London. During his time on this concrete island, he encounters Proctor, the brain-damaged ex-circus acrobat, and the “psychically twisted” Jane Sheppard. His concern shifts from escaping the island to “the exclusion and rejection of his position and history in the world outside” (Brigg 68). All the while, Maitland dominates both Proctor and Jane.

With Concrete Island, Ballard presents one of feminism’s worst nightmares in the form of Robert Maitland. In her 1979 piece where she attempts reconciliation of Marxism’s aims with Radical Feminism’s aims, Heidi Hartmann outlines the means by which the patriarchy maintains control.

Controlling women’s access to resources and their sexuality, in turn, allows men to control women’s labor power [. . . ] for the purpose of serving men in many personal and sexual ways[. . . ]. The services women render men [. . . ] occur outside as well as inside the family setting [including] the harassment of women workers and students by male bosses and professors as well as the common use of secretaries to [. . . ] provide ‘sexy’ surroundings. (11)

All of the women in the text, at least to Maitland’s mind, serve only his needs. Maitland epitomizes the upper-class swinger in 1970s England. Shortly after crashing his Jaguar on the book’s namesake, Maitland’s thoughts turn to his mistress, Helen Fairfax, with whom he recently spent a week. Maitland thinks about his infidelity after his car crash, considering himself
“preoccupied by the slight duplicity involved in seeing his wife so soon after a week spent with Helen Fairfax” (*Concrete* 9).

In Maitland’s catalogue of items knocked loose by the crash into the back seat, conflicting pictures of the two women in his life emerge. The emblematic items representing Helen Fairfax included a tube of suntan lotion from a holiday at Le Grande Motte as well as a paper she gave at a pediatric conference. By contrast, he represents his wife Catherine in the packet of miniature cigars he took away from her to get her to quit smoking (14). Maitland curses himself for failing to obey the speed limit, but he wanted to get back to his wife, Catherine. This sounds admirable enough, missing his wife, but Ballard then writes, “[Maitland] was looking forward to relaxing in their cool, formal house with its large white rooms” (16). Ballard describes Maitland’s three days spent with Helen Fairfax as leaving him feeling “almost suffocated” (16). Soon after, Ballard barrages the reader with illustrations of Maitland’s stereotypical patriarchal notions of the roles of females in his existence.

In his relationships with Helen, Catherine, and his secretary, Maitland represents the dominant patriarchy discussed by Hartmann. All are slaves to Maitland’s needs, either professionally, emotionally, sexually, or all three. Maitland’s secretary, sadly, and unsurprisingly, goes nameless. Maitland describes her as typing the agenda for a meeting scheduled for the upcoming week, “never thinking for a moment that her boss was squatting on this motorway embankment with a bloody mouth” (16). Maitland’s secretary represented many females entering into the clerical (read: lower professional) field. By the close of the 1970s, seventy percent of “clerks, cashiers, and office machine operators” in England were female (Pugh 288). Though typing the agenda for Maitland, doubtlessly Maitland would expect her to
perform nursing duties if she knew his current predicament, similar to what he might expect of Helen Fairfax. True, Fairfax is a doctor rather than nurse as one might expect from Ballard. However, she remains in the health care field, performing the nurturant tasks denigrated by males in patriarchal society (Hartmann 4). What of Catherine? Given the subservient roles of his secretary and his mistress, one may assume safely that while Maitland relaxes in their large home, Catherine serves him, with food, drink, sex or likely, all three.

Chapter Three opens with Maitland repeating Catherine’s name, after he is knocked back in his progress at escaping by a passing motorist (Ballard, Concrete 23). When thoughts return again to Helen and Catherine, he contrasts the way the two sleep. Helen slept “as always on the left side of the double bed [. . .] her head lying on the right-hand pillow, as if she had deputised the various sections of her body to represent both herself and Maitland” (24). A restless sleeper according to Maitland, she contrasts with Catherine who, by that point “would be sleeping quietly in her white bedroom, a bar of moonlight across her pale throat” (25). According to Ballard, “in some obscure way he was blaming her for his plight” (25). Maitland believed Catherine would assume he was spending the night with Helen Fairfax. Additionally, “she would not particularly care” (25). At the end of the chapter, his blame of Catherine turns to thanks as “[m]ost of the happiest moments of his life had been spent alone” (27). Was this the ultimate goal of their marriage, considered otherwise “a failure by anyone else’s standards” with Maitland ending up on the title construction?

Does Ballard condemn or glorify Maitland’s behavior? Does he simply depict it? One’s jaw drops at the self-centered nature of Maitland in Chapter Five:

Maitland remembered that Catherine was collecting her new car that morning from the Japanese distributors. Helen Fairfax would be busy
in the paediatric clinic at Guy’s – ironically, neither would try to telephone him, each assuming that Maitland had spent the night with the other. For that matter, no one at his office would be particularly alarmed by his absence, taking for granted that he was ill or away on some urgent business. Maitland had trained his staff to accept his comings and goings without question. [. . . ] Even if he were away for a week his secretary would not feel concerned enough to call Catherine or Helen. (38)

In the opening of Chapter Six he considers how his lifestyle would impact his chances of being rescued. “Given [. . . ] the circumstances of his private and professional life, that once-so-convenient division between his wife and Dr. Helen Fairfax, it might be at least a week before anyone was sufficiently suspicious to call the police” (44).

While collecting rain water to drink, Maitland begins to bring the two women into the conversation he was having with himself, “sometimes mimicking their voices, allowing them to taunt him with his incompetence” (46). Of the quart of water Maitland managed to collect, Ballard writes:

Catherine wouldn’t be impressed[. . . ]. She’d see the whole thing as some kind of over-extended joke [. . . ]. I’d like to see her here, as a matter of fact, how long would she last . . . ? [. . . ] Wait a minute, Maitland, they’d stop for her. Thirty seconds on that motorway and they’d be locked bumper to bumper all the way back to Westway. (47)

Maitland did not grow into this person. Maitland’s thoughts return, amidst his shouts for Catherine, to his younger years when:

as a child, he had once bellowed unwearingly for his mother while she nursed his younger sister in the next room. For some reason, which he had always resented, she had never come to pacify him, but had let him climb from the empty bath himself, hoarse with anger and surprise. (70)

He has always been this unpleasant and self-centered.

When the reader meets Jane Sheppard, Ballard presents an alternate female voice. However, any reader hoping for a feminist counter-voice ends up disappointed. Pringle labels
Jane Sheppard in *Concrete Island* as “the nearest thing to a ‘well-rounded’ female character in all his novels [up to 1979], although even she has many of the qualities of the lamia” (43). Does the characterization of “well-rounded” fit?

Chapter Eleven opens with Jane as yet another caregiver, telling Maitland “R[est] – try not to move. We’ve sent for help,” as she bathes his face with a soaked tampon and gives him a drink (*Concrete* 79). In describing the shelter, Ballard strews gender markers throughout. Cosmetics jars, mascara tubes and perfume bottles bury a card table and “[a] skirt and sweater, and various pieces of underwear” hung on hangers from a suitcase lid (80).

Maitland finds himself confused by Jane. On one hand, “the confident intonations of her voice, suggested to Maitland that she had come from a rather different background.” At the same time, the jeans and combat jacket she sports makes her resemble “the prototypal dropout.” Yet again, he also factors in “the mass of cheap cosmetics, the tatty hair-do and garish clothes hanging from the suitcase lid, the make-believe equipment of a street walker” (82). Is she any of these things? She is, in fact, a composite of the middle-class feminist (Pugh 317). She embodies the politically aware young Leftist of the period, as well as the victim of male violence that the two groups working together sought to liberate (316; 330).

At times, the nursemaid mask slips. Jane questions Maitland’s self-centeredness, saying “So no one stopped? I suppose you were surprised. These days we don’t notice other people’s selfishness until we’re on the receiving end ourselves” (Ballard, *Concrete* 83). Yet she falls back into the service role to Maitland, even rocking him to sleep as one would a small child (89). Jane’s subservience to the male patriarchy in another aspect appears in her return to the shelter early the next morning. Jane arrives drunk, declaring “God – are you still here? I thought you
were going. What a hell of an evening.” Maitland describes her attire, “a divided skirt that revealed her thighs and stocking tops, [with] pointed breasts under a day-glo blouse.” He describes her as resembling “a caricature of a small-town forties whore” (89). As with Beatrice Dahl and Catherine Austen, Jane’s flash of empowerment proves fleeting as she retreats into serving Maitland, nursing him back to health, and providing a “[concrete] island of intimacy in a sea of alienation” for the unnamed johns along the motorway (Hartmann 4).

Continuing his attempt to figure Jane out, Maitland speculates that she is a “classic drop-out, exiting from a well-to-do family with her head full of half-baked ideals” (Ballard, Concrete 95). With that one phrase, Ballard reduces Jane and every other feminist of the period, radical or otherwise, to a caricature. A combination of further taunts from Jane, as well as photographic evidence, prove Maitland correct. She returns with food from Indian restaurants, saying “They exploit themselves and their staffs more than the white owners do. But that’s something you know all about. [. . .] Exploitation. You’re a rich businessman, aren’t you? That’s what you claimed to be last night” (96). Later, when Maitland asks Jane to call Proctor so the two can assist him with his climb up the embankment, she replies, “Proctor won’t help you, but I’ll try – you’re awfully heavy, even if you have been starving. Too many expense-account lunches, terrible tax evasion goes on. Still, you’re supposed to get some kind of emotional security from over-eating” (100).

Maitland finds photographs in the shelter depicting Jane with a man twenty years her senior. In one, the two appear at a fairground. In another, Jane appears six months pregnant, standing next to the man in their wedding photograph. The current whereabouts of the child remain unknown to Maitland (106-07). Maitland finally deduces she suffered a miscarriage
After his revolt against Jane and Proctor, Maitland barks, “I need some food and none of that infant feed you keep bringing for me. I’m not going to play the part of your baby” However, she washes him as if he were her baby. Thinking on his revolt against the two of them, Maitland finds himself

surprised that it had pleased him, even slightly, to humiliate the young woman, playing on her muddled feelings of guilt and deriding her in a way that he had never thought himself capable of doing. He had relished the violent confrontation, knowing that he would make both of them submit to him well aware that both of them, by some paradoxical logic, were satisfied by being abused.

According to John Baxter, Maitland resembles Ballard given Ballard’s behavior regarding his sexual partners. Baxter describes it as

not so much gauche as contemptuous, even abusive, which some found to their taste. In Concrete Island, his protagonist justifies bullying the old man and the girl with whom he’s marooned; they want to be mistreated, he writes. They even expect it, since it confirms their low opinion of themselves. The ‘intellectual thug’ of Balllard’s schooldays was always just below the surface.

Maitland pays Jane for sex toward the end of the novel, which should surprise no one familiar with Ballard’s work. Jane becomes another female present to serve Maitland’s every whim. She declares, “Come on, strip off and let’s get you washed. Then we’ll have some food and I’ll fuck you” (Concrete 140). When the two engage in the sexual act, Maitland “accepted the rules of the young woman’s charade, glad of the freedom it implied, a recognition of their need to avoid any hint of commitment to each other” (142). He wished his relationships with Helen and Catherine were in a similar vein to what he engaged in with Jane. Ballard writes, “[A]ll the thousand and one emotionally loaded transactions of his childhood, would have been tolerable if he had been
able to pay for them in some neutral currency, hard cash across the high-priced counters of these relationships” (142).

A biographical parallel crops up at the end of the novel when Jane, once again inebriated, berates Maitland, conflating him with the father of her dead child. “Listen, I don’t need anyone to like me. I’m past it. Don’t be a child. How great that you and I are finished. I never want to see you again. I regard our relationship as ended” (165). According to Baxter, the speech comes from an incident with Claire Walsh. Ballard said, “That is a transcript of a secret tape recording I made of my then-girlfriend in a rage [. . .]. Well, ‘secret’ is the wrong word; she was simply too angry to notice that I had switched the machine on” (qtd. in Inner 227). Jane literally represents the stand-in for Claire in the novel. *Concrete Island* represents Ballard’s reaction to the Second Wave on a smaller scale. *High Rise* elevated matters, no pun intended.

*High Rise*

*High Rise* tracks the descent of the inhabitants of a forty-story tower block east of central London into savagery. The upper-middle-class tenants regress into being “hunters and hunted” as they slowly close off the outside environment (68). In the *Search and Destroy* interview with Jon Savage conducted in 1978, Ballard explained a biographical incident that planted the initial seed for the novel:

[Y]ears [and] years ago, the idea of [High Rise] came to me, way back [fifteen] years ago – my parents had a flat in the Red Lion Square, Victoria. There’s a little complex of office blocks, [and] there’s one block of flats, mostly rich business people live there. There were always rich people over with Rolls Royces – immodestly appointed flats, huge rents. These rich tenants [ . . . ]
the women (they were the ones at home) spent all their time bickering with one another complaining about the small things constantly – ‘Who’s going to pay for the maintenance of the potted plant display on the [seventeenth] floor landing’ – all that sort of thing and “So-and-so’s curtains do [n]ot match.” -- the most incredible triviality. (106)

This quote fascinates as well as disgusts. By focusing specifically on females, Ballard genders his target for the writing of his novel, reducing the tenants to a group of superficial busybodies where no one is allowed to mind their own business.

Robert Laing, a doctor and the first character through whom we view the inhabitants of the tower block, introduces us to the first women mentioned in *High Rise*. They consist of an anonymous “trio of air hostesses: sharing one of the apartments in the tower block” (5). Later on in the text, Laing’s sister Alice whispers of a brothel operating within the tower block. Laing says, “The mysterious movements of the air hostesses [. . .] clearly unsettled Alice” (9). Alice seems to conflate the activities of the air hostesses with that of prostitution. Either way, these nameless females live to serve. Next, Laing describes fellow tower block inhabitant Steele’s wife as “intense, glamorous,” and her manner toward Laing as unpleasant (6). “She clearly felt that at the age of thirty Laing should have been working twelve hours a day in a fashionable consultancy and be in every way as self-aggrandizing as her husband” rather than in the medical field (7). Laing views her as a “pushy fashion-consultant.” Furthermore, his activities, including drinking before lunch and sunbathing naked, upset her.

Next Laing introduces readers to Charlotte Melville, a widowed mother (9). Laing met her when he was “too drunk to get anywhere with this good-looking widow of thirty-five, apart from learning that she was a copywriter with a small but lively advertising agency” (8). Though the passage appears harmless enough at first glance, examine it closely. He emphasizes her
appearance and his own thwarted libido over her intellect. Much like the nameless secretary of Robert Maitland’s in *Concrete Island*, Charlotte occupies an office job. Furthermore, he describes her employer as using the same descriptors one might of a breed of toy dogs.

When Laing introduces Richard Wilder’s wife, he describes her as “a pale young woman with a postgraduate degree who reviewed children’s books for the literary weeklies” (10). Though representing the university-educated postwar female, Mrs. Wilder’s intellectual advancements shatter in a one-two punch. Laing’s usage of “pale young” harkens back to that of a doomed nineteenth-century heroine. Secondly, her job of reviewing *children’s* books indirectly aligns her with the domestic sphere. Due to the allegedly “powerful sexual aggression” of her husband, she appears in a state of permanent exhaustion (10). When Laing recounts an incident at the swimming pool, he describes Helen Wilder, finally giving her a name, as “long since drained [of] any self-confidence” by her husband. Laing comes to her rescue during her disagreement with an accountant who infringes on the children’s designated swimming time at the pool. She responds, “Richard was supposed to be here [. . .]. Do you mind walking me back to the elevator? [. . .] I’m becoming obsessed with the idea that one day we’ll be physically attacked” (15). Laing again comes to the aid of a damsel during a blackout. He rescues the “heavy-boned wife of a jeweller on the [fortieth] floor” from an elevator following a blackout (17).

In an exchange with Steele the orthodontist, one takes note of the catalogue of items leading to the blackouts, according to Steele. Ballard’s catalogue through reminds one of Bouchier’s earlier discussion of women and advertising: “Electronic baby-minders because the
mothers are too lazy to get out of their easy chairs, special mashers for their children’s food” (22; Bouchier 24). Do the men not also use “unnecessary appliances”? Apparently not.

Laing happily recounts a series of essentially revenge-motivated “catfights”:

There was even a certain petty envy of the more attractive women who were supposed to inhabit the upper floors, a widely held belief that Laing had enjoyed testing. During the electricity blackout the eighteen-year-old wife of a fashion photographer on the [thirty-eighth] floor had been assaulted in the hairdressing salon by an unknown woman. Presumably in retaliation, three air-hostesses from the [second] floor were aggressively jostled by a party of marauding top-floor matrons led by the strong-shouldered wife of the jeweler. (High Rise 27)

Here Ballard, through Laing, echoes, albeit in an exaggerated form, the behaviors of the females Ballard encountered at his parents’ residence, one inspiration for the novel.

Charlotte Melville reappears after his catalogue of females when one of a trio of pilots attempts to drag her off “caveman” style to a theater by the school, previously used to show children’s films, but now showing pornographic films “with locally recruited performers” (30). Amidst the revelers, another anonymous female arrives via the elevator. Laing describes her as “a thin-shouldered neurasthenic masseuse who lived with her mother on the 5th floor [. . .] one of the vagrants [. . .] who spent a large part of their time riding the elevators and wandering the long corridors” (32). The young woman then finds herself set upon by the female members of the party. Laing says to himself, “[C]areful Laing, or some stockbroker’s wife will unman you as expertly as she de-stones a pair of avocados” (32). Pringle noted this passage in his pioneering work as well. Though Ballard seemingly treats both the fear of females and castration flippantly in this passage, even if one focuses only on this specific text, it is a brilliant sentence, foreshadowing Wilder’s fate at the knives of the women at the end of the novel and
expressing the fear many white British males felt about radical feminists during this period (Pringle 43).

Considering the unflattering light in which Ballard painted Charlotte Melville in the beginning of the novel, that situation worsens Chapter Three. Concerned for her son, she goes home. Charlotte tries to convince Laing of the collapse of the society within the tower block. Unsurprisingly, matters degenerate into meaningless sex:

Laing looked down at [Charlotte], suddenly aware that this intelligent and likeable woman was failing to get the point. He placed an arm around her, unsurprised by the fierce way in which she embraced him. Ignoring her small son trying to open the kitchen door, she leaned against it and pulled Laing on to herself, kneading her arms as if trying to convince herself that here at last was something whose shape she could influence. (38-39)

In one passage, Ballard insults her intelligence and renders her a nymphomaniac as well as a negligent parent! Of course, after sexual intercourse, “[w]hen [Charlotte] was asleep in the early evening light, Laing let himself out of the apartment and went in search of his new friends” (39).

Steele reignites his complaints against the other tenants. Unsurprisingly, his complaints slant toward the female tenants. He informs Laing, “Some of these people generate the most unusual garbage [. . .]. Objects that could well be of interest to the vice squad. That beautician on the [thirty-third] floor and the two so-called radiographers living together on the [twenty-second]. Strange young women, even for these days” (40). In or out of the context of the 1970s, Steele’s character offends. As for his wife, her opinion of Laing in their next meeting shifts, though Laing’s opinion of her remains negative. He describes her as “hover[ing] about him with the delighted smile of a novice madam entertaining her first client” (41).

When the focus of the action shifts to Richard Wilder, essentialism creeps in again in the characterization of Helen Wilder. Phoning her nightly from his hotel, Helen’s “vague tone
concerned him” (44). When he returns to their apartment, he finds her lying awake in bed. He notes how the room reminds him of a cell in a psychiatric prison he filmed earlier. When he questions her about why the children were not at school, he finds himself “irritated by [Helen’s] passivity” (47). If she died on the spot from “brain fever,” would anyone bat an eye?

What unnerves Wilder the most previously pleased him the most. Helen never noticed the numerous affairs he had with single females in the tower block. Ballard mentions two of Wilder’s conquests, including the television actress owner of the Afghan dog Wilder drowned in the swimming pool and the continuity girl who worked “for an independent producer of pornographic films [responsible for] not[ing] the precise sexual position between takes” (48). Leaving the apartment, Wilder connects with Laing. Wilder likes Laing, due to Laing having a “keen eye for any passing young woman” (59). In Chapter Six, Ballard names the young actress as Jane Sheridan. Wilder broke off their brief affair due to the difficulty in reaching her apartment on the thirty-seventh floor. While there, Wilder felt what might pass for a twinge of regret as “[a]ll the time he was conscious of the distance to the ground, and of his wife and children far below him, deep in the lowest seams of the building like the exploited women and child labourers of the nineteenth century” (66).

On the twenty-ninth floor, Wilder encounters his future murderers in a commune comprised entirely of females. Here Ballard clearly engages in criticism of the time period, specifically the consciousness-raising separatist communes (Pugh 319). After mentioning the still unnamed and still grouped air hostesses, Wilder notes the woman who dominates the apartment cluster, describing her as “an elderly children’s-story writer, a woman of intimidating physique and personality” (Ballard, High Rise 72). Ballard, through Wilder, demonstrates his
ignorance of the structure of feminist organizations of the period by imposing the male hierarchical structure on the organization, one aspect such groups sought to obliterate in their new world order. Also, the physical description smacks of the “butch” stereotype of the radical feminist. Wilder, though feeling somewhat protected by being in the company of the masseuse whose exchanges in the lift overflowed with double entendres, such as “How far do you want to go? [. . .] I’ll ride with you” and “If you want to go higher, I’ll show you” (70-71), he still feels ill at ease. “What unsettled Wilder, as the women questioned him in pairs from their half-open doors, was their hostility to him, not only because he was a man, but because he was so obviously trying to climb to a level above their own” (72). Again, in a marvelous one-two punch, Ballard engages in social commentary of the period. Not only does he reflect the mentality of a reignited feminist culture seeking protection from male violence through legislation and political action, but also the class consciousness and criticism thereof that gave birth to it (Pugh 318). As the child of the white colonial merchant aristocracy, it scares him.

With Chapter Seven, Ballard shifts attention to Royal, the architect of the tower block. As Royal and his wife Anne decide to leave it, Royal remarks on her recent habit of surrounding herself with mirrors “as if this replication of herself gave her some kind of security” (78). One might also read this as a comment on Anne’s vanity as the wife of the well-to-do architect. Royal also has his share of conquests. Since the drowning of Jane Sheridan’s dog, Royal has taken on the role of Jane’s caretaker and no doubt receiver of affection (87). In Chapter Nine when Royal descends the tower block, he finds Anne and Jane amidst the warring tribes of tenants hiding in the junior school. Royal characterizes them as “[l]ike children caught red-handed in some mischief” (99-100). Upon their return to their apartment, they are visited by “the
wives of his fellow residents” who came to comfort Jane and Anne. Also, they offer to clean the Alsatian dog Royal took with him into battle. Again, Ballard paints the image of nameless females as caretakers in this new world disorder.

For all his infirmities, Royal remains a male aggressor with all the connotations his surname implies. The rhetoric Ballard employs to describe the relationship he shares with Anne and Jane Sheridan at a party later that evening disgusts. Of Anne, Ballard writes, “Despite his pleasure in displaying her to the other residents, Royal felt far more protective of her. This sexual territory extended to Jane Sheridan” (104).

If Helen Wilder’s lack of interest in Richard’s extramarital affairs elicited discomfort on Richard’s part, how does one react to Anne’s response to Royal and Jane’s exhibitionism? Does the reader react with the same passive acceptance Ballard describes?

Royal put his arms around Jane and embraced her with a deliberate slowness, as if repeating for his wife’s benefit a slow-motion playback. He knew that Anne could see them, but she sat quietly at the kitchen table, lighting a cigarette. During the sexual act that followed she watched them without speaking, as if she approved not from any fashionable response to marital infidelity, but from what Royal realized was a sense of tribal solidarity, a complete deference to the clan leader. (105)

Matters worsen in Chapter Ten. An inebriated Elanor Powell, another tower block inhabitant, described as “sway[ing] up to Laing,” points a finger at him accusing him of attempting to break in to her flat. At this, “Everyone cheered the news, as if rape was a valuable and well-tried means of bringing clan members together” (107). However do these comparisons to clans and tribes give too much credit to something that devolved well past either? Implied or potential incest follows when Ballard shifts focus to Laing at the close of the chapter. Alone and reeking of his own body odors in his apartment, Laing’s thoughts turn to his sister Alice and how they might bring her to him (117). In this tower block, with its literal class stratification of Royal at
the top, Laing near the top, and Wilder at the bottom, does Ballard represent the founding of a new nobility in Laing and Alice, turning inward for suitors when none exist outside or does he represent further descent into savagery? When he leaves the tower block, the absence of the stench troubles him. In his attempt to detect it on his secretary, who again appears nameless and a female, he frightens her, “hovering over her like a beachcomber in rut” (121).

In this next chapter, Wilder encounters the female separatist raiding party again. According to Ballard, their male domestic partners either moved in with friends living on other floors or “exited from their lives altogether” (129). When Wilder offers the lead in his proposed documentary to the children’s story writer, she responded by “gaz[ing] balefully at Wilder” (129). Returning to his flat, Wilder sees Helen showing some signs of life at the restarting of the school, albeit in their home. This renders Helen’s attempt to get away from the children for a little while a Pyrrhic victory, Wilder resolves to leave her and the children, in an attempt to “break away from the whole system [. . . ] he had been trying to shake off since his adolescence” (133). He even justifies his womanizing using this same rationale.

In a suitably perverse way, Wilder’s extramarital affairs prepare him in his ascent of the tower block climbing “over the supine bodies of the women he had known” (133). In his absence, the women’s group from the twenty-ninth floor move in on Helen, “offering help to abandoned or isolated wives, sisters of sinister charity.” (133). Again, Ballard’s not-exactly subtle critique of the grass-roots movement intrudes with the descriptor “sisters of sinister charity.” Free of Helen, Wilder begins his simultaneous physical ascent of the tower block and psychological descent into savagery. Wilder notices that he already, in the ensuing riots between
groups, relieves himself when- and wherever he pleases. On the previous night, he physically abused a woman who protested when he relieved himself on her bathroom floor (136).

Even Laing’s sex interest, Charlotte Melville, takes her place as one of Wilder’s conquests. On the return to her apartment Charlotte encounters an inebriated Wilder who procured a cassette recorder earlier. He plays his “selection of belches and grunts” to her before raping her in one of the most disturbing graphic passages in the entire novel:

The first time he struck her, cuffing her to the bedroom floor, he tried to record her gasp, but the reel had jammed. He freed it carefully, bent down and slapped her again, only stopping when he had recorded her now deliberate cries to his satisfaction. He enjoyed terrorizing her, taping down her exaggerated but none the less frightened gasps. During their clumsy sexual act on the mattress in the child’s bedroom he left the tape-recorder switched on beside them on the floor and played back the sounds of this brief rape, editing together the noise of her tearing clothes and panting anger. (147).

Wilder’s atrocity exhibition horrifies.

What of Wilder’s estranged wife Helen? The raiding party rescues and brings her to Royal’s apartment. Two weeks previous, she had been found “cowering with her sons in an empty apartment on the 19th floor [. . .] totally exhausted, numbed by hunger and indignation” (151). Royal thinks she might be a valued hostage one day, considering Wilder is continuing his ascent below. Now she resembles “the serious and attractive wife of an up-and-coming journalist who had arrived at the high-rise a year earlier” (152). She looks like she belonged to the upper levels.

Helen and Royal’s wife Anne join the six women who live in an adjacent apartment. They regard Royal in the same manner they regard Wilder, or so Royal thinks. “Sometimes Royal would visit Anne, but there was something daunting about the closely knit group of
women [. . .]. Their eyes would watch him as he hesitated in the door, waiting for him to go away” (154). When Royal turns his attention to Helen, she “stood passively with her tray, unaware of Royal fondling her, partly because she had been molested by so many men during the past months, but also because the sexual assault itself had ceased to have any meaning.” Royal aligns himself with Laing in the fear of the females who both viewed as revolting against the patriarchy of the tower block (Pringle 43).

Before his slaughter at the hands of the raiding women, Wilder enjoys one more conquest, a woman he recognizes as possibly the wife of a film company executive once upon a time (Ballard, High Rise 181). Wilder notes “her unmarked face, as open and amiable as a domestic animal’s. She seemed to have been totally untouched by events within the high-rise, as if waiting in some kind of insulated chamber for Wilder to appear.” After eating a roasted cat, Wilder “[w]ithout thinking [. . .] opened the front of her suede jacket and loosened her breasts [. . .] placed his hands over the small nipples and settled himself against her” (182). First he objectifies her as property and then treats her as his latest sexual conquest.

Wilder’s final meeting with the female separatists at the top of the tower block bears close examination. As the aim of the second wave of British feminism included supplanting the dominant class (read: capitalist patriarchy), the tribe of females occupying the top level of the tower block in High Rise represents the patriarchy’s nightmares made manifest. However, the depiction remains flawed. Though the women occupy the literal top level of this microcosm, they remain in charge of childcare, reinforcing the essentialist/sociobiological claims levied against women (Groenhout 62). Additionally, Ballard as the patriarchal creator of this world restricts the expression of their sexuality, given their attire, seeming to equate sexual inactivity
with an undercurrent of lesbianism (Frye 3). Contrasting with the neo-Tarzan image of Wilder, the first woman Wilder encounters wears “an ankle-length dress and a long gingham apron, her hair tied in a knot behind her neck” (Ballard, High Rise 191). All of the women dress in a similar fashion, somewhere between a fundamentalist Christian sect and an exaggeration of the ground-length hemlines that characterized women’s skirts and dresses in the early 1970s in reaction to the objectifying effects of miniskirts of the previous decade. With the exception of their sunglasses, “[t]hey seemed to belong to another century” (191).

Wilder sees his wife Helen, and though he rushes to her initially, he stops in his tracks due to her “unimpressed appraisal of his heavy loins” (192). Indifference proves a stronger deterrent than hate. Wilder’s member denies him membership in this exaggerated radical separatist commune (Pugh 319). Andrzej Gasiorek describes Wilder as “governed by instinctual aggressiveness” (126). In Wilder literally becoming a social climber, Gasiorek labels Wilder’s strategy “part of an outmoded mythos, and his conquest of the block’s summit [. . . ] is accompanied by a regression to painted savagery” (126). By the end of the novel, he has been reduced to communicating through grunts.

Wilder regresses so far that he welcomes his doom courtesy of the knives of the top floor matriarchy, oblivious to oblivion itself. As Ballard describes the scene, “In their bloodied hands they carried knives with narrow blades. Shy but happy now, Wilder tottered across the roof to meet his new mothers” (High Rise 192). Curiously, in this final scene, Ballard toys with gender-based norms. He depicts the females as aggressors while reducing Wilder to an infant needing them to take care of him, which they do, albeit not in the manner he expected.
The novel closes with Laing acting as “slave” to his sister and Eleanor Powell, reiterating as well as expanding, upon the fear expressed earlier both by Royal and Wilder. Laing views the two women as in charge. Additionally, “they despised him totally. This ultimate role had helped him on one occasion, when a marauding band of women led by Mrs. Wilder had entered the apartment. Seeing Laing being abused, and assuming him to be Eleanor’s and Alice’s prisoner, they had left” (197). How long until Laing joined Royal and Wilder in death at the hands of this band of females? If the tower block represents England as a microcosm, clearly the roving band represents the radical feminists recently sprung up during the Second Wave.

Conclusion

David Pringle wonders if Ballard’s conscience got the better of him during his techno-barbarism period. Pringle wrote, “The females in Concrete Island and High Rise are depicted with greater care and sympathy than the women in most of the earlier works” (43). Are they? Pringle gives Ballard too much credit. Though his focus shifted away from ecological disasters of the 1960s to the urban landscapes in the 1970s, matters remained the same in his characterization of females in his works, if heightened by the anxiety felt by a member of the patriarchy seeing the position of women in British society as shifting from being dominated by to being in competition with males (Gasiorek 202). Where the ecological disaster novels represent the concerns voiced by LeGuin and other female authors regarding the possible side effects of the New Wave’s sexual frankness made manifest, the techno-barbarism quartet represents
Ballard’s increasing anxieties as females shifted further away from the latter day Dale Ardens that populated his first group of novels. A “pair of Styrofoam boobies” no more, the roving band of murderous females would hereafter become a recurring trope in Ballard’s fiction, an object of terror both attractive and repulsive, especially after the failures of Labour gave Ballard’s tribe, if only in her gender, a leader in the form of Margaret Thatcher. Ballard’s fascination with Thatcher would loom large over the next group of his novels.
CHAPTER FOUR: FAUX MESSIAHS

1975 marked the end of a period, or so Ballard felt. In an interview with Werner Fuchs and Joachin Korber, he said, “I’d written four books all tending in one particular direction [ . . . ] all dealing with the communications landscape and modern technology.” This new segment of Ballard’s work would be, in his own words, “free, fantastic literature” (144). With this next tetralogy of The Unlimited Dream Company (1979), Hello America (1981), The Day of Creation (1987), and Rushing to Paradise (1994), all four novels focus on “the dangers of the unfettered imagination that come to the fore in the shape of an all-devouring ego.” All four works focus on male and female characters whose delusions of being godlike brings about a separation from reality so utterly complete that all attempt to remake the world “in thine own image” (Gasiorek 134).

This image of the faux messiah added another layer to the evolving antagonistic image of females in Ballard’s writing. Throughout this period, one can see a continuation in the building up, or tearing down to be more accurate, of women in Ballard’s novels. The lamia/damsel archetypes that marked Ballard’s first period persist, added upon in Ballard’s apprehension of the Second Wave writ large in the roving band of murderous female separatists during his second period, and culminated in the final text of this tetralogy in the faux messiah being the alleged eco-warrior-turned-murdering-female-separatist, Dr. Barbara Rafferty.
Before examining Ballard’s treatment of females during this period, Ballard’s fascination with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, whose reign runs approximately parallel to this section of Ballard’s career, merits discussion. She appears to be the “Iron Lamia” in the living room. When looking to who would be the great leaders in the future, Ballard said:

The charismatic dictators of the future will have to be women in the Margaret Thatcher mould. Only women will be able to tap the deep need of the male half of the population to be led, to be drilled, to be frightened. It won’t be Big Brother in the future [. . .]. It will be “Big Sister.” (qtd. in Baxter, Inner 301)

Consider the last images Ballard left his audience with in *High Rise*, with Wilder led, and if not drilled, stabbed repeatedly, and Laing frightened by the “when” rather than the “if” regarding his own fate at the hands of the roving band of female separatists in the tower block.

Repeatedly in interviews, Ballard expressed his admiration of, if not obsession with Margaret Thatcher. Ballard's “What I Believe” included “a panegyric to Thatcher that added an additional appeal: her association with the violence of the war in the Falklands” (300). In the piece, Ballard imagined her having sex with an Argentine soldier:

I believe in the mysterious beauty of Margaret Thatcher, in the arch of her nostrils and the sheen on her lower lip; in the melancholy of wounded Argentine conscripts; [. . .] in my dream of Margaret Thatcher caressed by that young Argentine soldier in a forgotten motel [. . .]. (*RE/Search #8-9* 176)

He agreed with Thatcher’s economic policies, though he felt her social policies proved her undoing (Litt, “Dangerous” 420). He considered himself “a great if partial admirer” of her
attempts to Americanize British citizens (Zinik 375). According to Ballard, he and Thatcher were the only two British subjects who supported the United States bombing of Libya (Pauline 128). In his interview with Mark Pauline, Ballard extolled Thatcher’s “virtues” to their fullest:

I always found her extremely mysterious and attractive at the same time. I think she exerts a powerful sexual spell, and I’m not alone. I think there are a lot of men who find themselves driven to distraction by the mystery of Margaret Thatcher [. . .]. I think she taps all sorts of extreme responses on the part of certainly, men in the population at large. (134)

Within Thatcher’s personality, Ballard believed, “She taps very deep levels of response. There are elements of La Belle Dame Sans Merci – the merciless muse, in her. Also the archetype of the [Medusa] [. . .] She’s the nanny, she’s the head mistress, and she’s the school-marmy as well.” Where one element of the dangerous female would have sufficed, Ballard barrages Pauline, and the audience by extension, with multiple examples.

Two final primary source items regarding Ballard’s obsession with Thatcher deserve mention. In his interview with Lynne Fox, Ballard reiterates his fascination with Thatcher, though he concedes that after:

[T]he first six or seven years of her reign (as I suppose one has to call it), [. . .] I think she went off the rails towards the end [. . .]. It’s extraordinary that a woman who was rather [. . .] pre-TV in many of her attitudes [. . .] should have lent herself so easily to the exploitative nature of the mass media. She had total grasp of the media, of the possibilities of the TV camera. (176)

To Catherine Reuther, Ballard stated bluntly what he arguably only danced around in his interview with Mark Pauline, stating, “I support Margaret Thatcher immensely [. . .] for sexual reasons. I admire her for mythological and sexual reasons. When I say this, people are totally fazed – they can’t understand what I’m talking about” (308). As Susan Brownmiller noted, “A woman on a soapbox with a microphone in her hand, even if she is perfectly coiffed, will still be
called strident, hectoring, or ‘somewhat shrill’ as the American press said of [Thatcher] the week she took office” (124). That image persisted. Hence, Ballard’s difficulty in explaining her allure.

Yes, history demonstrates any associations Thatcher had with the Second Wave began and ended with her biological sex. With Ballard, his focus on females, especially in power positions, begins and ends with their biological sex. In the respective texts, Thatcher’s developing doppelganger appears in the persons of Miriam St. Cloud in The Unlimited Dream Company, Professor Anne Summers in Hello America, Nora Warrender in Day of Creation, and most explicitly, Dr. Barbara Rafferty in Rushing to Paradise.

Historical Context

In the period leading up to Margaret Thatcher’s ascent to the leadership of Great Britain, women were divided in how to progress from the ideals laid down in the Second Wave. Was it better to remain with the separatist culture or act within the system? With the rising threat of a return to power of the Conservatives, many allied with the trade unions and the Labour party (Pugh 334). As conservatism in Great Britain continued its rise, feminism increasingly became the scapegoat for anything having so much as a whiff of social progress to it. Women found themselves conflicted. How was one to reconcile feminism, specifically having a career, with the desire to have a spouse and children? This led many to a policy of
postponement while others hacked away in the role of single parent, juggling occupation and offspring. Lesbian motherhood significantly gained currency during this period as well (334).

As noted earlier in Ballard’s conflicted feelings about Thatcher, her tenure as Prime Minister remains regarded with a “swings and roundabouts” mentality in the ensuing decades (335). Becoming the Conservative Party leader in 1976, followed by Prime Minister three years later, Thatcher benefited from early feminists, but did nothing to acknowledge her visible debt to them. She enjoyed voting rights and access to higher education. Though she only became pregnant once, she was not hobbled by motherhood. She adopted the position of having pulled herself up by her own bootstraps. She advised women to cease complaining and take advantage of the “opportunities” open to them at the present.

When in a position of power, Thatcher “behaved like a male executive” and generally avoided other females (335). The only other female in her cabinet, and her stay was brief, was Lady Young. In the main, women suffered under Thatcher’s policies and the careers of many Tory women suffered under her leadership. To focus on the former, the only significant policy passed during Thatcher’s time that benefited females was the separate taxation policy introduced by Chancellor Nigel Lawson. Thatcher may have used her sex, but she refused to fight on its behalf. As Spare Rib put it, “[O]ne prime minister doesn’t make a matriarchy” (qtd. in Pugh 335).

Thatcher’s tenure as Prime Minister during the 1980s may have rendered the membranes between male and female spheres more permeable to the British subjects, although with the same positives and negatives cancelling one another out. Thatcher demonstrated that women could be
strong and have confidence in a position of power. She also demonstrated that women could be sadistic war mongers, as evidenced by the sinking of the Belgrano (336).

If any positives came out of Thatcher’s too-long time as Prime Minister, it rested with the number of women who achieved positions of power post-Thatcher. Stella Rimington led the Crown Prosecution Service. Editorship of The Independent and The Daily Express belonged to Rosie Boycott. Elizabeth Butler Sloss received the Lord Justice of Appeal appointment. Lastly, Betty Boothroyd presided in the House of Commons. In a bizarre turn of events, where Thatcher’s position of power proved a detriment to women in her party, for women in Labour in the decade following Thatcher’s ousting from power, she proved a galvanizing figure as they sought positions of power within the political mainstream (337).

The Unlimited Dream Company

The Unlimited Dream Company may be considered as Ballard’s “most sensuous and personal novel” (Baxter, Inner 62). Ballard summarized the work as being about [Blake,] a young pilot who steals a light aircraft and crashes it into the Thames, and in a sense, dies; drowns in his aircraft but frees himself by an enormous effort of the imagination, and through his imagination transforms Shepperton into a kind of Edenic paradise full of exotic plants and animals. (qtd. in Baxter, Inner 248).

Ballard, however, hated the title, feeling it sounded like the name of “a jeans emporium” (249).

For Roger Luckhurst, The Unlimited Dream Company marked the point where, if any doubt remained during the techno-barbarism period, Ballard broke away from science fiction (29). Peter Brigg says that the book, “is an adult fantasy with a strong core of eroticism. It is
remarkable in its sexual frankness yet wholly devoid of the pornographic tone employed in
*Crash*” (96). Brigg’s point proves debatable. One wonders if Brigg was ignoring the more
unpleasant aspects of *The Unlimited Dream Company* for fear that labeling some of the acts as
pedophilia would, in turn, levy the accusation on the accuser. I return to this point later.

Anderzej Gasiorek describes Blake brilliantly in the novel as “the unheralded avatar of
pantheism, a pagan god come to fecundate this pale copy of an animate world with his phallic
power” (137). Gasiorek also considers Blake as a type of Nietzschean anti-Christ “whose sexual
fecundation of the entire suburb, which begins with the women he sees as the first victims of this
consumerist nightmare, is an explicit assault on the commodity fetishism that is its presiding
deity and a fantasised dream of phallic generativeness” (138).

Of course, links may be drawn back to the earliest tetralogy of the eco-disasters in the
recasting by Blake of Shepperton into a lush jungle land, paralleling immediately with the effects
visited on Great Britain in *The Drowned World* as well as, to a lesser extent with *The Crystal
World*. The narrative, however, complicates seeing the parallels as being too pat, considering
that in the eco-disasters, the protagonist heads toward oblivion at the end of the novels whereas
with *The Unlimited Dream Company*, oblivion already claimed Blake, who dies before the piece
ever gets started.

Blake’s dreams develop “a collective significance” as, over the course of the novel, the
entire populace of Shepperton experiences a return to the prelapsarian period, “wander[ing]
around naked and unaware of their nakedness,” and responding both to a desire for
transcendence spiritually as well as a strong open physical expression of sexuality (Delville 55).
A major part of the novel is devoted to Ballard’s descriptions of Blake’s “mystico-sexual” urges.
In my mind I entered the bodies of these timid creatures. I dreamed of repopulating Shepperton, seeding in the wombs of its unsuspecting housewives a retinue of extravagant beings, winged infants and chimeraed sons and daughters, plumed with the red and yellow feathers of macaws. Antlered like the deer, and scaled with the silver skins of rainbow trout, their mysterious bodies would ripple in the windows of the supermarket and appliance stores. (*Unlimited* 82)

Beautiful though the image of Blake’s offspring might first appear, what stands a chance of being lost is Blake’s desire to “[seed] in the wombs of its unsuspecting housewives” which adds insult to injury by giving divine right to serial rape as well as relegating the female populace to the domestic sphere! Here, among other places, one sees Dworkin’s nightmare writ large:

> Subordinate to men, sexually colonized in a sexual system of dominance and submission, denied rights on the basis of sex, historically chattel, generally considered biologically inferior, confined to sex and reproduction, this is the general description of the social environment in which all women live. (*Right Wing* 221)

In a motif he would repeat three years later in *Hello America*, Ballard kills the central character’s mother, in a car crash at the opening of the text, dead mothers being a secondary common thread in Ballard’s fiction (6; Dworkin, *Woman Hating* 41). As for Blake’s *first* direct act of violence against females, his first relationship, not counting his sexual encounter with a cricket pitch, involves a whirlwind romance with an air hostess-turned-barmaid, whom he describes as “a spirited and likeable girl with a fund of strange stories about the sexual activities at international airports” (*Ballard, Unlimited* 8). In a one-two punch, Ballard demeans her via referring to her as a “girl” instead of a woman, but also placing her in two jobs related to the domestic sphere that, according to Alice Kessler-Harris “were widely available [,] easily acquired and often demeaned (361). The relationship proves another failure for Blake as an attempt at a loving embrace turned into “the need literally to crush her out of existence [. . . ].
Only when she collapsed around my knees did I realize that I had been about to kill her, but without the slightest hate or anger” (9). According to Dworkin, “rape, battery, [and] physical torture [. . . ] are done because women provoke [men] the same way they provoke erection, by being there” (Right Wing 208-9). Blake represents a parfait of perversity from the outset.

After his crash into the Thames, Blake is revived by Dr. Miriam St. Cloud. Critics appear divided over St. Cloud. On one hand, she stands as “another interpretation of the Jungian lamia, an attractive though strangely antagonistic figure whom [the protagonist] sees alternately as a menacing witch and an emblem of benevolence and innocence” (Deville 56). On the other hand, she is viewed as “an earthly, complaisant woman,” mirroring Ballard’s deceased wife Mary, chiefly “her sensuality, a willingness to mother him, and also act as his pupil” (Baxter, Inner 250-51).

Blake’s first impression of Miriam St. Cloud mirrors, in his rapid development of affection-turned-obsession, that of his fiancée/would-be murder victim:

Looking at this confused woman, I felt a powerful sense of gratitude to her. I wanted to stroke her skin, place my mouth against her breast. For a moment, I almost believed that I was her suitor, and that I had chosen this extravagant method of arrival in order to propose marriage to her. (Ballard, Unlimited 15)

His delusions continue as he objectifies her.

Dr. Miriam was looking at me in a reflective way, as if we were lovers long familiar with each other’s bodies. I could smell her strong thighs and see her strong, surprisingly grimy feet within her sandals. Her untidy hair was tied back in a faded ribbon. Through a missing button of her blouse, I stared at a child’s scratch marks on her left breast. I wanted to embrace her here on this open lawn [. . . ]. (17)

Blake runs the risk of representing Ballard’s novels in a microcosm, given how he repeats himself throughout the text, lusting after Miriam St. Cloud.
I watched her in an almost dreamlike way while she pressed my shoulders against the X-ray machine. The exquisite mole like a beautiful cancer below her left ear, her handsome black hair swept back out of harm’s way, the unsettled eyes ruled by her high forehead, the blue vein in her temple that pulsed with some kind of erratic emotion – I wanted to examine all these at my leisure, savour the scent of her armpits, save forever in a vial hung around my neck the tag of loose skin on her lip. Far from being a stranger, I felt that I had known her for years.

When Miriam informs him of his resurrection after being submerged beneath the water for ten minutes, he thinks, “I would have liked to show her just how dead I was and seed a child between those shy hips” (31). Going on a walkabout through Shepperton, Blake feels bombarded by young mothers. He states, rather unpleasantly, “As I stared at this array of thighs and breasts, I was aware of my nervous sex [. . .]. I was moving among these young women with my loins at more than half cock, ready to mount them among the pyramids of detergent packs and free cosmetics offers.”

According to D. Harlan Wilson, “A hypersexual urge and ‘sinister paedophiliac desire’ supplement [Blake’s] new nature [. . .]. This progresses into a full-blown polysexuality and need to copulate with every living creature, which he believes will contribute to the rebuilding of himself” (107). Upon his escape from St. Cloud’s would-be lover/murderer to be Stark, Blake arrives at the tennis courts (Delville 56). Two teenaged girls and their mother approach at which Blake finds himself gripped by the same powerful by indiscriminate sexual urge that I had felt for all the people I had met in Shepperton since my crash [. . .]. In a hot reverie, I stared at the mother and her daughters, as if they were naked, not in my eyes, but their own. I wanted to [. . .] mate with each of them among the crosscourt valleys, mount them as they crouched at the net. (Ballard, Unlimited 45)

Witness Blake’s tryst with Miriam’s mother, the denied-a-forename Mrs. St. Cloud:

I wrestled with this middle-aged woman, pressing her broad shoulders into the
pillow, my bloody mouth around her lips and nostrils and sucked the air from her throat. No longer concerned with her sex, I was trying to fuse our bodies, merge our hearts and lungs, our spleens and kidneys into a single creature. I knew then that I would stay in this small town until I had mated with everyone [and everything] there [ . . . ] and fused us into a new being. (62)

While one knows not what that “new being” was, one may safely consider that new being monstrous in nature.

As with his fiancée and Mrs. St. Cloud, Blake also attempts to crush the life out of Miriam (92). Blake confesses, “I was very sorry to have frightened Miriam – I wanted her to be the vessel of my transforming lust and our marriage to be not a rape but a private coronation” (93). In another repeat back to the fiancée, with her stories of sexual encounters in airports, Miriam admits her fantasy of being married mid-air aboard an airliner.

Blake’s desire to impregnate the female inhabitants of Shepperton begins to manifest itself in Miriam’s patients. Even grandparents, long past the childbearing stage, inquire Miriam about how to conceive a child (100). Miriam herself admits that “[S]ince you arrived, I’ve thought of nothing else. I’m as obsessed as these stupid women” (101). Blake states:

I enjoyed my sense of power over this small town, my knowledge that [ . . . ] I would mate with all these women in their bright summer dresses [ . . . ]. I sensed the same impulse, perversely, toward the young men and the children, even the dogs [ . . . ] (107).

Blake embodies what radical feminists label “phallic imperialism.” Dworkin states, “The man [ . . . ] colonizes a female body [ . . . ] depletes it as he wishes [ . . . ] moves on at will to conquer other land which appears more verdant and alluring” (Letters 118-19).

He reiterates, “I felt a growing sexual need, not only for the young women brushing against me in the crowded streets, but also for the children who followed me, even for the five-year-olds with their candy-filled hands” (Ballard, Unlimited 110). Bestiality follows pedophilia
as Blake sprouts antlers and begins to inseminate a herd of does in the streets of Shepperton. He says, “I coupled with the females, mounting one and then breaking away to take another [. . . ]. My semen splashed the windows of the supermarket, streamed across the sales slogans and price reductions” (116).

With his faux messiah mentality at full cock, Blake sets out to remake Shepperton in his own image (125). He masturbates below the altar of the church, fantasizing about Miriam all the while, “her lips and breasts, her nervous hands ready to push me away” (127). His ejaculations result in tropical vegetation sprouting, increasing his ambition to where he wants to “mount the town itself, transform Shepperton into an instant paradise” (127-28). Yet, for all Blake’s desires to have sex with everyone and everything in Shepperton, his onanistic fantasies return to the main Ballardian female, the lamia/damsel Miriam St. Cloud.

Miriam dons a “grotesque but magnificent wedding gown [. . . ] resembling a costume worn in some Hollywood spectacular of the 1930s [. . . ] a great white bird searching for her sky” (150). She wants the mid-air wedding proposed by Blake and challenges him to fly (153). When examining the passage on Blake and Miriam’s mid-air consummation, one could easily dismiss Ballard’s breaking down into body parts as a reflection of his reading medicine at university, as discussed previously in *The Kindness of Women*, but something far more sinister seems to be at work in his domination of Miriam:

As we embraced she merged with me, her rib cage dissolved into my own, her arms merged with my arms, her legs and abdomen disappeared into mine. Her vagina clasped my penis. I felt her tongue within my mouth [. . . ]. Miriam had gone, slipping away through the hundred doors of my body. I myself now wore the wedding dress. (156-57)
As the townspeople are also taken to the air as part of Blake’s desire to mate with all of them (167), he becomes “the local deity of the car wash [. . . ]. I had graced their modest lives with impossible dreams” (175). He believes that only when he had absorbed the energy of the townspeople’s bodies into his own would he be able to leave Shepperton at last. On what was to be his last day there, the townspeople dressed him, as well as Miriam, in bird costumes as the two flew together, ending in the church. Once inside, Stark shot both through the chest, though killing only Miriam (191).

Although Blake remained alive, his blood like “pennants [. . . ] that floated from my open heart like the still fluttering tail of a downed kite” (197). The townspeople, seeing the impossibly alive Blake, turned on him, treating him not as a faux messiah but full-blown Christ figure (Deville 55). However, instead of shouts of “Crucify him!” the townspeople demanded, “Cut off his penis!” (Ballard, Unlimited 198). By association, the landscape and animals that resulted from his copious ejaculations began to wither and to be replaced by a soured landscape.

Blake experiences one last surge of energy, drawing on the animals around his “tomb” to reanimate himself (212). He then passes the reanimation energy on to Miriam, who only thought she had fallen asleep like some Lady Lazarus. Ballard affords the reader one final objectification of Miriam’s body after her resurrection. Blake says:

I held her naked shoulders against my chest, breathing the hot scent of her body, counting the small blemishes on her skin [. . . ]. I wished that I could spend forever here among the flowers with this young woman, dress her hair with garlands from my own sex. (235)

The act of mercy extended to Miriam by Blake, Ballard, in turn, extends to the audience, as The Unlimited Dream Company permits the readers to awaken from this nightmare.
In *The Unlimited Dream Company*, Ballard issues several calls back before moving forward. As noted by critics, Blake’s desire to reconfigure Shepperton as a jungle recalls *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World*. Additionally, though the novel’s publication appears too early chronologically to draw a direct parallel between Thatcher and Miriam, she takes her place in the long line of lamia figures to be conquered by the Ballardian male. More importantly, given the historical timeframe, Blake’s desire to mate with all of the females and the obsession the female citizens have with conceiving after his arrival represents wish-fulfillment of males wanting a return by women to the domestic sphere. Blake as this resurrected messiah of the patriarchy would render the women of Shepperton literally “barefoot and pregnant.”

*Hello America*

*Hello America* harkens back to Ballard’s 1960s eco-disaster tetralogy in the story of a United States cut off from Europe. Unlike the chemical skin floating atop the ocean that disrupted the water table in *The Drought*, failed attempts at climate control have rendered the United States a desert. Additionally, the text “conflate[s] the self-absorbed mythology of the modern USA [ . . . ] with the boys’ adventure novels Ballard read in Shanghai” (Baxter, *Inner 256-57*). It would prove to be one of Ballard’s weaker entries as a longer work.

The story focuses on Wayne, a young stowaway aboard the *Apollo*, a ship sailing from Europe. The ship lands at New York to find “that the few surviving Americans are camel-riding nomads” (257). Limited in his experiences with American culture, Ballard’s image of America
was drawn from the aforementioned influences America threw up of itself in its icons. As a result, the remove is not as great as Ballard would like the reader to imagine, as the fascination with public figures that also marked the techno-barbarism period remains.

As one would expect from this run-of-the-mill speculative fiction piece, Wayne and the rest of the expedition heed the advice of Horace Greeley. In a nod to *The Drowned World*, they find Death Valley as a rainforest and Las Vegas “half-submerged in a lake, its quenched lights a symbol of America’s lost glory” (257). Vegas is now the capital of, at least what remains of the United States with its ruler, “Charles Manson,” occupying Howard Hughes’s former residence at the Desert Inn. Uncomfortably familiar as the use of Manson’s name for this faux messiah appears to the rational reader, Ballard continues focusing on our fascination with celebrities, even those who gain that status through nefarious means. Aside from Manson’s henchmen, the rest of the inhabitants are robots. Wayne becomes the President of the United States after Manson flees the earth in the last functioning space vehicle.

In his interview with Thomas Frick, Ballard summarized the text as

about that image which the States [have] chosen [ . . . ] to present of itself to the world at-large [ . . . ] made up of its film stars and gangsters, presidents and their assassins [ . . . ] Disneyland [ . . . ] Coca-Cola [ . . . ] and so on [ . . . ]. I was trying to construct a society using just these images. I suggest you would come up with President Manson playing nuclear roulette in Las Vegas.

(195-96)

At the time Ballard made this statement, there was an actor “playing nuclear roulette” in the Oval Office.

Turning to criticism, Peter Brigg considers *Hello America* to be both a throwback to “old fashioned” forward-looking science fiction,” but also going off “into the realm of political and social fantasy in its later parts” (96). Brigg elaborates:
Were it not that it is written in Ballard’s [ . . . ] style[,] *Hello America* would immediately be recognized as a brilliant speculative fiction based solidly on perceivable trends in the world economies, industrial technology, and the possible effects that these factors could have on the psychological will of modern America. (99)

Unfortunately, the text *is* written in Ballard’s style. Reaction to the text appeared largely negative.

The novel may have worked as a novella geared toward the young adult market, but to be stretched to the length of a novel, short as Ballard novels typically are, “the satire caved in for lack of structure” (Baxter, *Inner* 257). For those who let his mythologizing of the Kennedys during his second period slide, the “recruitment of Manson” into his works was regarded as “conspicuously bad taste” (259).

The “conceptual crux” of *Hello America* comes in the Manson figure, whom Delville labels “one of Ballard’s most successful psychopathological cases [who] embodies the potentially self-destructive power of the American dream” (60). Delville views the employment of the giant holographic projections as a reflection of Ballard’s ongoing obsession with mass media icons from his previous literary period and “the politics of postmodern simulation.” Delville elaborates further, writing, “The characters of *Hello America* once again teeter on the verge of this timeless space in which a surplus of televised images has allegedly erased all former notions of truth – they are caught up in a play of ‘simulacra,’ copies that no longer refer to an original, imagine that no longer have any direct relationship with an outside, external world.” While Manson does fit the *faux* messiah characterization of this period of Ballard’s literary work, one should, given this study’s critical lens, also focus on “[t]he expedition’s
obligatory *femme fatale*, Anne Summers [who] shares her name with a chain of sex shops” (Baxter, *Inner* 258; Wilson 138).

Though Anne Summers appears earlier in the text, as she is referred to only as “Professor Summers,” the audience does not know her gender. The first woman truly discussed in-depth is Wayne’s mother, who died five years earlier. To add multiple insults to injury, Ballard splits her life between being an outpatient at a mental hospital and being a “barely competent secretary” at the American University in Dublin (13). On one hand, Wayne’s mother embodies the Ballardian trope of the dead mother explained earlier by Dworkin. On the other, she spent her life in a pink-collar position, as defined by Kessler-Harris, as an adjunct to her supervisor in a position where she was allegedly incompetent.

Summers, the sole female to have any “development” in *Hello America*, as much as another stock character of Ballard’s, the female professional, *can* develop, is one of the members of the expedition to America. Wayne’s description of Summers depicts a woman lost in her own vanity.

Despite the spray, her severe make-up remained in place, but the wind began to unravel the blonde hair which she kept tightly rolled in a bun [. . .]. Wayne was her greatest admirer. Once, to her annoyance, he had entered the radiology lab without knocking and found her immersed in a small mirror, combing her hair to its breathtaking waist length, her face made up like a film actress of old, a screen goddess dreaming among her reaction columns and radiation counters. (15)

In this description, Summers embodies Susan Brownmiller’s remark about professional women when Brownmiller writes, “A man may keep his nose to the grindstone, but a woman had better stop now and again to powder hers” (228).
Professor Summers provides a humorous exchange with Wayne when their ship stops over the ruins of the Statue of Liberty. Summers believes she sees a “sleeping mermaid” (Ballard, *Hello* 20). More importantly, the ruins provide another example of the silenced female in Ballard. Playing upon the lamia with the reference to sirens who lured sailors to their doom in classical mythology, Ballard’s description reads:

Lying on her back beside the ship, *like its drowned bride*, was the statue of an immense *reclining* woman [. . . S]he rested on a bed of concrete blocks, the ruins of an underwater plinth. Her *classical* features were only a few feet below the surface. Washed by the waves, her grey face reminded Wayne of his dead mother’s when he gazed into her open coffin in the asylum mortuary. (20; emphasis added)

In this passage, Ballard not only alludes to Hamlet’s doomed love Ophelia, but also places Lady Liberty in a pose of supplication to the phallic vessel while objectifying her “classical” features and conflating her with Wayne’s insane, dead mother.

When they reach landfall, Wayne imagines the gold awaiting the crew in this “new world.” When he fantasizes about Anne, he pictures her “in gleaming breastplates and skirt of gold leaf,” turning her into a Valkyrie which fits her German upbringing (23). However, Wayne is not the only male seeking to dominate her. Dr. Paul Ricci, another member of the expedition infatuated with Anne, compares her to the land, thinking “Manifest Destiny” applies to both.

[T]he place has possibilities, all sorts of dormant things might be lying here, waiting to be roused. Like the beautiful Professor Summers. She’s standoffish now in her moody way but once we hit the expedition trail [. . . ] she’ll behave a little differently. (29)

Ricci’s statement recalls Barbara Burris’s merging female bodies with territory “to demean, subject [and] control” (335). Summers is not unaware of her male crewmates’ leering eyes. She
ponders why Captain Steiner always seems to be looking at her, “this curious man with his intense, unsettling eyes” (29)

When Ballard fleshes out her character, her duties of monitoring the seismic waves and residual radiation levels take a back seat to her vanity. Her main concern appears to be “protect[ing] her immaculate white skin from this barbarous sun” (30). Ballard informs the reader that she went on this expedition believing it “the last place on earth, where dreams could still take wing” (31). In doing so, she abandoned her “small but comfortable flatlet” as well as her “attractive if earnest lover, a middle-aged pharmacologist” (30). Ballard appears just as focused on Summer’s skin as the crew ventures into the desert that was once New York. “The vermillion glow [of the sun] gave her face a flush of animation, as if she were a convalescent already showing a marked improvement on the first day of arrival at a desert resort” (40).

In the next passage of significance, the description of Summers shifts back from an invalid to fantasy object. Wayne notices that, three days into their voyage, that she looked “trim and self-possessed” (50). Additionally:

Three days after their arrival in New York she had suddenly pulled the pin from the bun behind her neck, and there emerged, like a flare of light from a grenade, the long blonde hair that now shielded her from the sun. Already, in Wayne’s eyes, this white mane made her resemble some beautiful nomadic widow, endlessly crossing the desert in search of a young husband. Were one to attempt a film adaptation, doubtlessly the scene would run in slow-motion with a saxophone as background music, so clichéd is Ballard’s description of the Wayne’s lust.

When the leaders Orlowski and Steiner bickered over the next actions of the expedition, Summers joins the sailors in looting the deserted city. “Anne Summers brought back [ . . . ] a full-length black evening gown from Macy’s Fifth Avenue. Alone with her mirror in the laboratory, she paraded up and down among the retorts and Geiger counters, inviting the bored
Wayne to compliment her” (53; emphasis added). In truth, he needs little encouragement, which is exactly what she gives him after he takes charge of the water supply, managing to get extra pints out of him as a result. In his mind, “Wayne felt that she had begun to see him, not as a young stowaway, but as a man of almost her own age. Wayne was glad to be of use to her, and even encouraged it” (58). He loots an ancient tube of lipstick for her, “the exhilarating carmine bow across her mouth” convincing him he needs to keep an eye out for other cosmetics to bestow upon Anne.

In the tribes the crew encounters in Chapter Ten, Ballard troubles the readers twice. All the tribes are named after professions with the members taking their names from commercial signs. GM, a member of The Executives, refers to his wife as Xerox. When Steiner asks why he calls her “Xerox,” GM responds, drawing attention to her visible pregnancy, “All women called Xerox – they make good copies” (64). With “the Divorcees,” Ballard connects Hello America back to the roving band of the tower block in High Rise. According to Pepsodent, “That’s an all-woman tribe from Reno [. . . ]. Watch out for them, Captain, they’ll promise to wed you, then steal your camel and cut your throat before the night’s out” (65). Here are the masses Burris sees yelling “You castrating bitches!” (327).

The Executives weave in and out of Ballard’s narrative throughout the novel, always in a subservient role to the European expedition’s crew. When the crew arrives in Las Vegas, Xerox enters into service as Anne Summers’s maid (Hello 135). The domestic sphere encloses Xerox completely. Not only is she basically a brood mare for her tribe, but she also serves as caretaker for a woman who actually enjoys being objectified sexually.
As the expedition takes its toll on Anne, “[w]ith her worn nails, chapped skin and dusty blonde hair she looked ten years older than the young physicist who had stepped ashore in Manhattan” (82). Wayne’s only possible remedy is to give her another tube of lipstick and a movie magazine. No brave, intelligent female scientist remains. In her place stands Ballard’s damsel in need of rescuing.

Or are matters more nuanced? Though Anne is the sole female in the expedition, there are, as noted previously, other females in the text. Ricci attempts to trade his roan stallion for a camel, though the head of the Gangsters tribe offers one of his wives instead, “an electric blonde like an angry doll,” which Anne Summers protests against (85). Additionally, one of the Divorcees, despite her severe hair dye and make-up, proved “remarkably motherly” in wanting to adopt Wayne. Yet Anne remains Wayne’s focus, “the Queen of Sheba with a slight case of sunstroke” to whom Wayne pays tribute with more recovered make-up which he notes she always applies before the rations of water are distributed (86; 88).

Eventually, Wayne’s contempt arises regarding Anne and her make-up as the journey continues. In the “July 24” entry of the diary he keeps, Wayne notes that she has begun to wear her make-up during the daytime. He remarks that her face “looks like a Halloween mask but I go out of my way to compliment her [. . .] sorry to say that when she wipes off the make-up she isn’t the only one to get a shock” (90). By “August 19,” he describes her as being “painted like a harpy” (91). Nine days later, he describes her with “unwashed face covered with blisters and smudged mascara [. . .] complaining to me about the San Francisco earthquake, as if it were my fault. Sounds like a [. . .] twentieth century marriage” (92). Her “decay” continues as, upon
their arrival at the Holiday Inn in Dodge City, “[w]ithout her make-up and with [her] blonde hair in a towel, she resembled a pale-faced, ravaged nun” (104).

This passage echoes Brownmiller who writes,

Metaphoric reminders of the feminine ideal are doubly instructive when they cast the ambition of women in a monstrous light. Think of the glamorous façade on a chilling Faye Dunaway in Network [...] as a frightening image of femininity abandoned, the ugly witch with her crooked nose and hairy chin is all the more satanic when she rides her broomstick at midnight, subverting the trusty symbol of loyal housewifery [...] to nefarious ends. (229)

To emphasize further Anne no longer being an object of sexual attraction to Wayne, he compares her to that class of females for whom both desiring sexually and being desired sexually are off-limits. Anne is also “well aware that Wayne had exploited her weakness for beauty parlours and old movie magazines, her dream of being a film star. But in the streets of Dodge City he had defended her.” She tells him, “You kept me alive [...] but I won’t forgive you” (Ballard, Hello 107).

Upon their arrival in Las Vegas, Anne veers back into the role of Ballardian damsel, overwhelmed at the neon signs and strip lighting. Ballard writes, “Anne reached forward to hold [Wayne’s] arm. Her face flickered anxiously in the first reflections from the skyline signs to the big hotels” (115). She soon checks her appearance in the mirror (116). The crew encounters an animatronic re-enactment of Frank Sinatra, joined onstage for a rendition of his signature tune “My Way,” by Dean Martin and, sporting a gingham dress, pigtails and ruby slippers, Judy Garland? The confusion Wayne experiences at this historical inaccuracy takes on a decidedly cynical tone, noting that Liza Minelli, her daughter, should be onstage instead for purposes of historical accuracy. Garland had “been dead of drugs and alcohol for too many years to be singing as this straw-haired teenager from The Wizard of Oz [...] the wistful, young Judy
Garland would never have sung this brassy, self-congratulatory song” (119-20). In the animatronic Garland, Ballard simultaneously reduces the late entertainer to that of a child while also belittling her for the substance abuse issues that killed her, all in the name of a historically accurate reenactment.

Joining Garland was another doomed-but-iconic female in holographic form, Marilyn Monroe. The faux messiah President Charles Manson projects a giant version of her in the night sky over Vegas. Wayne describes Monroe as “a large statue of a bare-legged woman in a pink dress raised provocatively above her thighs. She stood astride Las Vegas, blonde hair thrown back, letting the fountains of casino light cool her legs” (136). This is not the Marilyn attempting to preserve her modesty over an air vent, but rather a hypersexualized version.

Wayne’s disruption of the animatronic Vegas show brings down Manson’s special patrol group on the crew (121). In hindsight, the armed youths reflect Ballard’s experiences in Dusseldorf as well as foreshadow the parent slaughtering children of Running Wild, the novella that will inaugurate the final section of Ballard’s career (121). The second-in-command, Ursula, Ballard describes as “a handsome seventeen-year-old girl with motor-biker’s goggles in a bandeau around her thick black hair” (122). Ursula provides Anne Summers with competition for Wayne’s attention. Wayne considers her a “beautiful but absurd girl, he could imagine her teaching him to tango with bursts from her machine gun” (179). Yet, Anne remains Wayne’s object of lust in the main.

While flying his pedal craft, the Gossamer Albatross, Wayne spies Anne Summers driving her red Mustang (155). He dips the craft’s wings down to graze the water’s surface. Anne notices and honks her horn in reply. Wayne reflects that:
He loved his mild flirtations with Anne, an elaborate courtship between the winged man and the racing woman. On the ground [. . . ] he felt clumsy and uncouth. Did she realise, as he circled her hotel in the evening, that one day she might become the First Lady?

No longer is the Ballardian male and female to be a new Adam and Eve, but perhaps a new John and Jackie Kennedy. Ballard repeats the midair consummation of a relationship from *The Unlimited Dream Company*, though only one of the members took to the air. Wayne still has hope he will be with Anne Summers, though he can only sweep her off her feet if he is not on the ground.

However, Ursula ends up with Wayne at the end of *Hello America*. Following the inevitable collapses of life in Las Vegas as Manson’s motives of wanting to launch nuclear missiles instead of a communications satellite are revealed, and Manson’s assassination, Wayne and the others escape on the Sunlight Flier crafts developed by Wayne’s father, Professor Fleming. In what might be a *glancing* nod of equality, it is Ursula who flies down to Wayne, asking him, “Say, you there – have you seen the President? A young fellow by the name of Wayne?” (222).

He takes flight to catch up with Ursula. The last image, and Ballard’s last laugh, depicts, in a full-fledged echo of Blake and Miriam this time, Wayne and Ursula flying together, however not as equals. Rather, “Wayne embraced Ursula’s shoulder reassuring the suddenly panicky young woman” (224). Why does she go from confident to panicky? Beyond simply being a Ballardian female, a temptress to be conquered, it is never explained.

In the character of Anne Summers, one sees an incremental evolution of the Ballardian female, still marked by an ambivalence of attraction and revulsion on the part of the male character(s). While still too early in Margaret Thatcher’s career to be a direct parallel to her,
Anne embodies the threat of the Second Wave feminists and what they hope for versus what males wished were still the same. Her position as a nuclear physicist, along with her at-times icy demeanor, represents the threat to male professionals, yet she remains focused on her vanity and “needs” saving by Wayne or other males in the expedition. She takes one step toward Helen Wilder and two steps back to Beatrice Dahl.

_The Day of Creation_

Released in 1987 after the literary success of Ballard’s first attempt at autobiography, _Empire of the Sun, The Day of Creation_ presents Mallory, a doctor with the World Health Organization who attempts to gain control of an underground river. While initially successful in his pursuit, the tampering with the waterway leads to its drying up, destroying everything that was created momentarily by its alteration. Martin Amis, among others, noted the heavily repetitive themes of the “M”-surnamed “protagonist” going up river like so many Ballardian characters before (Baxter, _Inner_ 288-89). Gasiorek summarized the piece as “an allegory of the deluded self-exculpations of the colonialist enterprise, the central protagonist’s vision of irrigating Africa originates in an emancipatory impulse that is quickly over-run by his self aggrandising dreams of power and glory” (134). Mallory quickly bypasses taking credit for discovering the river to believing, as the _faux_ messiah among the colonial unwashed, he _created_ the river.

The scant criticism on _The Day of Creation_, when it pays _any_ attention to females in the text, focuses on Mallory’s relationship with Noon, the prepubescent soldier which makes for an
uncomfortable examination, given the pedophilic overtones such criticism evokes (Baxter, *Inner 286; Gasiorek 134; Stephenson 137-38). No attention is paid to the other females in the text, which hurts the text considerably. Where Anne Summers and Ursula failed in *Hello America*, Nora Warrender and her female servants provide many a callback to the lamia/damsel archetypes, as well as the roving band of predatory females dating from *High Rise* onward.

It is curious that Ballard refers to females in several chapters in *Day of Creation*. Chapter One is titled “The Desert Woman,” while Chapters Eleven and Twenty-Four pluralize the feminine with “The House of Women” and “A Dream of Fair Women” (5). The last reference to females, this time in the typically feminized title given to a vessel, rests with Chapter Thirty-One, “The Death of the *Diana*” (6). Given the emphasis on females, both in chapter names and other characters in the text, the mind boggles that so much criticism focuses on the relationship between Noon and Mallory.

*The Day of Creation* is narrated in flashback. The narrator, Doctor Mallory, notices that an unknown female frequents his living quarters, leaving behind “curious footprints [. . . ] with their scarred right heels and narrow, thumb-like toes” (8). Strips of film, food, and cigarettes are removed. He finds his mattress mended crudely, “though perhaps more for her comfort than mine” (8). Has Suzanne Clair been cured of her leprosy and broken free from her crystalline entombment? In the passage where, evoking the leprosy allegedly passed between her and Charles Ransom like a venereal disease in *The Crystal World*, Mallory remarks:

The thought that I might be sharing a bed with one of these young desert women adds a sexual glamour to my dreams of the night rivers. If she suffers from eczema or impetigo, I will soon carry the infection on my skin, but as I lie in the bunk, I prefer to think of her naked to the waist bathing in the warm waters that flow inside my head. (8)
Note the “naked to the waist” characterization calling back to the topless model interviewing the patrons at the crashed cars exhibit which led to *Crash*.

The first voice other than Mallory’s in the text belongs to the Japanese photographer, Miss Matsuoka. Of her comment, Mallory compares it to “a query at a chaotic press conference” (10). No matter, for Miss Matsuoka was swept away by the soldiers in a foreshadowing of her future fate, as Mallory’s attention turned to that of Noon, who, as Wilson notes, Mallory names in the same manner he names the river, “branding and thus possessing her” (131). Mallory’s feelings about Matsuoka are made clear when he describes her in relation to rebel general Harare: “The presence of this Japanese photographer, endlessly scurrying at his heels, flattered [Harare’s] vanity” (Ballard 11). In one fell swoop, he belittles both Harare and more importantly Matsuoka, rendering her less a professional and more a fan girl.

Possibly foreshadowing the teenaged suburban guerrillas of *Runing Wild*, Mallory describes Noon as

> a panting twelve-year-old girl in an over large camouflage jacket [. . .] prodding me with her antique Lee-Enfield rifle, this child auxiliary had driven me all the way from my cell [. . .] like a drover steering a large and ill-trained pig. I had treated her infected foot when she wandered into the field clinic that morning with a party of women soldiers, but I knew [. . .] she would kill me without the slightest thought. (11)

While these women remain separate from the attendees of Mrs. Warrender Mallory meets later on, consider this secondary group of women another callback to the female marauders of *High Rise*, having traded their sunglasses and formal gowns for combat fatigues.

Yet, Mallory is not yet finished with Matsuoka. He recounts her arrival in Port-la-Nouvelle, camping in a tent below her light aircraft (17). She focuses on photographing all of the images of poverty in the area, ignoring his clinic. She later becomes Harare’s “court
photographer.” Mallory believes her to be either one of Harare’s “liberal sympathisers, or the field representative of a Japanese philanthropic foundation.”

Echoes of the Ballardian females, or more appropriately female singular, persist in Nora Warrender, labeled by Wilson as “a veterinarian, misandrist, and lord of a ship of nurses and prostitutes who pursue Mallory and dispatches vagrant soldiers” (131). Mallory describes her as “a small, disheveled woman, naked except for a faded dressing gown,” as is the normal attire, at least for Suzanne Clair, Beatrice Dahl and Catherine Austin from *The Crystal World, The Drowned World* and *The Drought* respectively (Ballard, *Day* 20). Widowed by deserting government soldiers, Mrs. Warrender took over the veterinary clinic, also like Catherine Austin in *The Drought* taking over from her father, until deciding one day to free the animals to their inevitable doom at the hands (or clubs or spears) of the townspeople (21). Mrs. Warrender occupies her large house half a mile from the airstrip, where she could be seen, the same female character stretching back to *Vermilion Sands*, “roam[ing] from window to window.” Mallory describes her as “[a] slim, handsome woman with a defensive manner.” In what could be viewed as a foreshadowing of Dr. Rafferty in *Rushing to Paradise*, the home was absent of any male servants, as it was now run by half a dozen African women, with the one named “Fanny” acting as Warrender’s guard. It may be reading too much into her loyal servant sharing the same name as a British derogatory slang term for the vagina, but one would not put it past Ballard either.

The inevitable occurs when she visits Mallory’s dispensary. Mallory states, “I assumed that she wanted to make more of our acquaintance – before her husband’s death [. . . ] she had been a good-looking woman” (21). In truth, she only wants to try a new sleeping pill. Mallory alleges that “without intending to, I had managed to take advantage of her [. . . ]. I realized that
she had not the slightest interest in me, and had offered her body to me like a pacifier given to a
difficult child.”

She continues to treat him in a motherly way, albeit a mother who is stern, disapproving,
and not keen to indulge his oedipal fantasies in the slightest, shoving him away as she gathers her
looted clothing and refusing his offer to drive her home (24). Mallory regards her as exuding “a
false calm that concealed a complete rejection of reality” (24-25). She bids him “Don’t give up”
and returns to the feeding station, with one of her ballgowns draped over her arm. Mallory still
fantasizes about her, imagining lying with her “watched perhaps by a stern-faced bridal jury
of her servant women. Fanny and Louisa and Poupee would be watching for the first drop of
blood, not my bride’s” (26). With this passage, Ballard illustrates Dworkin’s statement that
“Men say [. . .] that as mothers we injure them irreparably, as wives we castrate them, as lovers,
we steal from them semen, youth and manhood – and never, never do we ever give them
enough” (Our Blood 19). Mallory would likely accuse Nora and her crew of all of the above.

When Ballard’s camera returns to focus on Noon, she has been captured and beaten by
the police chief Kagwa’s forces. Mallory describes Noon as having lost both her rifle and jacket
and wearing only her ragged shorts and green singlet. Ballard writes, “She sat on the ground as
the rifle barrels bruised her cheeks and forehead. Wiping the blood from her nose, she tied and
untied the bandage around her infected foot. When she saw me approach, she looked up with the
same hostile eyes that steered me onto the beach two hours earlier” (Day 34). Yet, he spares her
from an execution by Kagwa’s guards, claiming she is not the same girl who tried to kill him
earlier, despite Matsuoka’s claims otherwise. When next seen after Mallory’s discovery of the
river, a hundred yards away, “[s]he stared at the lake, her hands dancing excitedly at her sides,
and then scutter[ing] away when she saw me approach [. . .]. For reasons of her own, the girl was defending the stream” (60).

To say Mallory finds Matsuoka an irritant would be an understatement. He feels she points her camera at him when lacking subject matter, regarding him as “one of the odder denizens of the forest” (56). She lives alone in her tent, below her aircraft, and refuses to share her supplies. Her incessant photographing only adds insult to injury.

Mrs. Warrender and Noon merge in the opening of “The River Mallory.” Ballard describes Mrs. Warrender with two of her servant women “knee-deep in the water, skirts fastened around their bare thighs” filling a water drum. He describes them as “the sisterhood under the sign of Aquarius” with all the anachronistic allusions to the 1960s counter-culture present, if incorrect (59). At the opposite end of the river, between two of Kagwa’s soldiers, is Noon, playing with her bandage again (60). Mrs. Warrender’s focus, however, is on the soldiers, her face “set in an expression of stony hostility.” Mallory wonders if her response was due to colonial racism as a “former White Rhodesian” or if she recognized, among their number, her husband’s killers.

Mallory notes Warrender’s dressing gown is not fastened in a manner typical of British prudishness. Rather, she allowed her breasts to be exposed. She is not, however, doing so “out of coquetry” (60). By revealing herself, she is stating to Mallory “in the most matter-of-fact way that [he] did not exist.” His protests that the water might be safe are followed by physical confrontation, resulting in Mallory tripping in the water. Noon then tries to drown him by churning water over his legs in her coracle (61).
To return one last time to Miss Matsuoka, the annoyance she brings Mallory, according to the rules of Ballardian narrative, means that she must be disposed of quickly. As Ballard sends Susan out the window to be bounced along the rooftops in *The Wind from Nowhere*, he sends Miss Matsuoka off in a tumble of logs into the river, as Mallory attempts to divert the channel to save the drilling project. Only the torn sleeve of her flight suit remains visible, floating in the water after the “accident” (69). Her body is recovered later on the beach below the tobacco warehouse. By that time, Mallory is convalescing at Mrs. Warrender’s, though Mallory remains suspicious that were it not for Nora, “I was sure that Fanny and Louisa and Poupee would have wheeled the cot on to the terrace and tipped their unwelcome guest into the nearest whirlpool” (70). He also found himself confused as to why Nora allowed him to stay there while he recovered (71).

Noon resurfaces, checking on the river from her coracle. Mallory admits to leaving food for, as he labels her, “my child” (74). He sees Poupee attack Noon with a willow branch. Nora intervenes in Mallory’s altercation with Poupee, “steer[ing] me away from the water, as if I were a senile patient at a private clinic [. . .]. She still wore the dressing-gown, a badge of whatever outrage she had suffered – before leaving Port-la-Nouvelle” (75). It is suggested, if not explicitly stated, that Harare’s guards beat and raped Nora. When Mallory voiced his dismay that her female guards beat Noon, Nora reminds him, in echoes of Matsuoka, that Noon tried to kill him, asking him, “Is death less final when the trigger-finger belongs to a twelve-year-old?” Nora tells him that Noon acts as his “little messenger,” keeping him informed regarding the river (76).
When Mallory tells Nora the river was soon to become a war zone, Nora delivers a monologue that positions her brilliantly against the warring males in Ballard’s novel:

Men must play their dangerous games [. . .]. I’d let that river run free. Then it might sweep them away. All of them, Harare and Kagwa and their mercenaries, and you too, doctor. I could open the station again [. . .]. A new game reserve populated by every living species – except one. (78; emphasis added)

Warrender’s aim parallels that espoused by Dworkin when she writes, “We intend to change [the world] so totally that someday the texts of masculine authors will be anthropological curiosities” (Our Blood 9). In her employment of essentialist rhetoric, setting herself against the war-like males, Nora Warrender’s desire to drown out all of the males and return to a prelapsarian existence sans Adam places her in the evolutionary line between Helen Wilder and Dr. Rafferty among the Ballardian women, taking up arms against their male oppressors.

When Mallory is able to get close to Noon to assess her appearance, without river or rifle between them, he notes the scarring around her brows and lips, figuring her either abused to the point of brain damage or born autistic, and orphaned following her mother’s death (Ballard, Day 81). Any attempt at further communication is scuppered by the arrival of Kagwa. Mallory remarks that the last image of her face made her resemble “that of a teenage mother whose child is threatened” (82).

Why, in so much of the scant criticism on Ballard’s works, when Day of Creation is discussed, is Noon given so much ink? She remains an undeveloped character. Too young to conquer sexually, though there are passages that veer uncomfortably toward pedophilia, she falls short of the damsel archetype. Due to her age, the lamia archetype also fails horribly. Mallory voices his confusion as to why Noon attached herself to him, “making no attempt to hide her
disapproval, like a serious-minded child watching a clumsy adult” (102). Furthermore, Mallory believes that “[o]ne false step and this odd child would stab me through a kidney.”

Certain passages of how Mallory regards Noon prove more uncomfortable than others. The segment where Noon dives into the water, spear in hand, serves as an example:

I rested astride the gantry, watching the semaphore of Noon’s pale feet. A coquettish water-nymph, she was inviting a passing mariner down to her bower. I assumed that she wanted to impress me, to tempt me down into her realm where she, without a doubt, would have the upper hand. (107)

Indeed, the segments of Noon in the water prove a bit much on the grounds of good taste. As another example from later in the text reads:

She lay on her back in the dark water, her legs breaking the surface as she lifted her knees, admitting the river like a lover between her thighs. The platinum foam, the soft teeth of the black admirer, played across her nipples. Was she, in her child coquette’s way, trying to draw me back to the river? (131).

Doubtlessly, Captain Kagwa thinks something amiss when he discovers the two occupying his limousine, particularly given Mallory’s naked state. When he says that Mallory is harboring one of Kagwa’s guerrillas, Mallory informs him, “The girl is working for me” (113). At this, Kagwa asks, “Is she still a girl, doctor? Your medical dictionary might say something else [. . .]. Everyone is concerned for you—I had to stop Mrs. Warrender hiring a boat to follow you” (113).

In truth, Noon never seems to develop beyond the intelligence of an affectionate, loyal guard dog. This further complicates those passages where Mallory attempts to sexualize the child. Worryingly, in the opening to Chapter Twenty-Two, he labels their connection as a “courtship” (150). However, she is not the Thatcher doppelganger that dominates the faux messiah period of Ballard’s career. That title belongs to Nora Warrender, who returns with her
female brigade in Chapter Twenty-Four, the aforementioned “A Dream of Fair Women” with Mallory again in recovery aboard the floating brothel of the *Diana* (174).

After remembering how he arrived on the ship, Mallory confronts Fanny regarding the whereabouts of Noon and Sanger, the filmmaker the two were with when rescued. Fanny responds to Mallory, “You can go on deck. Your time for fresh air [. . .]. No more strange medicine from Dr. Mal” (176). At a loss of how to respond to her, Mallory “followed her large and purposeful buttocks up the companionway. Although a handsome woman [. . .] she now belonged to another, remote order of womanhood.” In this rare instance, Fanny subverts the typical racist stereotype of mainstream media that portrays black women as “wild animals ready for any kind of sex, any time, with anyone” (Carter 318). Wisely, Mallory veers more toward Laing than Wilder in his regard toward Fanny.

Upon his reunion with Nora Warrender, Mallory sees she still wears her dressing-gown “as if she had spent the intervening months idling about her dressing table and was waiting for me to join her in a nearby cabin” (Ballard, *Day* 180). Her hair is now shorn to a point to where he compares her to a concentration camp survivor. In reality, *Mallory* is a prisoner to these women (181). During their journey from Port-la-Nouvelle, the women have acquired an arsenal of firearms under mysterious circumstances. Nora tells him, “They . . . weren’t needed anymore” (183). Had she finally exacted some level of revenge for her husband’s murder?

Two passages regarding Nora represent how Ballard, for all the talk of him as a prophet of the near future, was more accurately beating dead horses of the recent past. If the anxieties of the motorways and tower blocks were *passé* at the time of his techno-barbarism period, how silly, given the 1987 publication date of *Day of Creation*, Ballard’s caricature of the Second
Wave seems. Mallory wants to skipper the Diana, but Nora informs him that the ship has no captain. The women take turns in “[t]he sort of cooperation that rouses all your suspicions” (185). Additionally, Mallory wonders, “Had she worn the shabby bath-robe, [interestingly no longer referred to as a dressing-gown] during her rape by Harare’s men? Like her cropped hair, it was meant to serve as a constant reminder [ . . . ] of the crime committed against herself.” In the cooperative skippering of the ship, along with Nora’s haircut fitting the stereotype of the butch lesbian, Ballard employs the same stereotypes about the Second Wave still trundled out to this day by the Right, a decade plus after the fact.

On a final note, Mallory’s nakedness, previously not a problem for him, registers when he realizes, having grazed a wound on his person, that he had been stripped of his filthy, decaying clothes when brought on board the Diana. He says, “During the previous days it had never once occurred to me that I was naked, even in the presence of these women. By refusing to see me as a man, they had effectively castrated me” (189). As effectively as they de-stoned a pair of avocados, no doubt.

As the women of the Diana begin to perform brisk business with the soldiers, Nora finally sheds the dressing gown for the formal ball gown that Mallory recalls her rescuing among the garments strewn on the beach at Port-la-Nouvelle. According to Mallory, “[It] made her seem like a young woman again” (217). Still, Mallory disliked the way in which Mrs. Warrender had recruited these illiterate village girls as whores [ . . . ] bait in whatever trap she was setting [ . . . ]. For reasons I chose not to examine, the calm but threatening presence of this unnerving woman always set off an immediate surge of my fever. (218)

The novel ends with the Mallory drying up, coinciding with Noon’s disappearance, assuming she ever really existed. Kagwa, Harare, and their men are presumed dead, though Mallory never
sees their bodies. As for Nora and her tribe of women, Mallory believes they “disappeared into their mountain dream of a new nature reserve” (254). By placing Warrender and her “followers” in the wilderness, destined to start a new reserve, Ballard sets up thematically the final faux and female messiah, Dr. Barbara Rafferty in *Rushing to Paradise*.

*Rushing to Paradise*

During an interview with Damien Love, Ballard labelled Dr. Rafferty as a “sort of Margaret Thatcher figure. Another messianic do-gooder. Another public-spirited psychopath” (327; emphasis added). In a follow-up question, Love asked, “Not quite as attractive though?” Ballard reiterates his sexual obsession with the Prime Minister, “Oh, I found [Thatcher] wonderfully attractive. I always had a thing for Margaret Thatcher. Until I grew too old for her.” The resemblance to Thatcher of Rafferty was noted elsewhere two years prior to the Love interview by Lukas Barr, who described Dr. Rafferty as “a ruthless and dictatorial ecological campaigner who bears a not unfaint resemblance” to the former Prime Minister (283).

In his summary of Ballardian females, Delville believes, “they often stand as rather effaced and elusive but nevertheless symbolically charged figures whose main function in the narrative is to elicit a particular emotion or intellectual response in the mind of the protagonist” (47). The major exception to this rule Delville sees in the person of Dr. Barbara Rafferty, the villain, if such categories fit Ballard’s writing, of *Rushing to Paradise*. 
Rushing to Paradise focuses on the “latent and manifest motives of Dr. Barbara Rafferty, the charismatic leader of a community of radical environmentalists overrunning the deserted Pacific atoll of Saint-Espirit” (Delville 78). Rafferty’s motive “is not to save the albatross but to transform Saint Espirit into a breeding sanctuary for women, whom she comes to consider as the real endangered species. Her purpose then becomes to turn the island colony into ‘a sanctuary for all [the women’s] threatened strengths, their fire rage and cruelty.’” Make no mistake, however, this is not a utopia wherein females are able to “de-domesticate [ . . . ] and recover their lost dignity.” D. Harlan Wilson believes Rafferty “becomes a Kurtzian psycho and wants the island to be a [ . . . ] dark and twisted version of [ . . . ] Herland” (141). Dr. Rafferty’s obsessions take precedence over others’ concerns as the need to satisfy her own obsessions lead her to downfall.

According to Wilson, David Pringle saw other influences besides Thatcher in the character of Dr. Rafferty, citing German Green Party member Petra Kelly, and Dr. Barbara Moore, a “British engineer, long-distance walker and ‘breatharian’ who gained notoriety in the 1960s for her views about nutrition and physiology” (144). Moore seems highly likely as an influence, not only due to her forename, but also her publicity-starved nature and eccentricities, including believing she cured herself of leukemia via experimental diet, as well as the idea that abstention from basically everything, coupled with a proper diet, could enable people to live to the age of two hundred.

Whatever the real-life inspirations behind the text, Delville criticizes that “As is often the case in Ballard’s fiction [ . . . ] the specific ‘issue’ which constitutes the starting point of the story is gradually stifled by the psychological depth and the allegorical dimension of the narrative, and
it would therefore be a mistake to interpret the novel as (merely) a satire on extremist tendencies in either animal-rights activism or feminism” (80).

Gasiorek agrees, labeling the text as “[o]stensibly a satire of eco-feminism,” though he finds that aspect of the text not terribly convincing. The real crux of the piece is power, specifically the kind wielded by those whose detachment from reality is as severe as that of Dr. Barbara Rafferty, who is the only person who has “the force of will to carry through a project of extermination through which the male members of her new tribe are progressively wiped out once their procreative functions have been fulfilled” (135).

As with Noon, Dr. Rafferty is more than the lamia figure archetype that permeates his work up to this point. Rather, Ballard believes she is an immensely powerful, strong-willed woman, who has all the ancient, ancestral power of women as creators, as controllers, as enchanters of men, as crones, as mothers – all those archetypal female images, which have so terrified and inspired men through the ages, are incarnated in a small way in this character. (qtd. in Delville 79)

The bulk of the story represents an account given by Neil Dempsey, the future stud of Rafferty’s gyno-utopia. Dempsey finds himself so pulled in by Rafferty’s sexual magnetism that he makes it his goal to protect his mistress from reality. He remains loyal to Rafferty almost to the very end of the novel. Dr. Rafferty’s “tools of the trade” were not of the sort one might anticipate from one with the “Dr.” prefix before his or her name. For those looking for vitamins or syringes in her medical kit, none are to be found. Neil catalogues the contents of her bag, including cans of spray paint, a machete, a protest banner and a video camera (Ballard, Rushing 11). Rather, one is reminded of Dr. Timothy Leary. An academic, to be sure, but his acid
activism during the 1960s also took on cult-like overtones. All of Dr. Rafferty’s equipment would serve his aims in spreading his message of “Turn on. Tune in. Drop out.”

To say Neil is smitten with the deranged doctor would be an understatement. Witness the sexual overtones that mark Neil’s attempts to restrain Dr. Rafferty in the scene aboard their boat, after she becomes apoplectic at the sight of Japanese whalers escorting a factory ship that dumped a combination fat and blood slick on the sea:

Neil held her around the waist, fearing that the deranged physician would leap into the bloody waves. As they wrestled together, cheeks flushed by the reflected carmine of the sea, the pressure of Neil’s hands on her muscular buttocks seemed almost to excite Dr. Barbara, distracting her until she pushed him away [. . .]. (12)

Noting her demeanor, Neil remarks that Dr. Barbara was able to switch from “peremptory schoolmistress to doting mother in a way that always disarmed him” (14). One should recall school mistress is a designation Ballard also assigned Thatcher. It comes as little surprise when one reads:

She was forever touching Neil, peering into his eyes and checking his urine as if carrying out a running inventory of his working parts, a calculated appeal to a sixteen-year-old’s libido that he could barely resist, whatever its motives. Once, when she hugged him playfully in the galley, a slice of sweet potato between her teeth, he had been tempted to strip naked in front of her.

She knows all too well she is playing on his hormonal ego when she tells him later in the text, “Neil, there are millions of young people like you all over the world. They won’t listen to me but they’ll follow you” (23).

Neil may remain oblivious to Rafferty’s true motives, but others remain suspicious. Following his hospitalization after sustaining a bullet wound to his foot, Neil’s recovery is overseen by a South African nurse, Carole Crawford. In their exchange while Neil watches
Rafferty on television, Carole makes no effort to hide her displeasure with Dr. Rafferty, referring to her as “The great lady doctor, still itching to save the world” (26). When Neil informs her that he likes Dr. Rafferty, Carole replies, “Of course you do – she nearly got you killed. Who can compete with that?” When Carole expresses her uncertainty about Rafferty, Neil replies, “She wants to save the albatross. Is there something wrong with that?” Crawford responds, “Maybe there is, Neil. Yes, I think there is.” Neil ignores this, noting how Rafferty has gained weight, “thanks to a regime of fund-raising dinners” (27). Additionally, he notes how “the micro-climate of TV studios had left her face attractively pale.”

During his first interactions with Rafferty, Neil describes her as a “shabby, middle-aged woman in a threadbare cotton dress [. . .]. Neil assumes that she [is] a beggar or down-and-out” (29). When approaching her, Neil explains he was saying goodbye to his parents, noting his stepfather’s status as a colonel in the U.S. Army. In a possible echo of Jane in Concrete Island, Rafferty barks, “One of the world’s greatest environmental threats [. . .] they said goodbye to us a long time ago” (30).

Curiously, given what Rafferty sets out to do later in the novel, she tells Neil during their “acquaintance period,” “Avoid meat products [. . .]. They’re crammed with hormones and antibiotics. Already you can see that men in the west are becoming feminized – large breasts, fatter hips, smaller scrotums” (34). Considering her gynocentric utopia in-progress, would this not be the ideal for males?

Evidence of Rafferty’s aims being more messianic than quixotic emerge the day before Neil is scheduled to leave the hospital. An article in a magazine posted to Neil reveals that Rafferty had lost her license to practice medicine in 1982 following the deaths of two terminally
ill elderly women. Rafferty had assisted their suicides via a cocktail of potassium chloride, morphine, and chloroform. Upon investigation, six more patients added to the death toll (39-40). The path from one-woman Dignitas to “Save the Albatross!” was marked with bloody footprints. Rafferty rationalized to Neil that “Old women deserve special care, they’re not looked after as gently as old men” (43).

Ostensibly, Rafferty’s commune Saint-Esprit is organized with an eco-warrior slant to save the albatross. The first hint of Rafferty’s faux messiah status-in-development comes via David Carline, who summarizes Rafferty’s speech/pledge never to leave Saint-Esprit as “the oldest religion there ever was—sheer magnetic egoism [. . . ] it’s just what I expected from her” (84). Still, does he not wonder why the almond aroma was coming off the grape drink in his hand?

In Chapter Eleven, Ballard informs the reader that Dr. Rafferty wants a child, albeit one conceived by Neil and one of the two German hippie girls, Trudi and Inger, who joined the commune. They raise the female membership alongside Dr. Rafferty, Professor Saito’s wife, and the French flight attendant, Monique. Monique occupies another pink-collar job, referred to colloquially as “trolley dolly” in British slang. The child would be a “sanctuary first-born who would celebrate the new kingdom of Saint-Esprit” (144). At this point, however, that only thing they want Neil to place in their stomachs is food.

Rafferty’s exchange, revealing Neil’s potential “stud” status in the commune sounds eerily similar to Hardoon in his attempts to tame the gales:

I think they should each have a baby [. . . ]. They need a fresh start with a new husband [. . . ]. I’m thinking of only one father, in point of fact [. . . ]. You’re young, in the peak of health, and ready for responsibility. Why do you think I’ve been testing your blood and urine all this time? (149)
Rafferty reasons to herself that “[e]ven the slightest hints that Neil was sexually involved with Trudi and Inger and the father of their expected children would light a touch-paper in the minds of Monique and Mrs. Saito.” As with the women of Shepperton after Blake’s arrival in *The Unlimited Dream Company*, they too would become obsessed with having a baby.

After the murders of Monique’s father and Trudi’s mentally challenged infant, Gubby (43), Dr. Rafferty plays on Neil’s adolescent male ego again, telling him, “I trust you [. . .] Neil – but I’m not sure if the others are strong enough. David and Kimo had worked hard, like Professor Saito, but they’ve started to fall ill, and soon they’ll be sick all the time just as little Gubby was” (165). When Neil suggests inviting more men to the sanctuary, she tells him “One man is enough, Neil. A man with the right fever in his blood [. . .]. In fact, we need women more than men. Women work harder and survive on less [. . .]. I should have brought more women with me but I had to make do with the men” (165-66). One does not have a long wait before Rafferty lapses back into ‘mad scientist revealing her plan for global domination’ which she does with all the melodrama of a pantomime villain, revealing to Neil:

> Why did we come to Saint-Espirit? It wasn’t the birds [. . .] It’s we who are threatened – Monique and myself, Mrs. Saito, Inger and Trudi, even poor old Mrs. Anderson, playing batman to the Major [. . .]. Saint-Espirit isn’t a sanctuary for the albatross, it’s a sanctuary for women – or could be. We’re the most endangered species of all [. . .]. We domesticated ourselves. But I know women are made of fiercer stuff. We have spirit, passion, fire, or used to. We can be cruel, and violent, even more than men. We can be killers, Neil [. . .]. The biggest problem the world faces is [. . .] too many men. (170-71)

Neil fathers a child with Trudi, though the child dies soon after, being born with a birth defect (read: having a Y chromosome) (182). Both Inger and Monique become pregnant by Neil.

> [He] found it hard to believe that either Monique or Inger would miscarry
[...]. Monique stood in the bows, swimsuit rolled around her waist, exposing the large breasts that seemed to be filled by scarcely smaller pregnancies of their own. The hard-working and over-serious Air France hostess had become a sedate Juno [...] lipsticking obscenities on [Neil’s] back as he slept. (182)

Ballard writes that all three females had “close-cropped hair into a mannish trim” (183).

Additionally, Dr. Rafferty notes the sex of the babies was female, “increasing the female population of Saint-Espirit to the point where it will exceed the number of men.” As soon as the babies are born, Dr. Rafferty directs Neil to sleep with the women again. In this passage, Ballard’s critique of the radical feminist separatist groups finds its most stereotypical expression in the “butch lesbian” haircuts of Inger, Trudi, and Monique.

Additionally, in the description of Neil and Monique’s sexual intercourse, the very criticism by Dworkin about the dehumanizing effects of pornography appear, writ large. Ballard writes:

[Monique] never relaxed with Neil, even when they were in bed together, Assigning him portions of her anatomy and taking him through their sex act as if demonstrating a complex piece of cabin equipment to a dimwitted passenger. (183; emphasis added)

Matters are no less uncomfortable in the description of sex with Inger and Trudi as older sisters cheerfully committing incest with him. Neil loved their darting hands that stung his buttocks when he was clumsy or over-ardent [...]. He loved their teeth biting his nipples, fingers gripping his testicles as if weighing the sperm he was incubating for them. Sex with Inger and Trudi was a happy version of the sex he had known with Dr. Barbara [...]. He was surprised and hurt when they pushed him from their beds once Dr. Barbara announced that they had conceived [...]

[H]e sensed that [they were] slipping away to join the camp of the enemy. (183-84).

Neil’s exchange with Trudi after she discovers the sex of her unborn child emphasizes further the mentality of the women in the sanctuary as joining “the enemy.” When Neil asks if the child,
like Gubby, had any birth defects, Trudi says, “Of course not. It’s a girl. You’ll have a new Gubby to play with” (185). Neil reminds her that Gubby was a male child, to which Trudi states, “Never mind. A girl is even nicer – you know that, Neil.” With that statement, one might consider Trudi fully assimilated.

When Neil broaches the subject of having male children to Dr. Rafferty, she reiterates the importance of females to the commune. She explains that, “No. We don’t need more men, not even if they’re strong. One strong and healthy male is enough, and we have you, Neil” (187-88). Again, Dr. Rafferty veers toward the pantomime villain in her wish to accelerate human pregnancy, to “hot-house the future into existence and fill the sanctuary with women” (189). When Neil seeks clarification, asking, “The sort of women who dislike men?” Dr. Rafferty seems wounded, stating that women do not dislike men. Rather, “[W]e’ve been too kind to them, letting them play their dangerous games” (189). With that, she sends him off to “play” with Mrs. Saito.

As more women come to join the sanctuary, after Kimo and Professor Saito both die, having been secretly being poisoned slowly by Dr. Rafferty, Neil and David Carline find themselves ostracized with Neil suspicious of how the fourteen-year-old Moluccan boy, who Ballard blatantly names Nihal, is fawned over by Trudi, Monique and Dr. Rafferty. Only the truly oblivious would be able to ignore that he is being groomed as a replacement (201).

Neil discovers the husbands of the two Swedish females, who entered into Saint-Espirit, with no small amount of trepidation on either female’s part, did not, in fact, leave the island in the middle of the night with David Carline (213). Neil finds their shallow graves, as well as another containing his clothing (220). He assumes he is soon to join them. He realizes Dr.
Rafferty has murdered all the men, including Dr. Saito and Kimo, and she remains a threat to all on the island.

When Ballard’s novel reaches its inevitable Jonestown-esque conclusion, matters feel anticlimactic as Neil surveys the corpses lying in bed together:

Mrs. Saito and Monique lay together [ . . . ] hands clasped around their waists. Flies festered on their bruised lips drinking the tears that filled their eyes [ . . . ]. Inger and Trudi lay beside each other [ . . . ]. The dark had entered their faces and drained the flesh to the waiting bones and flies fought among the open needle-marks on their arms. (232)

Dr. Rafferty, surprising Neil, informs him that all died by her hand, including the unborn children (233). She states, “They weren’t strong enough” (234). On the arrival of the French to reclaim the island, Neil, the more recent arrivals who had also been poisoned, and his would-be replacement, Nihal, are rescued. Dr. Rafferty, in the tradition of Jim Jones before her, commits suicide but in adhering to her extremist tendencies, drowns herself not unlike feminist icon Virginia Woolf before her (239).

In a 1994 interview with Lukas Barr, Ballard remarked, “[W]e see extremist fringes popping up all over the place. The feminist movement has its own extremist fringe, and one could imagine a nightmare scenario of some very sinister movement emerging” (284). Barr views the text as taking on the Left. With regard to feminist “extremists,” Ballard said, “I don’t know where female separatists fit on the political spectrum. They want to destroy the social contract between men and women and replace it with nothing, they seem to believe that all penetrative sex is rape, if a wife loves her husband she’s exhibiting a ‘slave mentality’ [ . . . ]. [H]ow do you cope with that sort of fanaticism? Satire seems one way.”
Dr. Barbara Rafferty, to Ballard’s mind, “is transforming the island of Saint-Espirit into a huge psychosis of her own. Of course, not all the characters in my fiction, thank God, are as mad as she is, though I admire her” (286). A year later, speaking to Will Self, Ballard reflected that “[Dr. Rafferty] is probably my first female protagonist” but saw that line stretching back to the females in *Vermilion Sands* in that “although they are all told in the first person by a male narrator, -- each story is dominated by an enchantress figure” (305).

Expounding further on the story, Ballard said, “Barbara Rafferty is a new kind of figure for me, but I [ . . . ] couldn’t have used a lunatic male feminist. Also, the thesis of the novel advocates – that men are superfluous [ . . . ] we don’t need them anymore, or we don’t need more than a few – requires a [ . . . ] dominant female figure” (305). Self asked, “[S]ince the technologies of bio-engineering and contraception enable women to adopt all the necessary roles that men can adopt, so given a few cups of well-preserved semen, the need for men simply isn’t there anymore?” Ballard agreed (311).

The conversation with Self and Ballard digresses into an interesting essentialist discussion. Forecasting thirty years into the future, when Ballard believed genetic engineering, specifically designer babies, would be the norm, Ballard states, “I assume most people will choose a boy first” (311). Additionally, “bearing in mind that a lot of women who have one child never have another for all sorts of [ . . . ] reasons, that will lead inevitably to an imbalance between the sexes [ . . . T]hat is a recipe for civil unrest on a vast scale.” In those areas where parents opted for female over male babies, “one may find havens of social ease, low crime rates, tolerance, a powerful sense of community. More and more people may realise that [ . . . ] the best thing is to keep down the number of men.” The old reliance on physical strength attributed
to males is no longer needed in modern industry for Ballard. He refers to the male sex as “a rust bowl” (312). With one final look at the future, Ballard informs Self, “Men are going to have to cope with the huge task of deciding who they are. And they are going to have intense competition from the world of women” (313).

With a society in transition, so too did Ballard’s literary output appear during this third thematic quarter. In the characters of Dr. Miriam St. Cloud and Dr. Anne Summers, the lamia/damsel of the first tetralogy has achieved an advanced degree at university, though she still remains the objectified beauty to be conquered sexually by Ballard’s literary stand-in. The women of The Diana and the separatist commune at Saint Espirit build upon the isolated dropout Jane Sheppard in Concrete Island and the murderous cannibal tribe of High Rise. Nora Warrender and Dr. Barbara Rafferty both represent the ambivalently regarded strong female in a power position Thatcher held as Prime Minister at the time. Yes, in three out of the four texts, the messianic figure’s sex is male. However, it should be noted he is a faux messiah if not failed messiah. Only when Ballard performs literary gender reassignment does he get it ‘right.’ Ballard would continue to play with gender and politics in the final phase of his literary career.
Ballard did not make it ten years into the twenty-first century, succumbing to prostate cancer early in 2009. His “myths of the near future” were now realities of the immediate present (or recent past) moreso than the techno-barbarism tetralogy. Iain Sinclair’s charge of Ballard writing the same work repeatedly shows at a strength unseen in this last phase of his novels since his eco-disaster tetralogy (*Crash BFI* 49). Ballard himself admitted his lack of progress. When asked by Toby Litt if the same J.G. Ballard that wrote *Crash* would have written *Kingdom Come*, Ballard saw no differences. He believed he would have approached the text in the same way (“Dangerous” 423). During this final phase, he *does* approach the texts in the *same* way.

The plots of *Cocaine Nights* (1996), *Super-Cannes* (2000), *Millennium People* (2003), and *Kingdom Come* (2006), as well as their “forenovella” *Running Wild* (1988), follow the same basic pattern. The first-person narrator, a “troubled but pliable” figure, plays the detective role trying to piece together the order of a set of events to make sense of them. During the course of his pursuit, the narrator blends in with the subculture that he (always *he*) will expose and this capacity for identification with this subculture calls into question both his motives and character, reflecting Dworkin’s statement that “Virtually any circumstance in a man’s life will make him a hero to some group of people” (*Our Blood* 53). Also, this reveals the power and seductive nature of the subculture. At the end of each novel, though the narrator has seen through the subculture,
his attraction to it is exposed by the other characters in the novel (Gasiorek 171). Philip Tew corroborates:

Each novel is marked by a group [. . . ] which is committed to different forms of widespread violent social behaviour without any notion of financial gain. In turn, each group is peculiarly radicalized and their actions impact unexpectedly on the life of a centrally situated [. . . ] professional male in the throes of a profound [. . . ] identity crisis. (107-08)

Allegedly, Ballard lacked the patience to “stick with a narrative and a collection long enough to complete a conventional novel.” One sees this in the “limp conclusions of his late ‘thrillers’” as Cocaine Nights and Super-Cannes fizzle out two-thirds of the way through their respective narrative (Baxter, Inner 97). In hindsight, it is difficult not to see this period as a curtain call, given not only the repetitive nature of the plots during this phase, but also the number of Ballardian tropes present in this final section.

When asked about the origins of Cocaine Nights origins, Ballard replied, [W]atching the growth of the Costa del Sol and similar places along the Mediterranean [. . . ] and seeing a microcosm of a future of that waiting for us all [. . . ] these security obsessed enclaves with tele-surveillance and armed guards and smart cards and all the whole paraphernalia like a kind of maximum security state, reduced to the size of a village [. . . ]. People are obsessed with security at all costs [. . . ]. And I can see this development beginning to isolate people [. . . ] and they’ll pay an enormous price[.] (Love 321)

One should take Ballard’s statement with a grain of salt as Cocaine Nights’s antecedents stretch back to Vermilion Sands of the futuristic resort where “faded film stars and decadent rich people idle away their days” (320). More immediately, the false messiahs of the previous tetralogy return in the respective form of Bobby Crawford, Wilder Penrose, Richard Gould, and David Cruise, all embodying the next “Adolf Hitler [. . . ] to emerge from the wilderness of the [. . . ]
shopping malls. The first credit-card Buddha” Ballard envisioned in his interview with Zinovy Zinik (357).

While Anderzej Gasiorek argues that “fear of life without meaning connects the narration,” one could argue this theme runs through all of Ballard’s work, even back to the eco-disaster tetralogy (20). In this segment, collapse results, not out of failure, but the success of the system. *Millennium People* proves the odd exception to the rule. Of Ballard’s novels during this period, society exists in “a realm of high-tech perfection, a cool plate glass world in which virtually every aspect of the individual’s life is subject to a routine” (21). When “high-tech perfection” clashes with human imperfection, catastrophe is not a result but a demand of the inhabitants of society. When those repressed elements are released, its tangential tension is as well, bringing about the restoration of normalcy (Baxter, *Inner* 235). This also harkens back to the techno-barbarism period.

What of the Ballardian female? Outside of Charles Prentice’s ex-wife going off to join her all-women’s gliding group in *Cocaine Nights*, the female separatist groups of *High Rise*, *Hello America*, *Day of Creation*, and *Rushing to Paradise* no longer threaten the Ballardian male directly here, though the lamia and damsel archetypes of previous works persist. They have not been obliterated, but integrated. Julia Kristeva’s analysis of women involved in urban guerrilla organizations provides an excellent critical lens for examining females in this final section:

> [W]hen [ . . . ] a woman feels [ . . . ] her condition as a social being too brutally ignored by existing discourse or power [ . . . ] she may, by counterinvesting the violence she has endured, make of herself a ‘possessed’ agent of this violence in order to combat what was experienced as frustration – with arms which may seem disproportional, but which are not so in comparison with the [ . . . ] suffering from which they originate [ . . . ]. [T]his terrorist violence offers as a program of liberation an order which is even more oppressive, more sacrificial than those it combats. Strangely enough, it is not against totalitarian regimes that
these terrorist groups with women participants unleash themselves, but rather, against liberal systems, whose essence is, of course, exploitative, but whose expanding democratic legality guarantees relative tolerance. (28-29)

With Paula Hamilton and, to a lesser extent, Elizabeth Shand in *Cocaine Nights*, Frances Baring and Dr. Jane Sinclair in *Super-Cannes*, Kay Churchill and Vera Blackburn of *Millennium People*, and Dr. Julia Goodwin and Sergeant Mary Falconer in *Kingdom Come*, Ballard presents the final face of the threatening lamia: the *suburban* guerrilla.

**Context**

The overarching theme of this last period had, in fact, been gestating for twenty years. After the release of the first film adaptation of *Crash*, Ballard was the guest of honor at an event for Mercedes-Benz. His mode of transport, a 1904 Renault, proved too slow to travel the autobahn, forcing Ballard to travel the B-roads. In the pristine suburbs of Dusseldorf, Ballard saw the future. Here, Ballard “intuited why Germany had become an exporter of urban terrorism. This was the breeding ground of [Baader-Meinhof], a world where the only freedom was to be found in madness” (Baxter, *Inner* 213).

During the 1970s, “Wanted” posters depicting members of the Baader-Meinhof gang, or Red Army Faction, hung down from public spaces throughout Europe. Depending on one’s age and political leanings, Baader-Meinhof was regarded as heroic or villainous. Their origins arose out of the student protests of the late 1960s. At the height of the group’s activities, police profiled youths of driving age, leading many to bumper-sticker their autos with the phrase, “Ich
Baader-Meinhof engaged in armed violence against their parental figures, both figurative and literal, many of whom were previously high-ranking officials in Hitler’s Nazi Party.

When the four core members of the group, Jan-Karl Raspe, Andreas Baader, Gudrun Esslein, and Ulrike Meinhof were arrested and placed in Stammheim prison, a second wave of attacks took place out of revenge, with judges murdered, political figures kidnapped, and the German Embassy in Stockholm bombed. The trial of the core members began in 1975, though Meinhof committed suicide the following year. In 1977, the federal prosecutor was murdered (Savage, England’s 411; “Politics” 55).

After the surviving ringleaders were handed down life sentences, Red Army Faction members murdered the head of the Dresden Bank, Jurgen Ponto, during a botched kidnapping. Suzanne Albrecht, one of the members of the group, was the sister of Ponto’s goddaughter. On September 5, 1977, Hans Martin Schleyer was kidnapped by the group who demanded the release of Baader, Esslein and Raspe. On October 18, all three were found dead in their cells. The West German government declared all three to be suicides, though some suspected murder. Another female member who had been arrested after the core four, Irmgard Möller, survived multiple stab wounds she was incapable of inflicting on herself. She alleged extrajudicial activity resulting in their deaths (“Politics” 55). After the deaths of Baader, Esslein, and Raspe, Schleyer’s body was recovered by authorities (Savage, England’s 412).

Ballard told Vale,

 Nobody could understand these people. They were all sort of well-to-do, middle-class, well-educated kids from, comparatively speaking, rich
families, who took to all this ‘absurd violence.’ Nobody could understand them. But suddenly I realised, ‘My God, of course I can understand them.’ If you’re brought up in one of these suburbs [. . .] where nothing is ever allowed out of place, where because they were so terrified by the experiences of World War II [. . .] they’d gone to any length to make certain that everybody is happy, everyone in school or kindergarten is dutifully equipped so there would be no deviance and no problems later. If you have a world like that, without any kind of real freedom of spirit, the only freedom to be found is in *madness*.

(154)

His 1988 novella *Running Wild* provided the sketch for his final four novels (Baxter, *Inner* 293).

*Running Wild*

Consensus labels *Running Wild* as a piece of detective fiction (Baxter, *Surrealist* 172; Delville 53; Sellars xiii). However, instead of being “Who did it?” in nature, the question is “Why did they do it?” as one knows who did it from the outset. The text should not be seen as completely breaking completely from its predecessors. One sees a civilized world under continuous improvement “that thwarts our deepest needs and violates our true being” (Stephenson 145-46). The tower block of *High Rise* restructured itself as a series of McMansions in the new decade.

Ballard’s novella was an update of his 1984 short story “The Object of the Attack.” The original premise for the story concerned an attempted assassination of Apollo astronaut Tom Stamford by a religious zealot (Baxter, *Inner* 291). In the four-year lapse between the original short story and *Running Wild*, the Hungerford Massacre would exert its influence on Ballard. Referenced in the text’s opening, the assailant went on a shooting spree with an automatic rifle in
Hungerford, Berkshire (2). Before the assailant took his own life, he succeeded in killing seventeen people and wounding almost as many (Baxter, *Inner* 292). Ballard would also mention Hungerford in later variations on this theme during this period.

The isolation afforded to the upper classes reappears here in the form of Pangbourne Village (Ballard, *Running* 14). The parents in the gated community have been murdered and all the children are missing. No one knows of their whereabouts. Only eight-year-old Marion Miller reappears during the novel, though she remains catatonic until she is retrieved from the hospital when two of the other children, Annabel Reade and Mark Sanger, storm her room with firearms (77). Similar in plot to Poe’s *The Purloined Letter*, the narrator of the piece, Dr. Greville, ignores the obvious until this armed reclamation of Marion Miller by the other children. The children disappeared because they carried out the assassination.

It is not that the possibility does not occur to the investigators. However, they rank its likelihood dead last alongside theories such as foreign sleeper cells who were instructed to commit suicide, having fulfilled their mission in Pangbourne, experimental nerve gas causing neighbors to go on a killing spree with no recollection thereafter, or space aliens murdering the parents before abducting the children (27). Investigators do get closer to the mark, believing “the example of Patty Hearst suggests that one of the older children may have been brainwashed by a maverick group, perhaps a successor to the Baader-Meinhof gang” (24). Dated though both Baader-Meinhof and the Symbionese Liberation Army were by that point in the 1980s, both represent Kristeva’s statement of subscribing to a force of liberation that proves more oppressing than what it combats.
Yes, the novella’s 1988 publication overlaps with the earlier faux messiah period chronologically. However, the synchronicity proves fortunate in tying the two periods together. In the epilogue of the novella, Ballard flashes forward five years to the then-future of 1993 to an incident involving a former British prime minister. Ballard notes she is referred to as “Mother of Her Nation” and “Mother England,” titles that, as Ballard explains, were “recently coined by a sycophantic newspaper editor nostalgic for the halcyon days of the 1980s” although he never comes out directly and says he is writing about Margaret Thatcher (104).

Marion Miller stands as the only Pangbourne child who even comes close to being a developed character. Her hand gestures are repeated throughout the text and “revealed ultimately to be a reenactment of her act of murder” (Stephenson 145). Ballard writes, “She seemed to press a key into a lock and then turn it with a difficult double motion of her small hand – exactly the sequence of wrist movements [...] that would release a spring-loaded mortice lock” (Running 32). The reality, particularly when the motion of shielding her face was taken into consideration, though initially thought of as her attempt to ward off an attacker, was Marion plugging in and dropping a blow dryer into her father’s bath while her brother stabbed him (34).

As the youngest member of Pangbourne’s children of the damned, Ballard presents Marion Miller as an extremely loaded figure in a small body. When Marion is discovered, the eight-year-old’s appearance borders on that of a nineteenth-century urchin. He describes her as “shivering and grimy [...] with matted blonde hair, wearing a bedraggled cotton frock and single shoe” (29). Only upon examination of the labels in her clothing, Harrods and “an exclusive Branching Place outfitters” is her privileged birth revealed. She is unable to speak, and only occasionally “emitting a strange hissing noise, as if she were imitating a pet cat.”
After viewing the surveillance footage and testing their hypothesis of the blow dryer in the bathwater, Greville and Payne recognize the hissing noise. Greville says, “You heard the hiss, Sergeant – something that poor child will never forget. In fact, it’s probably the last thing she remembers” (34). Marion, as the footage of the film reveals, is, if not the ringleader, at least co-ringleader with her brother. Viewed in slow-motion, the surveillance footage shows Marion, clad in a dress stained with her bloody handprints, having tried to wipe her father’s blood from her hands, signaling to the other children “in a gesture reminiscent of a black power salute.” Scotland Yard rationalizes their appearance as “the boy and girl had been locked into the study and were signaling for help.” To this, Greville replies, “For heaven’s sake, she was smiling – an icy smile [. . .] but a smile” (43).

The forms of pornography familiar to Ballard’s works also appear. At the midpoint of the novella, Payne takes Greville to a stack of Playboy and Penthouse magazines stashed beneath Jeremy Maxted’s swimming gear in his bottom drawer. Greville asks, “Playboy, Sergeant – the first crack in the façade?” To which Payne replies, “If you want to find the real porn have a look underneath” (25). Underneath the skin magazines were “a dozen copies of various gun and rifle publications, Guns and Ammo, Commando, Small Arms, The Rifleman, and Combat Weapons of the Waffen SS.” Indeed, Maxted’s stash reveals the “real porn [. . .] the thrill of a fantasized violence that will eventually be unleashed [. . .] hiding coiled beneath the shiny surface of a supposedly enlightened form of life that in actuality operates a coercive model of subject formation” (Gasiorek 168). Maxted’s magazines reminds one of the question that, had it been asked, might have spared the parents of Pangbourne, posted by Barbara Burris: “Why are so
many blind to the grotesqueness of the tough, hard, super-balls, insensitive unemotional male image in John Wayne, James Bond, the Marines, etc.? (356).

Jeremy Maxted’s belongings are not the only literary revelation of something foul in Pangbourne. Slightly better concealed “in the panels behind their dressing table mirrors,” Gail and Annabel Reade’s journals describe Pangbourne in prose reminiscent of Jane Austen, but with a startling sexual frankness. The Reade sisters’ journals, portraying Pangbourne in an alternate Victorian reality “convey the impression of Pride and Prejudice with its missing pornographic passages restored.” Two of “the charming and well-bred daughters” in Pangbourne serve as prostitutes, satisfying the sexual desires of their family members, no matter their age or sex. Although no direct implication of the massacre appears in these bits of juvenilia, what emerges is “the sense that through these sexual activities the over-civilized inhabitants of Pangbourne can make their escape into a more brutal and more real world of the senses” (Ballard, Running 46). The Reade sisters further illustrate Kristeva’s notions.

Greville fails to grasp until halfway through the text what the reader realizes instantly (Gasiorek 162). The treatment of children as symbolic of innocence is “a tired and conditioned system” (Baxter, Surrealist 212). In the catalogue of late twentieth-century groups of violent, predominantly young revolutionary groups, Ballard “invites comparisons with the Baader-Meinhof gang [. . .] the Italian Red Brigade [. . .] and the Manson Family” (179). The suburban guerrillas would grow up quickly in the inaugural novel of Ballard’s final phase, Cocaine Nights.
Extending the themes from *Running Wild*, “principally the implications of public surveillance and gated communities, but transplanted [...] from Britain to Spain’s Costa del Sol region” (Love 370), *Cocaine Nights* presents travel writer Charles Prentice, flying to Estrella de Mar, a resort in Spain. His brother, Frank, the manager of a sports club/discotheque, stands accused of murdering five people via arson (11). The dead, mentally ill mother of *Hello America* returns in Charles and Frank’s mother, the embodiment of Dworkin’s description of fairy-tale mothers: “[S]he is so passive in life that death must only be more of the same. Here we discover the cardinal principle of sexist ontology – the only good woman is a dead woman” (*Woman Hating* 41). According to Charles, the only thing that prolonged her existence was the family’s smuggling practices among their colonial brethren. Charles says, “Without [them] our mother would have lost her slipping hold on the world long before that tragic afternoon when she climbed to the roof of the British Institute and made her brief flight to the only safety she could find” (Ballard, *Cocaine* 12). Ballard never names the late Mrs. Prentice, denying her any real identity.

He does the same with the first female Charles encounters in traffic on his way to Estrella de Mar. Charles sexualizes the driver behind him, “a handsome Spanish woman [...] at the wheel of an open-topped Mercedes, remaking her lipstick over a strong mouth designed for any activity other than eating” (12). Frank wonders about her occupation. Is she “a nightclub cashier, a property tycoon’s mistress, or a local prostitute returning to La Linea with a fresh stock of condoms and sex aids?” The passage angers, piling insult upon insult with the “strong mouth
designed for any activity other than eating,” read, primarily oral sex or other orally delivered methods of executive relief to males, as well as the only three occupations available to her being tied to practices of ill-repute. Any other profession would place her in the company of “uppity women” (Dworkin, Right Wing 198). She realizes Charles has been ogling her and in reaction, “snapped down her sun vizor, waking both of us from this dream of herself. She swung the steering wheel and pulled out to pass me, baring her strong teeth as she slipped below a no-entry sign” (Ballard, Cocaine 13).

Charles’ thoughts later turn to an earlier trip to Dubai where he “pursu[ed] . . . ] an attractive French geologist I was profiling for L’Express” (16). At the time, Charles explained his plans to write a book on, queasily, “The architecture of brothels.” She replied, “It’s a good idea. Rather close to your heart, I should think.” Score one for the good women!

Charles is informed of the multiple murder charges Frank faces as a result of his premeditated arson. Three of the victims were female: Mrs. Hollinger, her niece, and their maid, Bibi Hansen (20). When Frank and Charles meet, Ballard gives a few additional details of their mother. Frank says, “[She] was drinking herself to death and no one was doing anything about it [. . . ]. Then she started those long walks in the middle of the night and you’d go with her” (26). Suzanne Clair’s ghost from The Crystal World, among other females, haunts Cocaine Nights.

Charles immerses himself further into determining the motives of his now arsonist/murderer brother, and falls asleep while examining Frank’s personal effects. The scene he awakes to provides a catalogue of would-be lamias. Included among the early morning revelers was a “drunken young woman in a gold sheath dress” as well as “[t]hree young women [
... dressed like amateur whores in micro-skirts, fishnet tights and scarlet bustiers” (56-57).

Making his way to the car park to leave, Charles witnesses a rape:

The woman sat in the passenger seat of the Porsche, her bare feet protruding through the door, skirt around her waist. Her blonde hair gleamed with the attacker’s saliva, and her blurred lipstick gave her a child’s jamjar face. She pulled her torn underwear up her thighs and retched onto the gravel, then reached into the back seat and retrieved her shoes [...]. (58)

The disturbing scene is exacerbated further by Charles noticing the row of parked cars with its passengers watching the rape “faces concealed by lowered sun visors.” His confrontation of the viewers watching this exhibition is met by the mass ignoring him and driving off. He runs off to find the woman, finding her “beside the pool, dancing shoeless on the flooded grass, the backs of her hands smeared with lipstick, smiling at [him] in a knowing way when [he] walked towards her and tried to take her arm” (59). In this segment, Ballard runs from one endpoint of the continuum to the other set forth by his arch enemy’s definition of pornography as “the sexually explicit subordination of women in scenarios ranging from sexually objectifying a woman (i.e., the aforementioned “amateur whores) to raping [ ... ] her for sexual pleasure (i.e, the woman in the Porsche)” (Dworkin “Landscape” 68).

The first female worthy of being named by Ballard is Charles’s former partner, Esther. When Charles informs Frank of their separation three months prior, he expresses his sadness. He says, “I always liked her. Rather high-minded in an unusual way. She once asked me a lot of strange questions about pornography. Nothing to do with you” (Ballard, Cocaine 27). Charles notes that she took up gliding during the previous summer, which he took as a sign that she wanted to leave him. Charles stated, “Now she and her women friends fly to competitions in Australia and New Mexico.” While it is too much of a stretch to compare Esther and her group
of women gliders to the roving band of female separatists from Ballard’s previous literary periods, the escape from the male to find a better life remains.

Among the women Charles sees at Club Nautico, he glimpses a female swimmer, described as “a long-legged woman, swimming a crisply efficient backstroke” (39). Charles describes how she moves through the water, “Her wide hips rolled snugly in the water, and she might have been lying in the lap of a trusted lover.” He also notes the “crescent-shaped bruise” that ran across her left cheek, the bridge of her nose and upper jaw (39). No human exists here. Only body parts (Dworkin, *Letters* 204). Charles later recognizes her as Dr. Paula Hamilton, the resident physician at the Princess Margaret Clinic. She was one of the few people who declined to speak with Charles about Frank’s alleged mass murder and she continued her evasiveness at the funeral for Bibi Hansen, the Hollingers’ domestic (Ballard, *Cocaine* 68-69). Bobby Crawford, the resort’s tennis pro, describes her as a “[t]ypical woman doctor – a calm and efficient front, but inside rather shaky” (73). Out of the five million doctors employed in hospitals, seventy-six are female. Ballard still retreats into essentialism with the caveat of “rather shaky” (Burris 352; Kessler-Harris 361).

When Paula and Charles do finally meet, Charles thinks she is the club treasurer, David Hennessy. He arrives at Frank’s apartment and notes a “faint scent [. . .] an effeminate aftershave of the kind favoured by David Hennessy” (Ballard, *Cocaine* 82). Charles thinks Hennessy is playing a trick on him as he sees a body move from the balcony to the bedroom. Uncomfortably, the ensuing struggle between Charles and who he thinks is Hennessy, with Paula reduced to body parts again by the male writer, reads like an attempted rape:

A skirt flared and a woman’s thighs flashed in the moonlight. A coil of thick black hair scattered itself over the pillow, and a scent of sweat and panic
filled the room. I bent down and held the woman’s shoulders, trying to lift her to her feet, but a hard fist punched me below the breast-bone [. . .]. I reached out and seized her hips, pulled her on to the pillows and pinned her hands to the headboard, but she wrenched herself from me and knocked the bedside lamp to the floor.

“Leave me alone!” She struck my hands away [. . .]. “I told you – I won’t play that game any more!” (82-83)

After the two gain composure, Paula apologizes, saying “[W]hen you grabbed me, I was expecting someone else” (85). She explains she came by to look for a photograph of her and Frank from a holiday they took. When Charles states that he did not know the two were romantically involved, she denies they were. Charles finds Crawford’s summary of Paula to be correct, thinking “behind the professional poise she presented to the world she seemed distracted and vulnerable, like an intelligent teenaged girl unable to decide who she really was, perhaps suspecting that the role of efficient and capable doctor was something of a pose” (86). He catches her smiling at the picture of her and Frank. She stifles it out “fear of exposing her emotions, even to herself [. . .]. I guessed that [she] had always moved through life at an oblique angle, detached from her emotions and sexuality.” Paula seems to prove as much when she says that the night before the fire, she and Frank slept very little. When Charles questions her about the relationship with his brother, she said it ended, although they still had sex together (91). Charles finds himself envious of Frank as a result, admitting that “[a]fter grappling her on Frank’s bed it was all too easy to imagine us making love” (92).

After Paula’s departure, the attack that opens the floodgates of euphoria through violence previously seen in Crash happens to Charles. Bobby Crawford, the faux messiah of Cocaine Nights attempts to strangle him (248). Charles suspects Crawford may have been in Frank’s
apartment the whole time Charles was with Paula. Charles’s reaction will be repeated by the main character across all four novels in this tetralogy.

Following the account given to Charles of the arson and where Frank’s alleged victims died, Charles ponders why Paula had interest in him. He says,

I assumed [. . . ] that her interest [. . . ] was partly sexual [. . . ] I prompted memories of happier days with Frank. I now realize she needed my help in some scheme of her own, and was still deciding whether I was astute and determined enough for her. (117)

When he asks her about Bobby Crawford, she says, “He’s not selfish enough. Selfish men make the best lovers. They’re prepared to invest in the woman’s pleasure so that they can collect on a bigger dividend for themselves” (121). Is Paula acting as Ballard’s ventriloquist dummy? Charles feels she is “teasing me with her body, trying to spur me on and remind me that Estrella de Mar was a cabinet of mysteries to which she might hold the key.” While one could consider Paula’s lamia status expressed in this phrase, Ballard continues.

Paula tells Charles, “Making love to me is always stressful. Quite a few men in Estrella de Mar would confirm that. I don’t want to visit the cemetery again” (122). When Charles questions her about her facial injury, she brushed it off as a gym collision. Charles mentions the exhibitionist rape incident he witnessed on his arrival. Paula only responds, “That sounds like Estrella de Mar.” She speaks of her upbringing with her aunt, a woman “not too keen on men but very keen on sex [. . . ]. In many ways she lived like a man. Take a lover, fuck all the best sex out of him, then throw him out” (123). The passage is uncomfortable to be sure, not for the anti-essentialist stance of Paula, but how one might justify her as “asking for it.”

Further evidence of Paula’s dismissal of the rape as “sounds like Estrella de Mar” emerges when, watching the video Charles took from the Hollingers, he witnesses an amateur
pornography film. The film escalates quickly from a lesbian threesome between a bride and her bridesmaids to an actual rape for which the bridesmaids may have been prepared, but the bride certainly was not (126). Charles notes that a woman was running the video camera, clad in a black bikini with a surgical scar running from her back to her right hip (127).

In a nod back to *Vermilion Sands*, Elizabeth Shand constitutes another dominant female in *Cocaine Nights*. Though spared sex with Charles, one recognizes her lamia nature. The most successful businesswoman in Estrella de Mar, Ballard describes her as “tall, strong-shouldered, [with] platinum hair tightly crowned by a wide-brimmed black straw hat [. . . ]. No one seemed willing to approach her, and I sensed that a formal invitation was needed merely to bow” (62). When Charles interviews Shand, she speaks of the rapes as “Awful, I know. But it does keep the girls on their toes” (133). Charles asks her about who might have made the film. Shand says, “Paula is a bit of a camera buff.” Regarding Paula’s relationship with Frank, “[He] was awfully sweet, but I suspect that Paula needs someone with a taste for the . . . deviant?” (134) She thinks Charles more suited to the task.

Readying for their visit with Frank, Paula adjusts her cleavage to emphasize it for Frank. She wants to “cheer him up” (189). When she asks Charles if he thinks they will work, he volunteers to test them out.

The regret I felt at taking advantage of Frank’s absence, and having sex with his former lover on his own bed, was eased by the thought that I had begun to replace him in Estrella de Mar. I had never seen Frank make love, but I guessed that he had kissed Paula’s hips and navel as I did, running my tongue around its knotted crater with its scent of oysters, as if she had come to me naked from the sea. He had raised her breasts and kissed the moist skin still bruised by the wired cups of her brassiere, he had drawn out her nipples between his lips. I pressed my cheeks to her pubis, inhaling the same heady scent that Frank had drawn through his nostrils, parting the silky labia that he had touched a hundred times. (190)
The description of sex between Charles and Paula takes on sinister overtones. Not only is dominating Paula, breaking down her body into its respective parts, but he simultaneously replaces Frank as well. Had she any identity to Charles as the grieving partner to Frank, a slim chance existed he might have hesitated, but Paula, like other Ballardian women, is only the “generic she [. . .] the hole between her legs [. . .]. She is valued insofar as men value entry into her. For the rest, she is decorative” (Dworkin, Letters 175).

Post-coitus, Paula tells him that by age fourteen, she knew she had to be like her aunt, though she considered becoming a nun. She was thinking about “all those masturbating sisters mind-fucking Jesus [. . .]. My aunt showed me the way out. She was so realistic about people” (Ballard, Cocaine 192). In what can only be considered Charles’ second “assault,” he sees the same scar from the videotape and connects her with the camerawoman in the black bikini (194). In what will be a recurring plea from the female character throughout this segment, Paula says, “I wasn’t expecting the rape. If I’d known I would have taken part” (196). Her involvement in the filming of the rape drives a wedge between the two which increases more after her visit to Frank (226).

Charles continues to follow Frank down the path to destruction as he becomes the manager at Residencia Costasol, allegedly hoping to find the identity of the “true” arsonist (224). Paula reconnects with Charles to deliver what will be a recurring speech, summarizing the dilemma facing Charles and every variation on his character in the tetralogy:

When you came here you were [. . .] full of hang-ups about your mother and little guilts about those teenaged whores you fuck in Bangkok. Now you haven’t a moral care in the world. You’re the right-hand man of the local crime czar and you aren’t even aware of it. (293)
At the close of the novel, the truth, known from the outset by the reader, emerges to Charles when Paula warns him about another fire due to take place at Bobby Crawford’s farewell party with psychiatrist Dr. Sanger as the true target (314). When Charles questions her about the first arson and who was behind it, she indicted everyone at the Hollingers’ funeral. When he asks why the Hollingers were killed, as Paula had always known, she parrots Sanger’s idea of the resort running on an “engine of transgression” (188), saying, “The people of Estrella de Mar had to commit a major crime themselves, something so violent and dramatic, up on a hill where everyone could see it, so we’d all feel guilty for ever” (217). In a repeat of her protests at the filmed rape, Paula says, “I thought it was some sort of glorified prank that would send up the Hollingers’ feudal notion of how to run a party” (315). Of course, Frank was also involved, but he, like Paula, allegedly did not know how extreme the plans against the Hollingers ran (320). Having replaced Frank as both manager and Paula’s lover, Charles soon willingly takes on the mantle of murderer as well, being framed for Bobby Crawford’s murder at the close of the text (329).

Although lacking the mass execution via militarization of the suburban guerrillas in *Running Wild*, the involvement of women in acts against the establishment in the form of rape and murder places Paula Hamilton alongside the female children in Pangbourne Village, further illustrating Kristeva’s idea of trading one form of oppression for another. She takes part in the violence, but is passed off between Charles and Frank as an object for their sexual relief, her status as a doctor long forgotten. Ballard’s “membership drive” would continue in *Super-Cannes*. 
Published at the beginning of what was to be the final eight years of Ballard’s life, *Super-Cannes* focuses on Paul Sinclair, an injured pilot whose younger wife, Jane, accepted a six-month appointment at Eden-Olympia, where the previous doctor, David Greenwood, an acquaintance of Jane’s, allegedly went on a killing spree and died under mysterious circumstances (3). In an echo of Burris, Sinclair’s rhetoric seems to keep Jane firmly in place, describing her as his “spunky, but insecure wife” (4). When Paul goes to reassure her along their drive to Eden-Olympia, he says, “Jane, you’ll be a huge success. You’re the youngest doctor on the staff, and the *prettiest*” (6; emphasis added). In an attempt to save face, he also adds “efficient” and “hardworking.” Does Jane know that others will also be focused on her appearance? She voices concern about her perfume and how it makes her smell like a “tart,” to which Sinclair states, “The most gorgeous tart on Cote d’Azur” (8). To remind one of the overarching characterization of the female terrorist, Ballard describes Jane, saying, “At heart, she was the subversive schoolgirl, the awkward squad recruiter with a primed grenade in her locker” (9).

Sinclair has his own insecurities. Though Jane knew the late Dr. Greenwood, he did not know how intimately she knew him. He wondered, “Had she and Greenwood once been lovers? [. . . ] A mass-murderer had perhaps held her in his arms, and as Jane embraced me, the spirit of his death embraced me, too” (11). Sinclair retreats into essentialist thinking when he asks, “Was
[Greenwood] married? [. . .] . A wife would have known something was brewing” (27; emphasis added).

Repeatedly, Sinclair characterizes Jane as childlike, denying her the maturity that a doctor in her late twenties most surely attained. Upon their arrival to their new quarters, he describes her in the study, “Alone in this white room, she seemed at her prettiest, a charming ingenue in a modern-dress version of a Coward play” (32). Additionally, she “held her nightdress to her chin, admiring herself [. . .] like a child trying on her mother’s clothes” (34). When the two are in bed together, Sinclair makes specific mention of “resting [his] face against her small breasts, with their sweet scents of summer love” (34). After Jane’s first day at work, he drives her to Cannes where he “remade Jane’s lipstick before showing her off to the Arabs, lolling with their women on the white-leather after-decks of their rented yachts” (40). He comes off less as her husband and more a stage father or, given what happens to Jane in the text, her first pimp!

The Arabs were not the only ones watching Jane, however. Their neighbors, Simone and Alain Delage, both watch and are watched by the Sinclairs. Of Simone, Paul wondered, “Was she aware of me watching her? I suspected that this private and moody woman [. . .] took a perverse pleasure in exposing herself to the solitary man lying by the pool with his apparently withered leg” (40). Paul will not be the target of Simone’s affections during their time in Eden-Olympia, however.

Paul thinks back to when he and Jane met. He ended up in hospital after failure to land his aircraft properly. He characterized her as “one of the teenage doctors [. . .]. She was twenty-seven years old, but could have passed for seventeen” (40). While under Jane’s care, the
two began to have conversations. Talked turned to the pilot, Beryl Markham, who Paul alleged was “[t]otally promiscuous” in reply to which Jane asked, “Aren’t all women, if they want to be? Men have such a hang-up about that [. . .].” Here she echoes Paula Hamilton’s earlier statement about her aunt’s promiscuity in *Cocaine Nights*. Jane says, “They say flying and sex go together. I don’t know about that side of your life, but it’s going to be a while before you fly” (42). Sinclair suspects she might be an impostor, perhaps “some renegade sixth-form schoolgirl who had borrowed a white coat and decided to try her hand at a little doctoring” (43).

The two married and Jane’s “bad girl” behavior, which might explain his need to frame her in the ill-fitting clothes of childlike innocence, included smoking marijuana at their wedding reception, snorting a line of cocaine in front of her lawyer mother, and recounting a completely fictitious account of having sex with Paul in the back of his aircraft, an act for which her father cheered. She also filmed the two having sex and studied Paul like he was her experiment (44).

However, Sinclair is not the only person to oppress Jane through characterization. Simone Delage is also guilty of this, saying “[Jane’s] so sweet. We love to hear her talk. So many schoolgirl ideas” (53). Later on, her husband says, “She has an ingenue’s charm and directness” (106). After these repeated attacks belittling her as a “schoolgirl,” she also becomes their plaything later in the text.

Paul begins to investigate Greenwood’s killing spree, finding three bullets the police investigation apparently did not. One was in the omnipresent Ballardian swimming pool, and the other two are in the pumphouse (65). When he shows them to Jane, one might hope she would at least be characterized as the concerned wife, but instead, he describes her as “playing the wise daughter” (65). Paul already suspects Jane’s relationship with Greenwood extended to sexual
but it helps matters little when she notes, “We sleep in his bed,” to which Paul replies “Almost grounds for divorce” (67). He presses the issue with Jane, which she greets with expected perturbation. At this, Paul says, “She seemed older than I remembered her, her hair neatly groomed, the scar from her nasal ring concealed with cosmetic filler. She raised a hand as if to slap me” (79). Paul’s tactic shifts from keeping her young to aging her to where she lost some of what attracted him initially.

During his investigation into the massacre, Paul interviews Pascal Zander, the security head. Pascal asks him, “Does violence intrigue you, Mr. Sinclair? [. . .] and your wife? [. . .] Some people find violence is a useful marriage aid. A special kind of tickler” (86). Zander’s statement echoes Dworkin’s statement that “any woman, no matter how uppity she has become, can be reduced by force or intimidation to the lowest common denominator – a free piece of ass, there for the taking” (Letters 119). Additionally, Zander foreshadows the appearance of Frances Baring, a blonde woman whom he noticed earlier that day on a laptop in a café where he was eating.

Sinclair describes Baring as “attractive but prickly” and “sophisticated but unsure of herself, probably climbing the upper slopes of the corporate pyramid with little more than her scatty humour to protect her” (Ballard, Super 110, 112). Baring warns him about Delage, saying “He looks like a mousy account but he’s a textbook anal-sadist” though she admits “His wife is more my type but she plays hard to get” (114). She informs him on what is really going on in Eden-Olympia as the “intelligent city.” It is a lab experiment for the psychiatrist Wilder Penrose who was creating “the vanguard of a new world-aristocracy” (115).
Greenwood’s murder spree drives the expected wedge between Paul and Jane as he delve further into the investigation and she becomes immersed in her work. Their sex life runs aground. Her previous behavior during the time he was suffering most from his injury “had been smothered by a sleep of eye-masks and sedatives, followed by cold showers and snatched breakfasts. She moved naked around our bedroom in full view of [the Delages] flaunting not her sex but her indifference to it” (155). Paul discovered that each of Greenwood’s victims was shot displaying his or her respective vices (203). He finds that the man who shot Greenwood was Frank Halder (204).

Paul’s investigation leads him to suspect that Greenwood’s actual slaying took place on the roof of the car park and that perhaps someone else killed all of Greenwood’s alleged victims. Frances Baring echoes Paula in Cocaine Nights, telling him, “You’re a political prisoner. You wander round all day, searching for the escape tunnel, while getting more and more involved with the guards” (214). As stated earlier, this is the thesis for all four of Ballard’s novels during this period. And what are his feelings toward Frances? Paul believes, “I had been too slow to respond to her, and she faulted herself for not playing the femme fatale more skillfully. I was attracted to her sexually, but she needed my complete submission if I was to join the secret game she controlled” (215). Did Charles Prentice not regard Paula Hamilton in the same manner?

Naturally, Paul and Frances have sex, though Paul admits he was “a poor lover, aware of Jane watching me from the back of my mind and barely able to maintain the erection [. . . ]. When I came at last, an orgasm as faked as a bored housewife’s, Frances had smiled the microsecond smile of an escort agency whore” (225). With Jane now a plaything of the Delages, Paul turns his objectifying gaze on Frances, saying “Her body was still unpacking itself for me.
The small scars below her chin, the erect nipple that seemed to have a life of its own, the strong ribcage and blond pubic pelt were a raid on my senses” (229). The sum of the parts does not equal a hole (Dworkin, *Letters* 175).

Paul and Frances witnessed a robbery, the act that unleashes Paul in the narrative sexually. In one of the text’s more disturbing passages, Frances asks:

[D]o you want to beat me? [ . . . ] I’ve got a nice rump – deliciously spankable [ . . . ]. Do you want to tie me up? We can go to the bathroom, you can [ . . . ] bugger me [ . . . ]. Do you want to see me fucked by another man [ . . . ] Do you want to me to pee or shit on you? (Ballard, *Super* 230)

Frances’ final self-degradation comes when she appears in a zebra-striped cocktail dress Paul had seen earlier among the belongings of the teenage girls Dr. Greenwood worked with (231). When Frances asks how it made her look, Paul responds, “Thirteen.” Is she taking the place of his “child bride” who the Delages had wooed away? Paul characterizes sex with Frances as being the same way in the “she drove her car, firmly gripping the controls” (235).

When Paul meets with Wilder Penrose, the novel’s mad scientist moment takes place as Penrose explains that places like Eden-Olympia are the ideal grounds for “any messiah with a grudge.” The future dictators would not emerge from a desert, but rather the “shopping malls and business parks” (256). Penrose stressed the importance of violence to Paul when attempts at relief through sex to maintain health failed (257). The more extreme forms of sexual pleasure, like those catalogued by Frances, still exist, though Penrose concedes that it needs stronger monitoring (261).

The decision to flee comes not from Paul but from Jane, as she descends further into drug abuse and her bisexual affair with the Delages (268). When Paul asks if it was something he did, she replied that he is the only “innocent” one among them at Eden-Olympia. She did not want
Paul to end up “like the rest of us” (269). Her fears mirror those expressed by Frances, who explains that David, after becoming a pedophile, decided to seek revenge and kill the people who corrupted him (349). Both women act as Ancient Mariner to Paul’s wedding guest.

Not that the two women are not already progressing toward doppelganger status in the text, but in the final section of Super-Cannes, Ballard makes their “two-sides of the same coin” nature explicit. Ready ing herself for a night on the town, Jane is characterized as a “lurid figure in spangled crimson minidress and stiletto heels. A frizz of lacquered black hair rose in a retro-punk blaze [ . . . ] above kohled eyes and a lipsticked mouth like a wound” (368). She compares herself to “Miss Weimar, 1927,” swapping places with Frances as would-be femme fatale.

Frances, in contrast, takes the childlike cast previously assigned to Jane in the most unfortunate of ways. She had contacted him earlier as she needed to see him. Yet upon his arrival, he found her murdered in bed, with him set up to take the fall with the knife used as the murder weapon left in the running shower in an attempt to strip away any indicators of her true killer (373). In death, Frances’ “quirky lips had flattened themselves against her teeth, and her features were those of a child of ten. As she grew cold, she became younger” (373-74).

At the novel’s close, Paul rescues Jane from playing “prostitute” under the watchful eyes of the Delages. Her attempted seduction of a French client goes awry. She told Paul, “It didn’t feel like a game anymore” to which Paul responded it never was (383-84). Paul is determined to seek revenge for the pain those in Eden-Olympia have caused him and those he held dear. The last glimpse of Jane is that of “an exhausted Alice who had lost her way in the world” (386). Paul says, “I drove on, thinking of Jane and Frances Baring [ . . . ] ready to finish the task that
David Greenwood had begun” (392). Exit Ballardian male stage left, pursuing inevitable oblivion.

*Millennium People*

Reviews for *Millennium People* veered between regarding the novel as engaging in serious sociological discussion and viewing it as patently absurd. John Gray’s review characterizes the text as being “Seemingly a fable of the euthanasia of the bourgeoisie, [Ballard’s novel] dissects the perverse psychology that links terrorists with their innocent victims” (qtd. in Baxter, *Inner* 54). In contrast, Adam Mars-Jones noted the mannered nature of the revolts in the novel:

The bourgeois revolutionaries [. . . ] remain bourgeois even as they take on the system that has both spoiled and exploited them [. . . ]. A Volvo may have been burnt out in the mayhem, but it has been properly left in a parking bay. When making Molotov cocktails, the revolutionaries use burgundy bottles, with regimental ties for wicks. (qtd. in 328).

Ballard’s characters represent “radical chic” in a way Tom Wolfe doubtlessly never intended.

In another echo of *High Rise*, the text begins in flashback, with the residents of Chelsea Marina having destroyed their homes (Ballard, *Millennium* 13-14). David Markham, the narrator, is examining the sodden residence of Kay Churchill, a film studies lecturer who becomes the Ulrike Meinhof of the novel. He states, “I missed Kay and her shaky crown of ash-grey hair, her erratic opinions and ever-flowing wine” (15). Four months prior, Markham and his wife, Sally, were due to fly out of Heathrow. Markham characterizes Sally as a “natural
mender and healer, she had the knack of making everyone feel better” (21). Sally stands in contrast to Markham’s mother, another Ballardian failure. During his affair with Kay Churchill, Markham would describe his mother as, “a free spirit. She loved me deeply – for ten months. Then it was over” (74). Additionally, she was friends with R. D. Laing.

The same day the Markhams were due to fly out of Heathrow, a bomb exploded on a baggage carousel. Among the number of victims was his ex-wife Laura (26). Though the two had not been married for several years, her death left Markham shaken. He said, “For some reason, I felt closely involved in the crime, as if I had placed the bomb on the carousel” (27). If one reads Markham as Ballard’s literary stand-in, then a guilty verdict must be handed down.

Of Markham’s current wife, Sally, Ballard calls back to his techno-barbarism period, reminding the readers of Gabrielle in Crash, as she used walking sticks in times of stress. Unlike Gabrielle, though, she does not actually need them (21). As with Paul and Jane, the two met when Sally was a patient of Markham’s, having been run over by a tram while on holiday in Lisbon (30-31). While she no longer needed the walking sticks for physical reasons, she has kept them and still drives a modified car. She teased Markham that he got perverse enjoyment from having a handicapped spouse (30-31), an echo of an earlier statement Markham made about how she is regarded when they attend conferences in America. According to Markham, other attendees viewed her handicap as “an erotic challenge” (23).

Sally encourages Markham to go Laura’s funeral. She knew he still hated Laura and needed to attend for that reason (28). At the funeral, he noted that all of the mourners were “despised” by Laura. He says:

She would have been amazed by the presence of her former colleagues – ‘grey men with hang-ups they cling to like comfort blankets’ [. . .] and would
have laughed the lid off her coffin if she had heard the straight-faced tributes to her. (36)

Of their fraught past, Markham recalls that she had provoked him into slamming a door in her face, resulting in a “torrent of blood [springing] from her strong nose, about which she had always been sensitive” (37). Spurred forth as much by his own need to know as the need of her new lover, Harry Kendall, who is also one of Markham’s colleagues, to know, Markham begins his undercover investigation into protest groups.

After his arrest for being involved in an anti-cruelty to cats campaign, Markham meets Kay Churchill for the first time. He mistakes her for the solicitor of one of the accused, rather than being one of the accused (51). When he first visits her home, glimpsed in post-riot ruin at the beginning of the novel, he describes her as sitting on the arm of her settee, “tight skirt exposing her thighs. She was generous and likeable, if overly self-conscious, and used to being the [center] of attention” (54). She is a Film Studies professor, currently under suspension from teaching. She criticized her students for using too much jargon such as “voyeurism and the male gaze [. . . ] castration anxieties” (58). She instructed them to take their cameras into their bedrooms and make pornographic films. She reasoned, “Fucking is what they do in their spare time so why not look at it through a camera’s lens?” (60) Is Ballard using Kay as his ventriloquist dummy? One might argue as much.

She senses Markham would be a fine recruit for the cause led by disgraced pediatrician turned political activist Richard Gould. Gould had been dismissed from his post for defending a Jamaican nurse who molested terminally ill children, reasoning that they deserved, “a few seconds of pleasure touch[ing] their damaged brains before they died” (132). The inhabitants
Chelsea Marina wanted to change the world, employing violence if necessary, though in truth, none of them has gone without electric heat at any point (70). Kay explains:

Live here and you’re surprisingly constrained. This isn’t the good life, full of possibility. You soon come up against the barriers set out by the system. Try getting drunk at a school speech day, or making a mildly racist joke at a charity dinner. Try letting your lawn grow and not painting your house for a few years. Try living with a teenage girl or having sex with your stepson. (87)

Markham believes Kay is drawn by “the true fanatic’s zeal, a belief system that was satisfied with only one convert, herself” (95).

When Markham meets Gould, he tells Markham “Sex with Kay is like a resuscitation that’s gone slightly wrong. You’re deeply grateful, but parts of you are never going to be the same again” (166). Later, drawing on reality, as well as harkening back to Running Wild, Markham and Gould go on a drive to Hungerford where Gould says, “it’s where I’d like to end my days” (175). What may have been lost on Markham is not lost on the reader. This marks the first intrusion of real-life national tragedy into Millennium People.

Ballard plagiarizes himself as Markham becomes further immersed in Kay’s world of violence to snap the middle classes out of complacency. The “conversation” between David and Kay regarding David’s arousal resulting from the violence echoes both Paula Hamilton’s with Charles Prentice in Cocaine Nights and Frances Baring’s with Paul Sinclair in Super-Cannes:

[Y]ou were so wrapped up in the violence of it, the horror of those deaths. You had the best sex of your life [. . . ]. How many times did you come? [. . . ] You wanted to bugger me, and beat me [. . . ] I know when a man’s balls are alight. (159)

In a plot point familiar from the previous text, Kay wants David to return to Sally. For her group, the violence was a means to an end. For David, it is only an end (161).
If Kay is the theorist/Meinhof, then Vera Blackburn constitutes the practitioner/Ensslin of this group of suburban guerrillas. Markham describes her as “thin but strong, with a muscular body honed on exercise machines” (78). She walked “like a whore with a soon-to-be fleeced client or a moody prefect at a girls’ school on some sly mission of her own” (79). Vera was a child prodigy of bomb-making, having killed her stepmother via a combination of bleach and caustic soda in their household’s toilet (83). Markham becomes involved in her burning of the National Film Theatre, where the rest of the group abandons Markham. He tries to imagine what kind of lover Vera would be, but resigns himself to the idea that “no lover would ever equal the allure and sensual potency of Semtex” (185).

What of Sally? Markham believes the greatest use he has, at least from her father’s perspective, is in keeping her happy. “In his view I’m just a glorified counselor and medical attendant” (110). While Markham goes off with Kay, she also has an affair with Harry Kendall. She justified it by her “handicap” (143-44). As with Jane and Frances, Ballard conflates Sally with Kay, repeating the idea (in another callback to Crash) that violence changed David somehow. She says, “The Heathrow bomb – it wasn’t just Laura. That bomb touched something off” (215).

The revolt of the middle classes is upended by the intrusion of reality in the murder of television presenter, Jill Dando. While Dando’s murder lacked the majesty of a Kennedy assassination,

For a decade she had introduced [...] programmes [...] always ready with sensible advice and good humoured charm. I had never seen her on screen and could never remember her name, but her death on her own doorstep prompted an outpouring of grief that reminded me of Princess Diana. (205)
Here Ballard quotes himself verbatim from his conversation with Chris Hall (404). Dando might be considered the “unacknowledged heroine of the revolt, and the book” (Baxter, Inner 327). Additionally, Ballard, by incorporating Dando’s murder into the novel, suggests that the random nature of her death points to a fanatic such as Gould. She joins those other nonentities leading to a massive tragedy, such as Marinus van der Lubbe, alleged arsonist of the Reichstag or Herschel Grynszpan, alleged assassin of Ernest vom Rath, whose death initiated Kirstallnacht.

A Stammheim shy of simultaneous murder/suicides, the suburban guerrilla band of Chelsea Marina collapses. Stephen Dexter, a renegade priest/follower of Gould planted the bomb at Heathrow that killed Markham’s ex-wife (Ballard, Millennium 234). According to Gould, “[It] nearly restored [Dexter’s] faith” (243). However, David Markham, not his wife, was Gould’s real target, having seen him on television and feeling Markham needed to be “jolt[ed] out of [his] complacency” (249). Gould also takes responsibility for Jill Dando’s murder (254).

Markham returns to Chelsea Marina to see it in flames as Kay Churchill is being arrested. According to Markham, “She raised a middle finger to the onlookers shaking their fists at her in the back of the patrol car” (261). She would serve her time at Holloway and later be greeted with a book deal and media fame as a “columnist and TV pundit” (284). Gould and Vera are both shot by Dexter who, as happened to Charles Prentice and David Sinclair earlier, tries to pin the blame on Markham.

Despite the novel’s publication two years after September 11, neither the attacks on the East Coast in 2001 nor the second Iraq War factored into Millennium People. He was more focused on the homegrown “lone nut” (Hall 404). Jill Dando’s murder, and all the single-
assassin murders, going back to the University of Texas tower shooter Charles Joseph Whitman in the 1960s, for Ballard, have no motive.

*Kingdom Come*

In one of Ballard’s final interviews in 2008, after the publication of his autobiography *Miracles of Life*, Ballard told BBC presenter, James Naughtie, “I suggest that consumerism could evolve into something very close to fascism. When you go into these vast shopping malls, you’re being seduced into a semi-ritualised mass affirmation” (479). Such was the controlling idea for Ballard’s last novel, *Kingdom Come*.

The protagonist Richard Pearson, a failed advertising executive, ousted from his position by his colleague/wife, is driving out the suburbs of Brooklands, following the murder of his father, a former airline pilot who was murdered when lone nut Duncan Christie opened fire on the giant shopping mall the Metro-Centre. The giant mega-mall demonstrates Ballard’s continued fascination with urban structures. On his drive, Pearson equates the suburbs with the same feeling he felt when his wife, a colleague-turned-rival and eventual destroyer, left him (12). “Gazing out at the placid sea of prickly gables [. . . ] I felt a pang of resentment, the same pain I remembered when my wife kissed me fondly, waved a little shyly from the door of our Chelsea apartment, and walked out on me for good” (10).

Pearson himself was the product of a divorced family. When he was five, his father split from his mother, a woman Pearson describes as “strong-willed but highly-strung” (11). While
dialing back the alleged mental illness of mothers in the text, Ballard still begins what would be his victory lap with two women cast in a negative light resulting from failed marriages. Even though his father left his mother, Pearson imagined a conversation with his late father. The overview would end with Pearson’s classification as a “Failed husband completely outwitted by his former wife” (15).

For Pearson, his spiky relationships with females does not end with his ex-wife and his mother. A week before his father’s murder, he was returning “a close friend [with whom he spent] the happiest months in many years” to the airport, as her sabbatical from the History department at Vancouver University was at an end. He had entertained the thought of jumping on the plane with her to occupy an academic post in the Media Studies department there. His mind changed when she found his passport in her handbag and neither recognized the photo nor the name of the person, exclaiming “Who? Dick, my God! That’s you!” Pearson thought, “If someone who liked me and shared my bed could forget my name at the first glimpse of a departure lounge, I needed urgently to reinvent myself” (16).

Ballard’s double lamia/damsel motif repeats to the end with Pearson first meeting Sergeant Mary Falconer while she acts as an escort for a Middle Eastern family through one of the many throngs of racist football supporters displaying the Flag of Saint George on their person. She initially thinks Pearson has an association with the imam. When he informs her of his tourist status, she replies, “We don’t get many of those [. . .]. Next time try Brooklands Metro-Centre. Or Heathrow . . . everybody’s welcome there” (18; emphasis added).

The narrative digresses back into the women in his father’s life, all voiceless and nameless as Pearson attempts to fill in the gaps. Going through his father’s belongings, he finds
“a set of silver-backed hairbrushes that I assumed he had given to my stepmother, memories that would greet him each morning of this gaunt but still glamorous woman” (25). This is the only mention she receives in the text. On the mantelpiece, the late Mr. Pearson displays what can only be labeled his conquests.

On either side of the photograph was a set of smaller frames, each containing a woman’s holiday snapshot. One showed a cheerful blonde legging her way out of a sports car. A second blonde posed in tennis whites beside a Cairo hotel, while a third grinned happily in front of the Taj Mahal. Others smiled across nightclub tables and lounged by swimming pools. All the women in this trophy corridor were happy and carefree; even the rather intense thirty-year-old in a fur coat whom I recognized as my mother seemed briefly to revive in front of my father’s camera lens. (26)

Like father, like son?

Pearson’s tetchy period of getting acquainted with Sergeant Falconer resumes following the attack on Pearson by an unknown assailant. Ballard focuses predominantly on appearance as he characterizes the police officer:

A fast-tracked graduate entry, she was clearly destined for higher things than consoling bereaved relatives, not an ideal role for a steely but oddly vulnerable woman. She seemed unsure of me, and nervous of herself, forever glancing at her fingernails and checking her make-up, as if pieces of an elaborate disguise were in danger of falling apart. Much of her appearance was an obvious fake – the immaculate beauty-salon make-up, the breakfast TV accent, but was this part of a double bluff? (30)

During the interrogation, Pearson states, “She sat back, turning her face in profile. The mask of the policewoman had slipped, revealing the emotional flatness of a strong-willed but insecure graduate” (32). Toward the end, Pearson summarizes Falconer, writing:

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I could see that she was closing herself away. To begin with she had talked to me as if I were a child, and I assumed that her role was to defuse my anger and send me back to London. But she had used our meeting to get across a message of her own. In a way, she herself was the message, a bundle of unease and disquiet, wrapped inside an elegant blonde package. She had slipped a few
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ribbons and then quickly retied them. (33)

Dr. Julia Goodwin constitutes the second party in the double lamia/damsel. First noticed at his father’s funeral as one of two women in attendance, Pearson catches her watching him from the car park. He describes her as “[d]ark-haired, with the kind of disheveled prettiness that unsettles men [. . .] too young to be one of my father’s girlfriends, but I knew nothing about the old sky-dog’s last days” (22). He suspects he will see her again.

Pearson puts a face with a name in Chapter Eight. He notes, “There was the same evasive gaze, and I sensed there was something about me that I had yet to learn. She was attractive, but had been tired for too long, still trying to scrape a little compassion for her patients from the bottom of a long exhausted barrel” (74). As Julia recounts the death of Pearson’s father, she “touched the mass of dark hair above her left ear and traced a line to the back of her neck, an almost erotic transit that exposed the silky whiteness of her scalp” (75). As with Falconer, Pearson believes Julia to be uncomfortable with his presence. He states, “I had the sense that she had been briefed about me, and knew more of my background that might have been expected of a busy casualty doctor” (75). When he questioned her about her presence at the funeral, Pearson asks if she attended out of some sense of guilt. She responds, “No. What tripe! Do I really believe that? It’s amazing the nonsense that can pop out of your mouth if you’re not careful” (75).

When the two meet later at the Metro-Centre, Pearson notes her face is pale “but surprisingly strong, marked by tremors of doubt like those of an actress unable to understand her lines. When she saw me watching her she reached up to loosen her hair, but I held her wrists and pressed them to the table until she controlled herself” (81). Is fiddling with one’s hair in times of
anxiety a female trait? To look at Marion Miller as forming one endpoint and Julia and Sergeant Falconer as the other, it would appear so.

After being separated from Julia in an attack on Mr. Kumar, the Indian businessman, Pearson recalls their meeting. He believes that

[E]verything about her was almost too elusive. At this Holiday Inn, [ . . . ] she had been nervous and aggressive, a little too devious about her reasons for attending my father’s funeral. At the same time I was sure that she wanted to tell me something about his death, perhaps more than I cared to know. (96)

Tom Carradine gives Pearson the account of his father’s murder. According to Carradine, via Falconer, the alleged suspect Duncan Christie hid the weapon behind a group of gas cylinders. Of Falconer, Pearson remarks, “For someone so uptight, she gets around” (56). Upon hearing of the charges being dropped against Christie, Pearson goes to the station. Sergeant Falconer turns away initially upon seeing him, adjusting her hair again. “[She] studied my face, relieved to find me on the edge of anger, an emotion with which her training had taught her to cope” (60-61). Observing the police officer further, Pearson notes the scar on her ring finger and wonders if it was the result of a run-in with a hooligan or “had a tenacious engagement ring been surgically removed, her body holding on to a passion that her quirky mind repressed? Sergeant Falconer was wary and defensive [ . . . ]. I knew she wanted me out” (61-62). For Pearson,

I had unsettled the ramshackle construction she had built around herself in Brooklands, a card castle of compromises and half-truths that threatened to collapse onto her. Already I sensed that she was as much of a pawn as I was. (63)

If he only hinted at it earlier, here, in his final longer work of his lifetime, Ballard echoes Kristeva’s central thesis most explicitly among the female characters involved with the counter-society regimes.
After questioning Christie’s psychiatrist Dr. Maxted, over what he knows about his father’s shooting, Pearson reconnects with Sergeant Falconer. The language used to describe her actions mirror the description used to describe Julia:

[T]hough scarcely a hair or eyelash out of place [. . . ] she seemed ill at ease, like a supporting actor assigned the wrong role. Once again she reminded me of a strait-laced but vulnerable teacher aware that her class had seen her in a piece of questionable behaviour. (129)

The two leave at news of a bomb attack on the Metro-Centre. Though there are no casualties, Pearson notices that, while relieved, the sergeant was not “any less agitated. Threads of blonde hair were springing loose from their braids. For some reason, the slightest shift from the immaculate left Sergeant Falconer looking frayed and insecure” (132). Additionally, as the two descend to the car park, Pearson says, “My presence unsettled her, and she was eager to get away from me. Why she had brought me to the Metro-Centre in the first place seemed unclear” (133). At the discovery that a bomb detonated in Pearson’s vehicle, Falconer becomes unwell. Pearson says, “Even in the harsh glare of the emergency lights her face was unnaturally blanched [. . . ]. She turned and swayed, then stumbled against the inspector” (135).

Soon after the car bombing, a riot descends on Brooklands. Here Pearson and Julia reconnect. Dr. Goodwin has her own opinion about Falconer, describing her as “an odd little fish; I would like her interrogating me” (149). The two return to his father’s flat. Again, he wonders if she was one of, if not the last of, his father’s lovers. Pearson says, “I could imagine her in the kitchen, reminding him about his next flu jab” (152).

The two enter his father’s bedroom and, inevitably, have sex. Prior to the act, Pearson describes her as “a desperate woman [. . . ] sitting on my father’s bed, about to make love to his son for reasons that had everything and nothing to do with sex, the kind of clutching and violent
love that only the bereaved ever experience.” She tells him, “You don’t have to like me [. . . ].
It’s got to be here! [ . . . ] Can’t you understand?” (155). Afterward, Pearson says she “seized
me as if I were a demon to be pinioned, a delegate from my father’s grave. Sex with me was part
atonement and part restitution, an act of penance” (156).

In a later mention of Julia, Pearson believes “a vague sense of unresolved guilt hovered
between us as if she had aborted our child without telling me. But as least this edginess showed
her fierce honesty” (179). Is it not strange that he, Ballard or Pearson, would zero in on that
most hot button of feminist subject of reproductive rights in the relationship with Julia?

Mary Falconer reappears after another attack by more St. George’s flagwearing football
supporters who total the Kumars’ Fiat, douse Mr. Kumar with petrol, and shoot Mrs. Kumar
(207). Pearson wonders if she and Geoffrey Fairfax, who died when Pearson’s car was bombed,
had an affair. Pearson believed “this rather frozen woman with her always immaculate make-up
probably needed to feel subservient to a powerful man” (206).

After an assassination attempt on the Metro-Centre’s celebrity-in-residence David Cruise
and the attempted burning of the Metro-Centre, Julia is charged with keeping Cruise alive (236).
Additionally, with the Metro-Centre on lockdown, she becomes the spokesperson for the
besieged. Pearson states, “The exhausted but still attractive doctor made a powerful impact on
the nation’s television screens” (230; emphasis added). Image, especially for the Ballardian
female, is everything, right? As matters inevitably continue to deteriorate, Pearson takes the role
of Julia’s caregiver, feeling “as long as I was with her, emptying the pedal bins and foraging for
packets of herbal tea, she would be all right” (260). In a callback to High Rise, Ballard writes of
Pearson scavenging the abandoned supermarkets for food for her and her patients. Pearson says,
“I always stayed until she had forced herself through the tins of frankfurters, condensed milk and *foie gras*, rewarding me with a plucky smile” (274).

As the police begin to infiltrate the Metro-Centre, following the death of David Cruise, the complex burns down in a siege (298). In between, the revelation of a conspiracy to kill Pearson’s father was revealed. At this point, no one will be surprised that Julia was among the ringleaders. She admits to planning, as well as giving the order for, the attack (287). Further down the rabbit hole, Pearson’s erstwhile Alice finds Sergeant Falconer also among their number, the Esslein to Goodwin’s Meinhof. Julia says, “Sergeant Falconer was under Fairfax’s thumb -- he’d got her mother off a shoplifting charge. She supplied the weapon” (289). At the novel’s end, all but Dr. Goodwin perish in the fire, collapsing as Dr. Barbara’s gyno-utopia in *Rushing to Paradise* collapsed ten years earlier.

Compared to his previous literary stand-ins, Ballard allegedly felt that his connection to Pearson was more solid than in other novels. Like Pearson, Ballard felt estranged from his parents during the Japanese invasion of Shanghai, the subsequent internment in Lunghua, and the repatriation of Ballard, along with his mother and sister, proved three strikes against Ballard’s father. Reintegration never took place. Ballard explained, “[I]f parents are powerless, and [ . . . ] they can do nothing. And that’s damaging. Very damaging [ . . . ]. [B]y the time I saw my father, it was the early fifties [ . . . ]. Coping with England [ . . . ] I didn’t have any help from him [ . . . ] and it was a very strange place” (Litt, “Dangerous” 426).

For reviewers, Ballard’s swan song came across as tone deaf. Iain Sinclair felt the novel “could have been stripped down to be a series of savage essays or presentations about the motorway corridor with dramatised events happening in the middle” (qtd. in Wood 198). John
Baxter saw Ballard’s condemnation of consumerism in the novel as, if not an about face, at least uncharacteristic for a man whose appreciation of commerce stretched back to his childhood in Shanghai (*Inner* 334). Overall, critics viewed the novel rightly as a repeat of the previous three novels, though Simon Sellars viewed it more as a parody. Ballard conceded an element of parody did exist in the work, though he felt that always existed in his work. He cites the example of Pearson being labelled “beyond psychiatric help,” borrowing the summary of a rejection notice he received for *Crash* (Sellars, “Rattling” 432).

Regarding the negative reviews, Ballard rationalized that he was presenting a growing aspect in England the reviewers did not wish to acknowledge, specifically the right-wing political rhetoric of the 1970s. In an interview delivered on January 30, 1978, Margaret Thatcher stated, “People are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture” (qtd. in Savage, *England’s* 480). By playing to the prejudices of British society, Thatcher struck a chord “in a nation no longer tolerant, scared, and seeking a scapegoat.”

In *Kingdom Come*, Ballard had one last prophecy to bestow. By 2011, nearly half of the British public supported a nationalist party beyond the Tories, with a strong anti-immigration stance, so long as it did not lapse into violence and fascist ideals were not invoked (Baxter, *Inner* 334). Terrorism begets terrorism. After all, it worked so well the first times for the British Nationalist Party and the National Front. Never mind if the angle between two walls has a happy ending. Did Ballard predict the likes of Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson?

Ballard succumbed to prostate cancer in 2009, bringing to a close his literary career and this last thematic period of his writing specifically. Within these four novels and the novella from which all sprang, one sees female characters being just as corrupt as the male characters,
the “Mother Nature with V.D.” he spoke of in his *Conversations* interview with Mark Pauline (106). To return to Ballard’s statement noted in the opening of this study, “Men are going to have to cope with the huge task of deciding who they are. And they are going to have intense competition from the world of women” (Self 313). If early indications suggested Ballard viewed this as positive, then characters such as Dr. Paula Hamilton and Sergeant Mary Falconer prove this false. If Ballard regarded the female separatist cult that marked Ballard’s longer works, from *High Rise* onward, as a threat, their integration into the suburban guerrillas of this final tetralogy proved an even greater threat, no longer separate, but in danger of achieving equality. Despite the Ballardian female’s climbing of the professional ladder, she remains the conquest, broken down into body parts, never whole, often patronized like a child, and never equal.


Hall, Chris. “‘All we’ve got left is our own psychopathology’: Ed. Sellars and O’Hara. pp. 396-406.


