

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

"BETWEEN TWO WALLS":
POSTMODERNIST THEORY AND THE "PROBLEM" OF J G BALLARD

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the University of Hull

by

Roger Michael Luckhurst B.A. (Hull), M.A. (Sussex)

September 1992

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	p.i
List of Illustrations	p.ii
Preface	p.iii
PART ONE	
1) Introducing Postmodernism	p.1
2) Fredric Jameson's Rhetoric of Postmodernism	p.31
3) The Concept of Postmodernism	p.65
4) The Name of Postmodernism	p.120
5) Postings: "Postmodern Thought"	p.174
PART TWO	
Second Preface	p.215
6) J G Ballard and the Catastrophe of Genre	p.219
7) J G Ballard and the Genre of Catastrophe	p.281
8) Catastrophe after Catastrophe: The Ballardian Apocalypse	p.332
9) Where the Garment Gapes: <i>The Atrocity Exhibition</i> and the problematic of the Avant-Garde	p.386
10) Like No Other: The Signature of J G Ballard	p.464
Conclusion	p.523
Bibliography	p.528

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks must go to Bruce Woodcock, who displayed little *visible* signs of pain in supervising this project.

Thanks also to Geoff Hemstedt, whose criticism of earlier work on Ballard provided the impetus to continue further.

Rowlie Wymer's paper on Ballard for the Hull Erasmus Society helped to formulate my position; my thanks to John Hoyles for allowing me a formal setting in which to discuss my ideas.

Joyce Day at the Science Fiction Foundation was a considerable help in arranging my visit to the Library, and by sending material through the post so promptly.

John Osborne at *Bete Noire* magazine and Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. at *Science Fiction Studies* challenged and discussed sections of the thesis in article form. My thanks for their stimulus and support.

Simon Wilson and Chris Greenhalgh, fellow research students, offered some powerful connections to their own work. Simon in particular opened a strange passage between De Quincey and Situationism, which was revelatory.

Thanks finally to the people who sent me material relating to Ballard, or else just nodded at the right times during my tedious Ballardian monologues: Simon Barraclough, Andrew Butler, Julie Crofts, Jason Freeman, Chris Greenhalgh, John Lennard, Mary Luckhurst, Lynnette Turner.

This is dedicated to

S R L

Maggie

"Try again. Fail again. Fail better"
Samuel Beckett

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- 1) *The Naked City*, Guy Debord
reproduced from Hewison's *Future Tense*, Methuen
1990
- 2) *The Endless Enigma*, Salvador Dali
reproduced from Ades' *Dali*, Thames and Hudson,
1982
- 3) typographical collages by J G Ballard
reproduced from *Re/Search* magazine, no.8-9, 1984
- 4) "Does the Angle Between Two Walls Have a Happy
Ending?", 'advertisement' by J G Ballard
reproduced from *Re/Search* magazine, no.8-9, 1984
- 5) *The Doll*, Hans Bellmer
reproduced from *L'Amour Fou: Photography and
Surrealism*, ed. Rosalind Krauss, Hayward Gallery,
1986

PREFACE

"Does the angle between two walls have a happy ending?"

Ballard¹

This enigmatic question, posed by Ballard in his manifesto 'Notes From Nowhere', haunts this dissertation thematically and structurally.

Thematically, the two walls might relate to the oppositional arguments of postmodernist theory: between 'French' and 'Anglo-American' conceptions of the postmodern, between modernism and postmodernism, between affirmation and negation. Equally, it might relate to Ballard's problematic place between science fiction and 'mainstream' literature, between the 'popular' and the 'serious', between the claims on Ballard as modernist or postmodernist.

Structurally, this question addresses the very organisation of this dissertation. Part One is concerned with postmodernist theory in the abstract; Part Two reads the work of J G Ballard within and against the frame of postmodernism. This is not a divide between 'theory' and 'practice', establishing the theoretical mode with which Ballard will subsequently be read. The strange manner in which Ballard's texts operate "thetically" troubles this opposition, and his work will be found to read the theory

just as theory attempts to read him.

The main difference between the two parts lies in the mode of reading. I have chosen, in Part One, to *occupy* specific texts and the work of specific theorists, to trace the problems and contradictions that arise *internally* to what I will call definitional postmodernism. This is partly a strategic decision, faced with the vast and inchoate amount of work that is nominalised as 'postmodernist'. I hope to have evaded that empirical fear, where "research...tended to prolong the time of information gathering indefinitely, in view of deferring the nonetheless inevitable moment when unknown elements would come and demolish its basis"². Writing must begin somewhere. Part Two operates more intertextually, by juxtaposing contemporaneous discourses with Ballard's texts in an attempt to forge connections that themselves can begin to open readings.

If Ballard poses this question of happy endings, I do not attempt to answer it with any finality. Rather the angle questions the question, poses the problem of "difference and articulation" between the two walls. In this, I am relating the angle to what Derrida calls the hinge, *la brisure*:

You have, I suppose, dreamt of finding a single word for designating difference and articulation. I have perhaps located it by chance...if I play on the word, or rather indicate its double meaning. The word is brisure [joint, break] "-- broken, cracked part. C.f.

*breach, crack, fracture, fault split, fragment, --
Hinged articulation of two parts of wood- or
metal-work. The hinge, the brisure of a shutter*³

The section on 'The Hinge' in *Of Grammatology* deploys it in various ways: it is the space between, the non-space, the white blanks between words; it is the non-originary trace that allows oppositions to appear, their condition of possibility that is also their impossibility: the hinge both constitutes and breaches "all dualisms"⁴. The angle between two walls both differentiates and articulates together; this will have profound effects on the structures elaborated above.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Ballard, 'Notes From Nowhere', *New Worlds*, 167, 1966, p.149
- 2) Michel De Certeau, *The Writing of History* 1975, translated Tom Conley, Columbia University Press, 1988, p.78
- 3) letter to Derrida from Roger Laporte, cited *Of Grammatology* 1967, translated Gayatri Spivak, John Hopkins University Press, p.65
- 4) *Of Grammatology*, p.71

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism: "No one precisely agrees what is meant by the term"; "no one seems to be able to agree, not only on the interpretation, but often of what cultural phenomena are to be interpreted"; "The contradictory character of the term expands its meaning; its inflationary character follows from this contradictoriness"¹. The massive expansion of the term postmodernism has extended over discursive regimes, disciplinary structures, national and international borders. Definitions, however, always seem to contain the implied impossibility of definition.

Literary texts that have been designated as "postmodernist" seem to effect the same transgression of borders: Tom Paulin characterises Angela Carter's work as "an expansive territory without boundaries or horizons, a kind of permanent and infinite vanishing"². His invocation of Terminus, the god of fences and borders, to contain this is more than a response to the strange spatiality of *The Passion of New Eve*. Paulin's insistence on the imposition of order, of boundaries, could be said to represent the theorist standing before the unbounded, horizon-less space of postmodernism.

The space of the introduction is meant to offer a movement of clarification, the elaboration of a *terrain*. With

regard to postmodernism, this operation becomes peculiarly contradictory. It might be said, for example, that the term postmodernism is deployed in (at least) three distinct ways. The first is the construction of an aesthetic, or a poetics, which is produced inductively from an empirical analysis of a number of texts. Different aesthetics have been produced for different artistic forms; hence the competition for the most "exemplary" form between architecture, video, television, art and literature. The second is a considerably vaster claim, which moves beyond these purely internal disciplinary histories and attempts to place these shifts in a fundamental historical transformation. "Postmodernism" thus becomes a concept which relates to a new economic, political and cultural totality. Influential Marxist analyses categorise this in terms of a paradigmatic shift within the capitalist mode of production. The third sense may be termed 'postmodern thought', which posits a questioning, in the crudest terms, of the philosophical propositions underpinning "modernity"; the refusal, in Lyotard's overused phrase, of its "grand narratives" for the fractured incommensurabilities of "micronarratives" of difference³.

These three senses may equally be ascribed to distinct disciplines, with "postmodernism" belonging to art histories (in their most traditional form), "postmodernity" belonging to more sociologically inflected

analyses, and "postmodern thought" belonging to philosophy. However, just as soon as this introductory frame is posited, it begins to fall apart. Literary history has long been exploded from its disciplinary confines, and it is rarely the case that an aesthetic of postmodernism is not framed within a larger context, borrowing to varying extents from the second sense. Equally, with postmodernism, sociology in its strict form has found aesthetics, once a marginal preoccupation, becoming central. Further, the advent of "critical theory" in the humanities has meant an involution of philosophy and 'literary' concerns, and a rapid cross-fertilisation over multiple disciplinary borders. Indeed, staying within disciplinary confines in order to define it contradicts the crucial interdisciplinarity of "postmodernism".

More fundamentally, however, "postmodern thought" is, for Simon During, utterly opposed to the totality of postmodernity: it is "that thought which refuses to turn the Other into the Same. Thus it provides a theoretical space for what postmodernity denies: otherness"⁴. It appears that "postmodernism" cannot be glossed or neatly categorised into a plurality of meanings without stalling against an interdiction by one of its elements. The term cannot be said to encompass a line from totality to difference, for this returns the 'other' of difference to the 'same' of a "total" defining

moment. "Postmodernism" is less a bewildering and diversely deployed term which can yet be reduced to a singular root; rather, it conceals lines of thought which appear to be flatly opposed. Indeed, the opposition between totality and difference will be discovered again and again: Jameson and 'poststructuralism' as well as Habermas and Lyotard are two articulations of this I will be analysing in the chapters below.

Introductions to postmodernism are nevertheless regularly produced, which attempt to synthesize these elements and propose a coherent trajectory through them. My main concern in the following chapters will be to analyse and offer a critical commentary on the inevitable contradictions and forms of violence such works perform on the very term they are in the process of constituting.

If postmodernism is marked by the overrunning of boundaries, the very act of introducing is a delimitation, for etymologically *introducere* means 'to bring inside'. Transformed spatiality, the fundamental dis-organization of perceptual space that is a consistent presence in definitions of postmodernism is yet re-organized and taxonomized by the definitional introduction. Equally, if postmodernism is presented as an object or structure, edges or limits are required to demarcate it. Predominantly,

therefore, postmodernism is portrayed in terms of a radical break whether, in narrow focus, internally to disciplines, or, in larger terms, across the board, an historical rupture. Many problems ensue from such narratives: the edge produced by rupture yet introduces an epoch *without* edges or limits; a historical moment of break yet conceives of an epoch *without* history (another central definitional premise); a theory of the epoch within the epoch can only become another symptom of it. Further, the envelopment of "postmodern thought" by an overarching "postmodernism" fences it within methodologies which it constantly questions and problematises. This is to say that many definitional statements could not logically be pronounced within the very definition of an epochal postmodernism, since it is posited as denying the very capacity to make them. These difficulties, roughly stated here, will be pursued in the following four chapters.

Before this, however, it is necessary to analyse the *mode* of containment which definitional theories of postmodernism deploy. These works grasp postmodernism as an *object*, as empirical phenomena to be organized into an inductive homology; the genitive of a 'theory of postmodernism' implies that theory remains 'outside' its object. In this strange new space, all that is required is a "spatial hermeneutics"² that would give

orientation in this 'world'. This suggests that the space of postmodernism is some pre-given zone over which theory subsequently moves. However, Steven Connor is correct to state that "Postmodernism finds its object neither wholly in the cultural sphere, nor wholly in the critical-institutional sphere, but in some tensely negotiated space between the two"⁶. In that sense interdisciplinarity is not a bar to definition; it is the very possibility of such a term being produced and finding such diverse application.

It can be said at once that, despite a rhetoric of incapacity, of a "crisis" of apprehension, theory *constitutes* its object. There is a gap between what is enounced and how it is enunciated: "postmodernism" is both the descriptive content of an utterance and a *mode* of utterance, both an apparent "crisis" and the containment of that "crisis". If involving utterances that speak of a horizon-less space, the enunciative modality of definitional postmodernism has frequent recourse to a series of metaphors that seek to manage and order, by re-inscribing borders. In the first place, then, I want to analyse the constitutive space of postmodernism that the space of the introduction introduces: the metaphors of the map, the city and the exemplarity of specific sites within the city.

I

Michel de Certeau, from the 120th floor of the World Trade Centre, details the delight of being able to view the city from above, the erotics of viewing the changing 'rhetorics' of Manhattan from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. This apparent transportation above the text, however, "continues to construct the fiction that creates readers, makes the complexity of the city readable, and immobilises its opaque mobility in a transparent text"⁷. The city, the 'panorama-city', is a theoretical simulacrum produced by the fiction of being 'above' or 'outside' the text. It is from this perspective, of the Panoptic eye, that the map is drawn, "a plane projection of totalising observations" [p.119]. The fictive objectivism of the map imposes, like Paulin's Terminus, a rigid grid of explanation for distinct and diverse objects, a "proper place in which to exhibit the products of knowledge [and] form tables of legible results"[p.121].

Nevertheless, it is to the metaphor of the map that the theorists of postmodernism have most frequent recourse when characterising its perplexing space. "I will not attempt to define what postmodernism is", Huyssen begins, but rather will "provide...something like a large-scale map of the postmodern, which surveys several territories

and on which the various postmodern artistic and critical practices could find their aesthetic and political place"⁸. There is an appeal to the objectivism of the map, which should at least (as long as it remains "large-scale") trap the elusive object of postmodernism in its grid. Huyssen's map is temporal rather than spatial, and offers the following route. If the Sixties presents an 'authentic' avantgardism, an art "Groping to recapture the adversary ethos which nourished modern art in its earlier stages"[p.193], the Seventies is the "end game" of the avantgarde, not a ruptural and subversive movement, but "a search for a viable modern tradition... outside the canon of classical modernism"[p.169]. Opposed to the 'true' avantgarde of the Sixties, the Seventies is "largely affirmative" postmodernism, which has given up any notion of "critique, transgression or negation"[p.188], and which abrogates political responsibility by divesting itself of the concerns of history.

In the putative 'Eighties', Huyssen finds a resurgent oppositionality that perplexingly arrives from off the map. Looking to the edges in the phenomena of imperialist critique, ecological groups and feminism, these name-less, text-less movements ("I cannot discuss here the various and multiple forms of otherness as they emerge..." [p.219]) are seen to erupt and problematise the centre,

but they are invisible on his "large scale" map. It seems bizarre that Huyssen should offer a mapping that cannot track the emergence of a "political" art, something evidently celebrated in the Sixties and denigrated for its absence in the Seventies. This is not simply ignorance (specifically against Huyssen's bafflement "that feminist criticism has so far largely stayed away from the postmodernist debate", Meaghan Morris has produced a six page bibliography of women writers on that question⁹); rather, it suggests that the singular space of the map cannot contain forms of cultural politics that emerge *outside* the singular narrative proposed. Far from providing a neutral terrain on which the 'story' of postmodernism unfolds, the map is here constitutive and prescriptive of the 'route' taken, and thus accounts for the untrackable appearance of these oppositional practices.

Towards the end of *The Condition of Postmodernity* David Harvey warns: "There is a danger that our mental maps will not match current realities"¹⁰. Harvey, the influential Marxist geographer, conceives postmodernism in ways that fundamentally contradict Huyssen. Postmodernity arrives with the new regime of capitalist accumulation and a new round of "space-time compression" after 1973; postmodernism is the largely denigrated epiphenomena of this economic shift -- an at times distressingly straightforward reflectionist model¹¹. Given this new

spatial organization, Harvey's mapping seems to retain a conception of the map that by his own analysis is anachronistic. Detailing the rise of the Enlightenment conception of space and time, the main implement is the 'new' Ptolemaic map of fixed distances, represented from above. The world becomes finite, knowable, and vital to the colonialist expansion of capital. The map is a space through which Enlightened Man can liberate himself: "stripped of all the elements of fantasy and religious belief, as well as any sign of the experiences involved in their production, [maps] had become abstract and strictly functional systems for the factual ordering of phenomena in space"[p.249].

Such is the project, it seems, of his own theoretical ordering, even though he elsewhere states that "The transition from Fordism to flexible accumulation, such as it has been, ought to imply the transition in our 'mental maps', political attitudes and political institutions" [p.305]. The maintenance of the map is tied to a resolute defence of Marxism as the only method to constitute and comprehend the workings of postmodernity in its totality: "Meta-theory cannot be dispensed with" [p.117] if a "coherent" politics is to be offered against the "nihilism" and of poststructuralism's "total political silence". Capitalism, it is argued, has control of this abstract space of the map, and

any oppositional practice must meet it on that plane of abstract, global space. Opposed to Huyssen, there follows from this the critique of any politics which is based on *place*, that is, any specific local, regional or (especially) national struggle. The elements which appeared on Huyssen's borders, which "postmodernist politics emphasise can flourish in a particular place [are] all too often subject to the power of capital over the co-ordination of universal fragmented space and the march of capital's global historical time that lies outside the purview of any particular one of them"[p.239]. Difference, assigned to a specific place, is thus subordinated to global space.

If difference is equated with place, place is associated with Being. Being (for Harvey) is inherently reactionary against the Marxist subject's Becoming through 'making history'. However, as Connor notes, Harvey's attacks on the relativism of postmodernist art and poststructuralist theory are couched in terms of the opposition between ethics and aesthetics, or earth and (hot) air: Harvey's "is a language which obsessively and apparently unselfconsciously sets grounding, depth, radicality and foundation against the airy insubstantiality or miasmatic opacity of the cultural" ¹². Not only is this 'grounding' apparently already discredited as the illusionary metaphoricity

of a certain reactionary modernism, its opposite, "airy insubstantiality" precisely articulates the non-place of the cartographer's Panoptic eye. Harvey remains caught in the metaphors of the cultural that his analysis attempts to de-etherealise.

The imagery of height and ground is repeatedly discovered in works on postmodernism. Fred Pfeil's collection of essays is presented as offering "various models for mapping contemporary culture" and posits a concrete analysis contextualised by "flying over" the terrain through "the overlapping airspaces of the political debates and theoretical discourses that swarm above it"¹³. Lyotard notes that "The diversity of artistic 'propositions' is dizzying. What philosopher can control it from above or unify it?"¹⁴. Equally, Iain Chambers reflecting somewhat critically on the internationalised 'jet-set' academia that has constituted postmodernism, opposes the view from 35 000 feet to 'down-to-earth' analyses: "the flight plan only needs to consider the relation between the plane...and the flat referent beneath the fuselage...[.] Meaning contracts into the pressurised cabin [and k]nowledge of the social, political and cultural globe becomes the knowledge of a second-order reality"¹⁵. This recalls Baudrillard's opening conceit of *Simulations* where he moves beyond the proposition that "Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory...it is the map that engenders the territory" to

suggest that "it is no longer a question of either maps or territory. Something has disappeared: the sovereign difference between them that was the abstraction's charm"¹⁶. In the first of many uncanny echoes, Ballard has also stated that "The media landscape of the present day is a map in search of a territory"¹⁷.

Suggesting that the map is not the neutral position it purports to be but *constitutive* of the very terrain it unfolds does not accede to Baudrillard's order of simulacra. His implosion of map and territory is de-subjectivised, satirising and dis-empowering these metaphorical cartographies. What replaces it, however, "a metastable, programmatic, perfect descriptive machine", is all the more potentially totalitarian in its self-generation, "leaving room only for the orbital recurrence of models and the simulated generation of difference"¹⁸. Rather, what I propose to follow is de Certeau's opposition between map and itinerary, place and space.

The Practice of Everyday Life details, from the sixteenth century, the rise of the Panoptic map in parallel with the production of the 'concept-city'. As a way of containing and controlling increasing urban agglomeration, urbanist discourses conceived city space as a rationally organised synchronic grid administered with a strict functionalism. Elements which cannot function or which dysfunction for

the concept are expelled; synchronicity erases resistances of tradition and local difference¹⁹. Today, *discursively*, "the city serves as a totalising and almost mythical landmark for socioeconomic and political strategies" of control [95].

This spatial organisation may recall Foucault's taxonomic grids of explanation in the Classical *episteme*; it is discernable, however, in Harvey's mapping and also in certain constructions of a poetics of postmodernism. Brian McHale, for example, argues, in Jakobsonian terms, for a shift of dominant from the epistemological in modernism to the ontological in postmodernism. This is the sole organising principle, and texts across a global reach are arranged into an aesthetic, one initially constructed as a shift from an Anglo-American modernism. This extends to the orchestration of *continents*: Latin America, with its "mosaic of dissimilar and...incompatible cultures" being "*intrinsically* postmodernist", whilst the Caribbean "comes very close to constituting a heterotopia similar to those in postmodernist texts"²⁰. If these formulations rather worryingly insert 'Third World' realities into an aesthetic order which appears to have priority over them, it is not simply that a global reach is being interdicted; what is of concern is that such mappings reduce differences to equivalences within a grid.

De Certeau states that "the Concept-city is decaying"[95];

paradoxically the metropolitan concerns of theories of postmodernism concur in content, if apparently retaining it as a form of metaphorical containment. Mazzoleni's psychoanalytic approach argues that the classical understanding of the city was premised on the model of the body as a functioning organic system: now "metropolises are no longer 'places', because their dimensions exceed by far the dimensions of the perceptive apparatuses of their inhabitants...in the metropolis there is no longer pan-orama (the vision of all), because its body overflows beyond the horizon"²¹. Chambers, in different terms, agrees: "we can no longer hope to map the modern metropolis, for that implies that we know its extremes, its borders, confines, limits". In any case, "it is no longer an actual city but an image of it that has taken over... The media, and the images of the metropolis they offer, provide us with a city that is immaterial and transparent"²². De Certeau warns, however, that it is not necessarily that "cities are deteriorating along with the procedures that organised them" [95]; since the concept-city is *discursive* and metaphorical it may be that the 'misfortune of theory' is being transmuted here into a 'theory of misfortune' [96]. He proposes escaping this by changing the focus, by opposing the map to the *itinerary*: "the microbe-like, singular and plural practices which an urbanistic system was supposed to administer or suppress, but which have outlived its decay" [96]. Owing much to Benjamin's analysis of the role of

the *flâneur* and Situationist urbanism²³, de Certeau celebrates the "ordinary culture" of the itinerary, signalled in the subversive and untrackable 'rhetorics' of walking, against the "scientific discourse" of the map.

If I propose to alter de Certeau's terms a little, it is because it is suggestive to think that the massive production of theories of postmodernism, competing discordantly and non-consensually to organise the same elements (witness the divergent mappings of Huyssen and Harvey), are attempts to *project* a cartographic perspective from what remain, in effect, itineraries shuffling and re-shuffling between pieces from the same 'Postmodern Grand Tour'²⁴. There is a strange return to that moment where the map has not yet "disengaged itself from the itineraries that were a condition of its possibility" [120]. This moment, however, seems forever suspended by the very nature of a definition which so often includes the impossibility of definitional containment within it: its excess, its overrunning of borders, its unrepresentability.

In this, the city is an apt locus for the contradictory impetus of theorising postmodernism, for the city is both an object of postmodernism, a major site for analysis, which speaks of fragmentation, expansion and disorientation, but is also deployed, metaphorically, as a device for the very containment of flux. Stating the

major problematic for theory as the unrepresentability of postmodernism, which centrally includes the fracturing of city space, Fredric Jameson nevertheless believes that "the notion of a city...does rise imperiously in the mind as one of the last few thinkable "representations""²⁵. Such contradictions arise in other texts.

For Edward Soja, the city, and particularly Los Angeles, is the "prototopos" (paradigmatic place) for postmodernism²⁶. Soja, however, is more aware of the problematics not only of the paradigm, but of describing the city itself in the first place. The potential analogy to theory as he describes Los Angeles is striking:

From the inside, introspectively, one tends to see only fragments and immediacies, fixed sites of myopic understanding generalised to represent the whole. To the more far-sighted outsider, the visible aggregate of the whole of Los Angeles churns so confusingly that it induces little more than illusory stereotypes or self-serving caricatures -- if its reality is ever seen at all [p.222]

It is interesting to note that such an assertion is made in a chapter which tries to "recapture" the "spiralling tour" that Soja, Jameson, and the seminal Marxist geographer Henri Lefebvre took through Los Angeles²⁷. Their "itinerary" can only display fragments and lacunae of the city, and claims (from the same level as the city-text) that "Any totalising description of [Los Angeles] is impossible" [p. 223]. Equally Soja appears to reject the city as seen from above. Either vision is defective; the myopic, the far-sighted -- although, as

will be displayed, the latter has a double meaning.

As for theory, Soja makes use of the familiar metaphor: "the shifting, almost kaleidoscopic, intellectual terrain has become extremely difficult to map for it no longer appears with its familiar, time-worn contours"[p.60]. Postmodernism is seen as the "cultural, ideological, reflective"²⁸ effect at a conjuncture of diverse philosophical concerns (broadly termed 'posthistoricism', as privileging questions of space and ontology) with political-economic changes (termed 'postfordist', the breakdown of large-scale production, and the rise of flexible specialisation). Soja is concerned to offer a postmodernism which 'deconstructs' the old, historicist forms of closure: its rigid categorical thinking; its dualisms; its totalising "deep logics"[p. 73]. This, however, must be combined with a "tentative reconstruction grounded in the political and theoretical demands of the contemporary world...attuned to the emancipatory struggles of all those who are peripheralised and oppressed"[p. 74]. This is the 'good' postmodernist object. The 'bad' one is that which uses "deconstruction to draw even more obfuscating veils over the instrumentality of restructuring and spatialisation, reducing both history and geography to meaningless whimsy and pastiche..."[p. 74]. In order for this constant differentiation between good and bad objects to be successful, "A new cognitive mapping must be developed, a new way of seeing through the

gratuitous veils of both reactionary postmodernism and late modern historicism"[p. 75].

There is, then, a slippage between the unmappable object of Los Angeles and the fundamental mapping function of theory. Are the last two essays, both on Los Angeles, a rejection of that ability to map? Things are not this simple. Soja opens his text with a combined 'Preface and Postscript', which "signals right from the start an intention to tamper with the familiar modalities of time...to see the text as a map, a geography of simultaneous relations that are tied together by a spatial rather than temporal logic"[p. 11]. There is no introduction because Soja invites the reader to read the book backwards as well as forwards, or else from the centre out. However, the language of the 'Preface and Postface' slips: "the essays on Los Angeles...help[is] to *complete* an introductory and indicative map for the collection of essays"(my emphasis). For all the attempts to "tamper" with linearity, the final essays remain final. The apparent (in the pre-liminary remarks to 'Taking Los Angeles Apart') rejection of mappability nevertheless serves as an "introductory" map.

Further, 'It All Comes Together in Los Angeles' positions its analysis as an empirical paradigm for concretely displaying the 'abstractions' of postfordist spatial restructuring: how Los Angeles as a *conceptual* city is in

fact an annexation of a series of cities; how the space of these cities shows a rigid divide in terms of class, race and ethnicity (ethni-cities); how postfordism has emasculated the centre for new outlying spaces of industrial agglomeration. The bounded space of Los Angeles is displayed as traversed by innumerable contradictions: a deindustrialisation of manufacturing industry with reindustrialised areas of 'new technologies'; a consequent decentralisation, yet recentralisation, with projects for inner city urban renewal; Los Angeles as a site for the major defence industries, yet becomes the place for a mass Third World "invasion"; how such immigrants are employed in nineteenth century type sweatshops against the most advanced forms of labour in the new technologies. 'Taking Los Angeles Apart' positions itself, however, as an itinerary through the city, its sense of confusion, contradiction and simultaneity aligned with a (cultural, reflective) postmodernism. Quickly, Soja resorts to the map, drawing a sixty mile circle from the centre, a line largely occupied by defence installations. The 'overview' returns. Further, Soja reinscribes the primary significance of the centre, using Foucault's Panopticon to describe its surveillance function in relation to the urban fabric as a whole. Although this description may be partial, fragmentary, it serves to metonymise the elements analysed. In a footnote, Soja notes the "Colourful pictorial maps, so convenient for the exaggerated

representation of presences and absences, seen to be multiplying at an unusually rapid pace all over Los Angeles, quietly erasing the unsightly, distorting spatial relations for effect and calling to the fantastic and the most merchandisable"[p. 237]. Although Soja intends to uncover the "unsightly" spaces of Los Angeles, his map, his mirror of the city is equally anamorphic.

If Los Angeles is a "prototopic" paradigm, there is one space *within* this paradigm that is itself paradigmatic: the Bonaventure Hotel. It is this which ultimately frustrates mappability:

...a concentrated representation of the restructured spatiality of the late capitalist city...everything imaginable appears to be available in the micro-urb but real places are difficult to find, its spaces confuse an effective cognitive mapping, its pastiches of superficial reflections bewilder co-ordination and encourage submission instead[p 243-4].

The text ends on an 'impossible' postmodernist object. Jameson, too, ends his essay 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism' on the Bonaventure (it is also discussed by Baudrillard in *America*)²⁹. With its mirrored windows "when you seek to look at the hotel's outer walls you cannot see the hotel itself, but only the distorted images of everything that surrounds it"[p.82]. Jameson argues that the Bonaventure aims to create an internalised, self-sufficient mini-city, whose windows reflect away the anarchy of the city, whose access points are difficult and 'invisible'. In the confusing space

within, this "postmodern hyperspace" "has succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself...and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world"[p. 83]. This hyperspace becomes consonant with Jameson's conception of postmodernism *globally*: the paradox of an unmappable specificity metaphorically extended to map the whole. Meaghan Morris, in her reflexive account of the attempt to theorise the Sydney Tower, warns that such "'morphological' studies of exemplary sites" are read in this way as "an allegorical exposition of theoretical problems taken as given, and thus as exemplary of general forces already at work in the world"³⁰; that is, Jameson and others work in reverse by un-mapping the map already in place. Does not such exemplarity miss the problem of the city anyway? As Mike Davis suggests: "What is missing from Jameson's otherwise vivid description of the Bonaventure is the savagery of its insertion into the surround [sic] city. To say that a structure of this type 'turns its back away' is surely an understatement"³¹. Again, through the deployment of a 'grounding' metaphor, the space of postmodernism is contained and containing, the "Hotel" of theory turning its back on the rest of the (unreadable) city.

The "Hotel" of theory is precisely the metaphor chosen by Jim Collins to attack the "territorial isolation"³² of much postmodern theory. Collins portrays the "Culture-as-Grand-Hotel" as the dominant conception of

popular culture, installed by the Frankfurt School, a place seen as possessing a managing executive on the top floor which controls and directs all the mass culture which reaches the populace below according to some master plan of ideological control. In the postmodern arena, however, such notions of "dominant" ideology, of privileging a negative dialectics of the avantgarde over the undifferentiated "Culture Industry" of popular culture must be jettisoned. Against monolithic notions of cultural production, Collins proposes a regime in which "competing forms of discourse...try to 'cut' a place for themselves, resulting in the need for a given genre, medium, or institution to promote *itself* as the privileged mode of representing experience"[p.2]. We are asked to "check out" of the Grand Hotel into the "Arena" of "decentred cultures":

Instead of redesigning the interior, theorists must reconceive culture not as one Grand Hotel that has fixed ontological status transcending its representations, but rather as a series of hotels, the style changing according to the way it is imagined by the discourses that represent it...[.]The Post-Modern version of this might be a cluster of buildings, their styles and configurations changing according to whichever building one uses as a point of reference...[.] Culture does not have one centre or no centre, but multiple, simultaneous centres. Our knowledge of what constitutes "our culture" at any given moment depends on the accumulation of views produced by each of these structures...[p. 26-7].

This metaphorical conception of Post-Modernism has a certain validity; it refuses monolithic totality, whilst evading a non-critical pluralism, for these are fundamentally contestatory simultaneities of discourse.

The problem comes from the conception of the postmodernist "arena". Each discursive hotel is belligerently convinced of its own centrality and authenticity. What is the impetus, then, to 'check out' of such certainty, and 'check in' to another? Is this movement possible? Further, having once unpacked and settled in a new hotel, with new certainties, wouldn't there be a certain *forgetting* of prior certainties? From which point -- if not outside the "arena" -- can such an "accumulation of views" be gained?

This relates to the 'discursive arena' addressed by Collins, for these contestatory "decentred cultures" actually only relate to struggles within aesthetic forms. Hence, the arena, the "model field" is "decidedly not co-terminous with any actual field of discourses. Instead it is a constructed arena within which it does battle with other texts according to its own ground rules"[p. 43]. This Post-Modern collection of hotels is an arena of intertextual contest that is to be constructed by each text. Collins' non-totalising, non-monolithic discursive set of hotels are thus, in fact, contained by the singular "arena" of literary history.

What has been presented here is a series of metaphors from the map to the city (and the mapping of the city) to the hotel, which operate to elaborate a space, a terrain of postmodernism. However, such formalistic containments have

been seen to contradict their very definitional contents. Is an introduction to postmodernism impossible, then? Within these Introductions analysed here there are frequent signs of such a renunciation: Huyssen's "I will not attempt to define what postmodernism is"; Collins' "this book is intended as a prolegomena rather than a definitive study" [xv]; Harvey's "no one precisely agrees what is meant by the term", which does not prevent its dominant ideas being "boiled down to a bare minimum" [viii]; Jameson's denial that he is not presenting "a survey of the "postmodern", nor even an introduction to it"³³. Connor is perhaps right to note that "what is particular to postmodern theory...is the desire to project and to produce that which cannot be pinned down or mastered by representation or conceptual thought", but these metaphorical containments confirm his further point:

Such a theory asserts its legitimacy through the forms of discrediting, unmakes and decentres itself only to produce suppler forms of authoritative discourse. Postmodern theory yields the vision of a cultural 'heterotopia' which has no edges, hierarchy or centre, but is nevertheless always framed by the theory that wills it into being³⁴

This restates, then, the contradiction suggested between the enounced and the enunciation: if "postmodernism" is the description of a non-containable empirical reality, which sends theorisation into crisis, the term also covers, by the framing enunciations, the attempt to contain that crisis.



If this "crisis" affects the grasping of postmodernism as a totality, it has been Fredric Jameson *who* has most resolutely defended the possibility of retrieving a total conception from its apparent de-legitimation. One last metaphor: Jameson moves from the "small, painstakingly reproduced nostalgic restaurant -- decorated with the old photographs, with Soviet waiters sluggishly serving bad food -- hidden away within some gleaming new pink and blue architectural extravaganza", the parodic representation of Marxism by current theory, to attempt a kind of inversion of this space, the "vista of the gaudiest new hotels"³⁵ now to be *contained* by Marxism. Jameson's influence on the circulating definitions of postmodernism is massive, and I devote the next chapter to considering his work.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) quotes from David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Blackwell, 1989, p.7; Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Routledge, 1989, p.16; Donald Kuspit, 'The Contradictory Character of Postmodernism', in *Postmodernism -- Philosophy and the Arts* ed. Hugh Silverman, Routledge, 1990, p.53.
- 2) Tom Paulin, 'A New England', *Ireland and the English Question*, p. 174. Angela Carter is designated an exemplary "postmodernist" by Linda Hutcheon in *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Brian McHale in *Postmodernist Fiction*, Methuen, 1987, and rather less positively by John Bayley, 'Fighting for the Crown', *New York Review of Books*, 23/4/92.
- 3) see Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), translated Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi, Manchester University Press, 1984.
- 4) Simon During, 'Postmodernism or post-colonialism today', *Textual Practice*, 1:1, 1987, p.32.
- 5) the phrase is Edward Soja's, in *Postmodern Geographies*, Verso, 1988. This work is discussed below.
- 6) Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, Blackwell, London, 1989, p.7.
- 7) de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated Steven Rendall, California UP, 1984, p.92. All page references follow in the text.

- 8) Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, Macmillan, 1986, p.183.
- 9) Morris, *The Pirate's Fiancee*, Verso, London, 1988, p.17-23.
- 10) David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Blackwell, 1989, p.305. All page references follow in the text.
- 11) See, for example, Harvey's analysis of the film *Bladerunner* which is praised for displaying evidence of 'flexible accumulation' and other post-Fordist production techniques, but criticised for lack of credible class struggle (chapter 18).
- 12) Steven Connor, *Theory and Cultural Value*, Blackwell, 1992, p.156.
- 13) Fred Pfeil, *Another Tale to Tell*, Verso, 1990, p.1-2.
- 14) Lyotard, 'Philosophy and Painting in the Age of Their Experimentation: Contribution to an Idea of Postmodernity', *The Lyotard Reader*, Blackwell, 1989, p.190.
- 15) Iain Chambers, 'Maps for the Metropolis', *Cultural Studies* 1:1 1987, p.1-2.
- 16) Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1983, p.2
- 17) Commentary note to the Re/Search edition of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Re/Search Publications, 1990, p.89.
- 18) Baudrillard, *Simulations*, p.4.
- 19) This recalls, inevitably, Haussmann's slum-clearance of Paris in the mid-19th Century,

following riots. Equally, however, such an analysis might be proposed for London Docklands and its displacement of East End populations.

- 20) Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, Methuen, 1987, p.54.
- 21) Donatella Mazzoleni, 'The City and the Imaginary', *New Formations*, 11, 1990, p.100.
- 22) Iain Chambers, *Border Dialogues: Journeys in Postmodernity*, Routledge, 1990, p.54.
- 23) I deal with both Benjamin and Situationism in the conclusion to chapter 3, below.
- 24) The phrase is Peter Nicholls', in 'Futurism, Gender, and Theories of Postmodernity', *Textual Practice* 3:2, 1989, p 217.
- 25) Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Verso, 1991, p.376.
- 26) Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, Verso, 1989. All page references follow in the text. 27) Soja, see footnote 12, p.63.
- 28) Soja, p.29. This in fact refers to modernism, but is presumably transferrable to postmodernism.
- 29) Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *New Left Review* 146, 1984. Page references in text; Baudrillard, *America*, Verso, 1988, see pages 59-60. Elements of his description are very close to Jameson's phrasing.
- 30) Meaghan Morris, 'Metamorphoses at Sydney Tower', *New Formations*, 11, 1990, pages 16 and 14.

- 31) Mike Davis, 'Urban Renewal and the Spirit of Postmodernism', *NLR*, 151, 1985, p.112.
- 32) Jim Collins, *Uncommon Cultures*, Routledge, London, 1989, p.xiv. Page references follow in the text.
- 33) Jameson's quote from *Postmodernism*, p.xvii.
- 34) Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, p.19.
- 35) Jameson, 'Marxism and Postmodernism', *New Left Review*, 176, 1989, p.31.

CHAPTER TWO

FREDRIC JAMESON'S RHETORIC OF POSTMODERNISM

Anyone operating in the critical space of postmodernist theory must "work through" a certain 'anxiety of influence' from Fredric Jameson. His essay, 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism' (1984), was one of the key texts which initiated the massive academic institutional concern with postmodernism. It has principally been received as a definitional work; his list of determinants -- depthlessness, loss of historicity, 'schizophrenic' subjectivity coupled with the 'hysterical sublime', and a transformed spatiality -- is responsible for setting the terms of characterising the postmodern. What has been less accepted, but possibly more productive of 'debate', is Jameson's defence of a certain Hegelian Marxist method as the only approach to grasp postmodernism in its totality as a logic of an epoch constituted by an internal transformation of the capitalist mode of production.

Jameson's definitional elements are important, and if I leave a detailed analysis of them to the next chapter this is because the perhaps central definition, so it appears, is the *paralysis* of the definitional capacity. To define is to delimit, demarcate and set boundaries. It has already been displayed that the attempt to conceptualise postmodernism involves something which at varying levels

evades or overflows conceptuality, the result being a recourse to metaphors of containment. Jameson grounds this empirically in the global extension of capital such that there is, in effect, no 'outside' from which a definition could mark boundaries. Any definition is inevitably already part of that which is to be defined. This 'abolition of critical distance' marks, for a political/critical theory, the erasure of "radical conceptions about the nature of cultural politics... which range from slogans of negativity, opposition, and subversion to critique and reflexivity"¹. This would then appear to accord with Baudrillard's assertions about the futility of theory and his satires on the pretensions of oppositional politics alongside Lyotard's very different, ethical concerns about the violence inherent in any Theory².

How is this apparent abolition of critical distance to be equated with Jameson's claim that a Hegel-inflected Marxism can recognize and diagnose postmodernism in its totality? This is what this chapter will address. In brief, it may be said that only in the book-form of his work has Jameson delineated the *double* meaning of postmodernism. The first, "postmodernism theory", is that which proclaims fragmentation, decentredness, loss of historicity, and all the 'definitional' elements which would appear to disable analysis. The second, postmodernism 'itself', is an attempt to conceptualise an

objective historical totality, a mode of production. With this double movement Jameson can claim to historicise ahistoricity³.

Jameson has registered irritation at being "oddly and comically identified with an object of study"⁴, his detractors mistaking him for a proponent of postmodernism. However, this seems an inevitable risk, resultant from a fundamental defensiveness in his project. There are sections of his work, whole essays, which seem to 'belong' to "postmodernism theory" and which work to conceal his Marxist intent by "rhetorical trick[ery]" and the use of "code words" for Marxian terms⁵. Between "postmodernism theory", dominant in the epoch, and Jameson's attempt to conceptualise postmodernism 'itself', apparently disallowed by the epoch, there is a mimicking of the former and a rhetorical concealment of the latter. These can be followed in Jameson's comments on, firstly, *interpretation* and, secondly, *cognitive mapping*, a term which will return to the metaphors of mapping.

I

Jameson's conception of the dissolving of theory into its object must introduce a certain reflexivity into his own analysis. If he opens the book by stating that "I would not want to have to decide whether the following chapters are inquiries into the nature of such "postmodernism

theory" or mere examples of it"⁶, this does indeed reflect the disconcerting manner in which his texts become exemplary of his own definitions. This extends beyond his own signals of complicity. Most immediately, so vast is Jameson's production of essays explicitly on postmodernism (I will cite from sixteen⁷) that the material is difficult to "master", to find its edges, not least because it shades into other areas of Jameson's concerns: having read the essays individually, it is startling that the introduction to the *Postmodernism* book places it within a pocket as "the third and last section of the penultimate subdivision of a larger project" [PMCLC, xxi]. With other essays published only in the Far East, due to Jameson's participation in the global academic circuit⁸, the sense of an "unrepresentable" and unavailable totality hovers over his work.

Another difficulty arises from this astonishing productivity: the texts tend to be accumulative rather than refining propositions over time, such that differences, reversals and flat contradictions multiply. The massive conclusion to *Postmodernism* far from summarily retrenching positions is actually additive and only further complicates. It is ironic in this sense that Jameson entitles it 'Secondary Elaborations', for the Freudian reference is meant to define the "elimination of the dream's absurdity and incoherence"⁹. The conclusion, however, also paradoxically illustrates another exemplary

definitional moment, in that the new material is woven together by shuffling prior texts in a complex process of self-citation¹⁰, rather like "metabooks which cannibalise other books, metatexts which collate bits of other texts" [RWI, 223]. Interpretation of this eclipse of interpretation is thus fraught with problems.

In one of Jameson's earliest essays on postmodernism, he confronts the "uniquely problematical and unrepresentable content"[OD,118] of postmodernism; invisible reproductive technologies which have replaced the visible productive machines celebrated by a modernist aesthetic. Beyond the competence of a single subject to contain, it yet leaves an imprint, a vague sense of organised space: "it is felt to constitute a system, a world-wide disembodied yet increasingly total system of relationships and networks hidden beneath the appearance of daily life, whose logic is sensed in the process of programming our outer and inner worlds, even to the point of colonising our unconscious"[OD,118]. Jameson repeatedly recalls this sense of the subject's (visual) incapacity to grasp this postmodernist space: "our insertion... into a multidimensional set of radically discontinuous realities" [CM,351] results in the production of 'schizophrenic' subjects with no continuous sense of identity or place, severed from history, penetrated and eviscerated by the mediatised member of multinational capital.

If this 'hyperspace' resists theorisation, the 'most' exemplary "original and authentic"[RWI,223] postmodernist aesthetic form, video, equally refuses the hermeneutic operation. In a remarkable essay, 'Reading Without Interpretation: Postmodernism and the Video Text', Jameson argues that faced with the "total flow" of television, there is a structural exclusion of memory, a sudden obsolescence of critical distance, and that the only interpretive operation is "how the thing blocks its own theorisation becoming a theory in its own right"[RWI, 202]. Here, any 'traditional' hermeneutic approach renders a highly destructive violence to the aesthetic object: "To select -- even as an 'example' -- a single video text, and to discuss it in isolation, is fatally to regenerate the illusion of the [modernist] masterpiece or the canonical text, and to reify the experience of total flow from which it was momentarily extracted"[RWI, 208].

Nevertheless, this is precisely what Jameson proceeds to do, analysing a specific text, *AlienNATION*, which displays, internally this time, the same resistance to analysis. The text appears to be a 'meaningless' collage of extremely condensed quotations from films, television and adverts, combined with bizarre, originally filmed material that paradoxically seems more 'artificial' than the quoted segments. A 'traditional' analysis might isolate two successive segments and reveal how one becomes privileged, a hierarchy is established, whereby one will

comment or critique the other. Here, however, the "total flow" of images (and of soundtrack) is too fast, there are no hierarchies which are not immediately dismantled, replaced and dismantled again. The most astonishing moment of the piece is Jameson's suggestion that to give any meaning at all violates the logic of the text, transgresses the "deeper feeling that texts like... *AlienNATION* ought not to have any 'meaning' at all, in that thematic sense"[RWI, 217]. From this, Jameson generalises that "the postmodernist text...is from that perspective defined as a structure or sign-flow which resists meaning...which therefore systematically sets out to short circuit traditional interpretive temptations"[RWI, 219].

This is probably Jameson's purest 'mimic ry' of the disablement of analysis. That he goes on to entirely side-step this analysis cannot efface the risk that these bizarre propositions will be taken literally. Nicholas Zurbrugg, for example, has some useful corrections to Jameson's blissful (and self-protective) ignorance of video practice, but arguing that he "placidly acquiesces" to the "vicious circle" of "theories of textuality" completely ignores Jameson's next, allegorising move¹¹.

AlienNATION may offer no thematisable meaning, but a putative meaning can be proposed through a return to the historical referent. Thus Jameson translates the images of

the punctured milk carton as a reference to the assassination of Harvey Milk, and from this offers an allegorical leap from fantasies and anxieties about assassination (conspiracy) theories to "the global system of media and reproductive technology". This is a bewildering shift of rhetoric and strategy, but one which will ultimately be found operating throughout Jameson's work: the paradox of the grasping of "the concept of the postmodern as an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place"[*PMCLC*, ix], a strategy which, in its first formulation is referred to as "the rhetorical trick" [*RPM*, 30].

The trick partly involves positing the system *first*, before the allegorical leap. Jameson's interpretive telos is already in place, beyond and above the epochal incapacity of interpretation, and if he registers a problem in terms of such 'allegories' in relation to the video text -- that "they all turn out "the same" in a peculiarly unhelpful way"[*RWI*, 222] -- then this is *precisely* what happens with all of Jameson's postmodernist texts in general: they all tell the same story. In resisting a hermeneutics of "uncovering" a thematic meaning, Jameson can only interpret the text in an 'external' way, as a symptom of the existence of the "unrepresentable" totality. These symptomatic readings operate under a curious logic; if the totality can only be

sensed, but never attained (the sublime object, the Other of multinational capital), specific texts cannot be interpreted, except as symptoms of that totality. The totality is "unrepresentable", but every specific postmodernist text represents (allegorically) that totality; a circular and aporetic argument. Jameson's belief that a hermeneutics is incapacitated extends only as far as theme; it is simply replaced by a symptomal theme which underlies every postmodernist text: multinational capital.

The question has to be asked as to why this rhetorical strategy is felt to be necessary. The essays tend to clamp down, refuse to phrase explicitly his Marxist position; whilst there are elliptical suggestions of a prospective return of the 'collective subject' [RPM, 21; PTS, 208-9 is more overt], Jameson abandons the rhetoric only in his two responses to critics [MPM, conclusion to *PMCLC*]. Initially, it might seem plausible to posit some kind of 'break' from the work up to *The Political Unconscious*, as Robert Young has done¹². Young focuses precisely on the incapacity of interpretive theory, the loss of the very "metacritical impulse" that had motored *The Political Unconscious*. Here, with a sweeping gesture, Jameson incorporates all (crudely) post-structuralist theory to a "sectoral validity" within a Marxism as the "absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation" [PU, 17]. These "sectoral" theories, later homogenised as

"postmodernism theory" can have their fatal ahistoricity historicised by the "absolute historicism" of Marxism¹³.

How, then, to account for the position offered in the essays on postmodernism, its parameters annihilating History, paralysing Marxism, shattering the individual subject into fragments of discontinuous instantaneities? Is it really the case, as Young suggests, that this break registers "as if complete paranoia has followed on from the most inflated delusions of grandeur"?¹⁴

I would suggest that for all Jameson's attacks on other theoretical positions, the texts on postmodernism (*specifically* those texts) evince a highly neurotic Marxism, accounting for these bizarre swings between mimicking "postmodernism theory", the paralysis of interpretation, and the (more concealed, but equally belligerent) maintenance of Marxist supremacy. Jameson thus appears to accept a 'French' analysis of fragmentation, 'schizophrenia' and 'loss' of history (a disappointing parody) but in fact reinscribes a commitment to the untranscendable horizon of Marxist hermeneutics in a concealed 'allegorical' form. The language of Jameson's model of postmodernism *symptomatically* reveals a Marxism in retreat, by the very necessity of having to go underground; a retreat Jameson is momentarily prepared to admit, but attempts to contain by periodising it to the 60s: "'traditional' Marxism, if 'untrue' during this

period of a proliferation of new subjects of history, must necessarily become true again..."[PTS, 209] (although an essay of containment, the status of this tense "must...become" implies a 'not yet', even as Jameson closes the 60s down at 1974).

This "rhetorical trick" is evident in Jameson's repeated claims that a historicised postmodernism is of Necessity, and that theorists "cannot afford the impoverished luxury of such absolute moralising judgements"[PT, 62]. In place of positive or negative judgements, Jameson proposes a return to the dialectics of Marx's *Manifesto*, where Marx "urges us to do the impossible, namely to think this development positively and negatively all at once"[PMCLC, 86]. Jameson goes on to argue that:

The lapse from this austere dialectal imperative into the more comfortable stance of the taking of moral positions is inveterate and all too human: still, the urgency of the subject demands that we make at least some effort to think the cultural evolution of late capitalism dialectically, as catastrophe and progress all together.[PMCLC, 86]

The half-echo of Nietzsche here ("all too human") can be referred back to 'The Politics of Theory' where Jameson supports his view of the dialectic as being "'beyond good and evil'"[PT, 62]. Steven Connor takes at face value this refusal to repudiate or celebrate and sees it as a moment "uniquely on the left" of nonmoralising¹⁵. However, Cornel West notes that this attempt to synthesise Marx and Nietzsche rests on a misreading of the latter; beyond good

and evil is not a nonmoral realm, but precisely the basis for a new morality based on the 'will to power'¹⁶.

Whilst such moments of non-judgmental thinking can be discovered (for example, the undecidability of *Diva's* politics [OD, 119]), Jameson consistently evokes the negative, antipolitical status of postmodernist texts, and only vaguely utters the potentiality of a positive element (the enigmatic 'cognitive mapping'). Hence, as Haynes Horne has noted¹⁷, whilst Jameson is able to "semantically enrich" Van Gogh's 'Peasant Shoes', this hermeneutic operation is refused by the depthless surface of Warhol's 'Diamond Dust Shoes'. Hermeneutics is defined simply as the process "in which the work in its inert, objectal form, is taken as a clue or a symptom for some vaster reality which replaces it as its ultimate truth" [PMCLC, 59]. Whilst Van Gogh speaks ('ultimately') of "agricultural misery, of stark rural poverty" [58], Warhol's piece "does not really speak to us at all" [59]; it is flat, depthless and fetishised. If the rhetoric of interpretive incapacity is deployed here, once again it is immediately superseded by Jameson's symptomal hermeneutics. Hence Warhol introduces "the supreme formal feature of all postmodernisms" -- depthlessness, as a result of the vast expansion of commodification in late capitalism. Once again, Jameson tells the same allegory.

The questionable dialectic of nonmoralising in

'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Capitalism' turns finally on the possibilities of either a "peculiar new form of realism" (in which case texts assist the critic in revealing the depoliticised terrain of postmodernism) or "as so many attempts to distract and to divert us from that reality or to disguise its contradictions and resolve them in the guise of various formal mystifications"[88]. The reason for Jameson's refusal to separate postmodernism as sociopolitical epoch and postmodernism as cultural form (despite his Althusserian language of semi-autonomy) thus becomes clear; cultural postmodernism serves to support and promote the ethos of late capitalism. Hence, Jameson's belief that "individual artists are only interesting if one finds some moment in which the system as a whole, or some limit of it, is being touched" [RPM, 27]. It seems that Jameson's (concealed) project of renewing the collective subject of (revolutionary) political practice requires that the entire culture of postmodernism be trashed, and it is *precisely* this loss of revolutionary utopianism that is portrayed; that "most of the postmodernisms will betray the extinction of even the protopolitical in their agreeable ironies and their aesthetic cynicisms, their forced accommodation to the system"[PMU, 13].

Jameson does, however, insist that "My conception of postmodernism is...not meant to be monolithic, but to allow evaluations of other currents within this system --

which cannot be measured unless one knows what the system is" [RPM, 11]. The rationale for the totality is thus that oppositional (that is, political) practices become visible against the backdrop. This visibility is delivered by the uneven development of late capitalism, globally: "in this sense, postmodernism is 'merely' a cultural dominant: to describe it in terms of cultural *hegemony* is not to suggest some massive and uniform cultural homogeneity of the social field" [PMU, 16]. This tends to conflict with his view that "Postmodernism is what you get when the modernisation process is complete" [PMCLC, ix], the crucial distinction from the uneven development of modernism, but this at least suggests that not only are certain postmodernist forms 'positive', but also that across the unevenness of this space meanings can mutate as they travel and enter different locales. However, Jameson continues by saying that the postmodernist cultural form "has a duty to subdue and incorporate" [PMU, 16] these resistant practices. All postmodernist forms, it appears here, negate the (proto)political impulse. It is troubling, then, for Jameson, to discover in the work of Hans Haacke an oppositional postmodernism, which, he admits, in 'Postmodernism and Utopia', does not fit his paradigm "and does not seem to have been theoretically foreseen by it" [16]. At this point Jameson deploys an all too frequently used device; refusing to theorise the anomaly ("The scope of the present essay, however, is more restricted than this"). It is 'fortunate', then, as it

were, that two years earlier Jameson wrote 'Hans Haacke and the Cultural Logic of Postmodernism'.

Strangely, however, the question of Haacke's anomalousness is not addressed here; on the contrary, it is the sense of "inevitability"[38] of his 'work', deriving from two critical 'traditions' from the 1960s: the question of the 'work' -- aesthetic autonomy, the 'function' of culture -- and institutional analysis/critique. Haacke's museum installations often display the list of patrons of the museum, their bank accounts, owners of "masterpieces" with their prices at auction. What such strategies allegorise is predictable: "their raising [of] the issue of the possibilities of representation against the whole new framework of a global multinational system, whose co-ordinates can as yet not enter the content of any of our older representational systems"[HH, 43]. What interests Jameson is Haacke's strategy of opposition in a postmodernist hyperspace, where "a whole new house of mirrors of visual replication and of textual reproduction has replaced the older stable reality of reference and of the noncultural 'real'"[HH, 42]. In this, Haacke is of the "generous consensus in the left cultural production of the advance capitalist countries...that it is no longer possible to oppose or contest the logic of the image-world of late capitalism by reinventing the logic of the referent (or realism)" [HH, 43].

It is curious that Haacke subsequently becomes an 'anomaly', since here "Haacke...is exemplary...because of the particular mapping and totalising representations" [HH, 49] he deploys. If interpretation is incapacitated by the unrepresentability of the totality, Haacke seems to be offering an internal mechanism to escape this scene. The vagaries of "cognitive mapping" are more complex than this, however.

II

Jameson's first reference to cognitive mapping comes with the 'Need for Maps' suggested at the close of 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism'. Much of the essay is concerned with a negative hermeneutics of the postmodern; cognitive mapping is proposed as the positive hermeneutic. It is symptomatic, again, that this proposal constantly shifts its status, appearing only in 'code'. Cognitive mapping is a synthesis of Lynch's phenomenological work on the alienation of individual subjects directly correlated to their inability to imag(in)e their place in the city, and an Althusserian conception of ideology as an imaginary relation to the real conditions of existence. The synthesis allows a rethinking of Lynch's specific project "in terms of social space...of social class and national or international context, in terms of the ways in which we all necessarily also cognitively map our individual social relationships

to local, national and international class realities" [PMCLC, 91]. It is, however, the 'historically original' problematic of postmodernism that its hyperspace resists seizure in even more compounded ways than those confronting the modernists at the monopoly/imperialist phase of capital. Jameson proposes an aesthetic of pedagogical, didactic texts as the only "political form of postmodernism" [PMCLC, 92]. However, Jameson admits ultimately that the specific historical condition of postmodernism is that mapping "is not possible at all" [PMCLC, 91]. This is confirmed in the conference paper 'Cognitive Mapping', where Jameson opens by proclaiming: "I am addressing a subject about which I know nothing whatsoever, except the fact that it does not exist" [CM, 347]. Here, postmodernist texts perform only the most derisory pre-liminary attempts to conceive this space; the autoreferentiality of the aesthetics of reproductive technology (video again), or else the "seemingly inexhaustible production of conspiracy plots...the poor person's cognitive mapping...a degraded figure of the total logic of late capital" [CM, 356]. Once more, postmodernism is trashed as a failed attempt to map, useful only in its (helpless) mimetic reflection of confused multinational space, and *in its place* is proposed a now clearly utopian project of a new aesthetics. Jameson insists that "even if we cannot imagine the productions of such an aesthetic, there may, nonetheless, as with the very idea of Utopia itself, be something

positive in the attempt to keep alive the possibility of imagining such a thing"[CM, 356]. The Utopia ("a code word for the systematic transformation of contemporary society" [PMCLC, 334]) of Cognitive Mapping (code for "'class consciousness'"[MPM, 44; PMCLC, 417-8]) is the not-yet existing imaginary imagining of postmodernist space which is not itself postmodernist.

These formulations are curious in their suppression of an earlier text, which (in a footnote, marginalised from the main text) confesses that it is concerned exactly with an achieved form of cognitive mapping. 'Third World Literature in the Age of Multinational Capitalism' offers the "sweeping hypothesis" that whilst the First World suffers an unbridgeable gap between the private and public spheres, in Third World literature "the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public Third World culture and society", that "All Third World texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical...to be read as what I will call national allegories...particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly Western machineries of representation, such as the novel"[TWL, 69]. Against the "unavailability of the older national language"[PMCLC, 65], then, Third World texts escape the fragmentation of the collective into individuals and the fragmentation of the individual into discontinuous instantaneities, to offer a political aesthetic of/for the nation.

Jameson is certainly aware of the problematic idealisation of the Third World here; witness the concern that his hypothesis is "grossly oversimplified"[TWL, 69], and that "It would be presumptuous to offer some general theory of what is often called Third World Literature given the enormous variety both of national cultures in the Third World and of specific historical trajectories in each of these areas"[TWL, 68]. Jameson, however, argues this celebration of the First World's Other's marginality (as privileged interpretive position) is inescapable; he takes comfort, at least, from having "praised or valorized positively" the Third World. This is somewhat questioned by Jameson's dubious description of the First World's spectator's "shock of entry" into the Third World film: "submersion" into these films is felt as "the half-articulated fear of what the surface liquid conceals; a sense of our vulnerability along with the archaic horror of impure contact with the unclean" [OMR, 304]¹⁰.

That this -- national allegory, political aesthetics -- is all to do with perspective, with the position from which interpretation and cognitive mapping is performed, becomes evident when Jameson invokes Hegel's Master/ Slave dialectic. Both America (the Master) and the Third World (the Slave) are inextricably dependent, but the slave has the advantage of materialism: the slave knows "what reality and the resistance of matter really are" whilst the master is condemned to a "placeless idealism"

[TWL,85]. Jameson thus proposes that "The view from the top is epistemologically crippling, and reduces its subjects to the illusions of a host of fragmented subjectivities"[TWL, 85]. This is the First World postmodern condition. Since postmodernism is a global, multinational conception, however, the Third World must also 'experience' it, but in an entirely different way. Here, then, is the doubly marginalised footnote, relating to the deployment of the Master/ Slave analogy, and which I transcribe in full:

"The other basic philosophical underpinning of this argument is Lukacs' epistemology in *History and Class Consciousness* according to which 'mapping' or the grasping of the social totality is structurally available to the dominated rather than the dominating classes. 'Mapping' is a term I have used in 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Capitalism'. What is here called 'national allegory' is clearly a form of just such mapping of the totality, so that the present essay -- which sketches a theory of the cognitive mapping of third world literature -- forms a pendant to the essay on postmodernism which describes the logic of the cultural imperialism of the first world and above all of the United States" [TWL, 87/88]¹⁹.

Jameson's abolition of critical distance in the global culture of postmodernism should thus be more accurately located in the First World; distance can be attained elsewhere. To transform Third World 'national allegory' to cognitive mapping is a little idealistic even on Jameson's own terms, however. In relation to the global space of monopoly/imperialist capitalism, Jameson proposes that the European-based modernists could not represent the culture of imperialism in the Third World, traces of which

can only be read symptomatically as the "absent cause" in their "distorted and symbolic" figures [CM, 350]. In 'Modernism and Imperialism', however, Jameson suggests that the Third World position is equally problematic, for "the mapping of the imperialist world system remains structurally incomplete, for the colonial subject will be unable to register the peculiar transformations of First World or metropolitan life which accompany the imperial relationship" [M+I, 19]. One position left to map from, Jameson proposes, is the historical "uniqueness" of Ireland. Its semi-peripheral colonised status offers a space from which both the First and Third World perspectives can be united: in the texts of Joyce, which radically transforms the First World modernist project from its strange space on the periphery. Joyce's experiments in *Ulysses* with form are united by the *Odyssey*, not in terms of meaning, but rather through its "spatial properties. The *Odyssey* serves as a map: it is... [for Joyce] the one classical narrative whose closure is that of the map of a whole complete and equally closed region of the globe, as though somehow the very episodes themselves merged back into space, and the reading of them came to be indistinguishable from map-reading" [M+I, 22].

One would suspect that the relative positions of mappability/ unmappability have significantly changed in the structural mutation that has resulted in

postmodernism. Jameson discusses the new space's "suppression of distance...and the relentless saturation of any remaining voids"[CM, 351], an implication perhaps that the distances between the First and Third World have been "suppressed". Equally Jameson refers to the redundancy of the concept of nation in multinational space; does this paralyse even a Third World national allegory as (international) cognitive mapping? Referring to Joyce's style, Jameson prefers the term 'stylelessness' (the linguistic games of the impersonal sentence and pastiche), suggesting that "Joyce leaps over the stage of the modern into full postmodernism" [M+I, 21]. This extraordinary moment of having to 'postmodernize' Joyce implies that cognitive mapping is a vestigial survival of a privileged relation to global space prior to postmodernism (the "peculiar conjuncture and a certain strategic distance from the new reality, which tends to overwhelm those immersed in it" is given to Walter Scott and William Faulkner in 'Marxism and Postmodernism' [38-9]). Indeed, the last section of the conclusion to *Postmodernism* suggests that cognitive mapping is a "modernist strategy, which retains an impossible concept of totality" [PMCLC, 409].

Cognitive mapping is therefore an infracture of the modern in the postmodern. This tends to imply that its Utopian movement towards totality is also 'out of time'; further cognitive mapping, as a "code word" for

"class-consciousness" and the failure of Utopian thought ("a euphemism for socialism itself" [PMCLC, 208]), finally seems to incapacitate Marxism. Jameson is willing to confess this in the desperate move that Utopias, across periods, demonstrate the "*impossibility*" of Utopia, that "it is thus the limits, the systematic restrictions and repressions, or empty places, in the Utopian blueprint that are the most interesting" [PMCLC, 208]. Marxism's failure is its strength, it seems. The doubling move of Jameson's rhetoric, however, belies a fierce defence of the ability to view postmodernism 'itself' as a totality, beyond the incapacitated immanence of "postmodernist theory". There are two strategies involved.

The first is already inherent in the confusing, self-contradictory positions on the relative mapping abilities of the First and Third Worlds. Theorising their relation in terms of Hegel's Master/Slave dialectic maintains, despite the "postmodernism theory" rhetoric, a point of higher resolution, the sublation of the two terms into a totality. Robert Young's *White Mythologies* begins by positing 'post-structuralism's' antipathy to Hegel due to Hegel's "imperialistic" dialectic (Africa, famously, had no history). Residues of this "imperialism" are distressingly evident in Jameson. Answering his critics, Jameson insists that he has never rejected local struggles, but sees them (in this case South Africa) as "not merely indispensable, they are unavoidable;

but...they are effective only so long as they remain figures or allegories for some larger systemic transformation" [MPM, 44]. The question immediately has to be asked: allegories for *whom*? Who is in the position to "read" these allegories?

This disturbing element is conjoined to the extensive discussion of the "new social movements" of the postmodern epoch that constitutes much of the conclusion to *Postmodernism*. Leaving behind any rhetorical complicity with "postmodernism theory", Jameson refutes the displacement of class politics by the various feminist, ecological or ethnic groups: the abandonment of a dialectical analysis constitutes "political apostasy and a deconversion in shame and betrayal" [PMCLC, 344]; the concern with ethnicity, he suggests, is 'pseudo-dialectical' and "something of a yuppie phenomenon, and thereby without too many mediations a matter of fashion and the market" [PMCLC, 343].

'Politics' for Jameson is Hegelian-Marxist or nothing; this is not argued, it is *asserted*, and indeed can only be so since its "absolute historicism" cannot itself be subjected to Jameson's historical analyses of other theoretical positions. All differences, therefore, can be totalised within a singular model: "A system that constitutively produces differences remains a system" [PMCLC, 343], one that can be conceptually mapped. Jameson

is prepared to theorise a postmodernist aesthetic sensitive to "breaks and discontinuities, to the heterogeneous...to Difference rather than Identity, to gaps and holes rather than seamless webs and triumphant narrative progressions [PMU, 23], but this does not extend to his project of reading all such texts as allegories of the totality of multinational capitalism, that to give hypotheses of meaning "necessarily constitute transcoding operations in which we frame equivalents...in other codes or theoretical languages"; that all postmodernist texts "constitute the allegorical projection of the structure the analysis models" [SE, 138] (i.e. although specific allegories are read through to a deeper reality that reality -- the totality -- is an a priori condition that allows the reading in the first place -- an aporia discussed above).

Jameson's peculiar Hegelianism, however, completely misunderstands the thrust of the objection to totality by "postmodern thought". It is *precisely* Jameson's untouchable supra-theoretical identitarianism that is put in question; no matter how many differences are produced within the system, it is the *system itself*, that "untranscendable horizon" which is brought back down and set in play²⁰.

The second defence of totality is equally fraught. This can be economically introduced by completing a quote cited

above: "A system that constitutively produces differences remains a system; nor is the *idea* of such a system supposed to be in kind "like" the object it tries to theorise" [PMCLC, 343]. Jameson thus admonishes his critics for mistaking the concept of postmodernism with the 'thing itself'. The shift from the sense of an a priori space of postmodernism to the *constitution* of that space is registered by Jameson in the closing remarks of 'Marxism and Postmodernism'. Jameson praises David Gross' sympathetic article²¹ and his allusion to Benjamin's notion of cultural products as "spontaneous afterimages" produced on the retina of the eye as it turns away from the "inhospitable, blinding age of big-scale industrialism"[77]. Updating this for postmodernism, Jameson says:

Afterimages are objective phenomena which are also mirages and pathologies, they dictate attention to optical processes, to the psychology of perception, and also to the qualities of the object...I have produced a 'model' of postmodernism which is worth what it's worth and must now take its chances independently;*but it is the construction of the model that is ultimately the fascinating matter.*[MPM, 42, my emphasis]

The *constitution* of the postmodern epoch is thus openly evident here. The concept works *towards* grasping the 'thing itself'. The discussion of totality in the conclusion to *Postmodernism* contradicts this, however. Initially, Jameson is anxious to differentiate 'totality', "which seems to suggest that some privileged bird's-eye view of the whole is available", from 'totalisation',

which "implies exactly the opposite and takes as its premise the impossibility for individual and biological human subjects to conceive of such a position" [PMCLC, 332]. Three paragraphs on, however, Jameson is defending 'totality' from the charge that it is a "metaphysical survival, complete with illusions of truth...closure and certainty" with the astonishing argument that Marxism aims for a "transformation of the natural and social world into a meaningful totality such that "totality" in the form of a philosophical system will no longer be required" [PMCLC, 334]. This tends to imply that the conceptual totality of postmodernism evades the risk of other "concepts", since its Marxist form is effectively a non-conceptual concept, and is capable of grasping the 'thing itself': witness Jameson on the "identity of postmodernism with *capitalism itself*" [PMCLC, 343 my emphasis]. If Jameson reasserts the privilege of Marxism as somehow 'outside' metaphysics, he *then* argues four pages later that the epoch of postmodernism has destroyed all "metaphysics" anyway, and that their passing is instructive as "a supreme historical symptom of the technocratization of contemporary society" [PMCLC, 339]. One can only go in circles so far before losing balance.

It would seem that Jameson's tortuous logic is an effect of the construction of a totality that then appears to structurally exclude Marxism within it. Jameson has recognised this problematic (self-induced) paralysis: "As

for systematic accounts of the postmodern, however (including my own), when they succeed they fail...The more powerfully one has been able to underscore and to isolate the antipolitical features of the newer cultural dominant...the more one paints oneself into a corner and makes any repoliticisation of such culture a priori inconceivable" [PMU,16].

These problematic defences of totality can explain the shifting senses of the "code word", "cognitive mapping", for Jameson is anxious to avoid its fundamental *metaphoricity*, which would then open its "reading" of 'the thing itself' to an arbitrary aesthetic movement, forever risking error. If in 'Cognitive Mapping' Jameson appears to give its function solely to aesthetics (since aesthetics is a form of ideology, defined here as "how you map your relation as an individual subject to the social and economic organisation of global capitalism" [CM, 356]), it has been displayed that Jameson's exemplary aesthetic texts only ever function for a totality *that is already in place*: the allegory is always the same. Hence, if the Bonaventura hotel "has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself [and] cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world" [PMCLC, 83], this does not prevent a *symptomal* mapping of this unmappability onto the space of multinational capitalism. In calling up "cognitive mapping" Jameson insists that "you were to

dismiss all figures of maps and mapping from your mind" [PMCLC, 409] only to realize that that figuration cannot be escaped: it is, "as a concept, drawn back by the force of gravity of the black hole of the map itself..." [PMCLC, 416].

This admission of figuration means that Jameson's structure can be *contested*; other positions can be adopted which avoid the arrogant sweeping up of all into a dialectising totality. The latter has no *reasoned* privilege at all. This chapter has attended to the problematics of the frame; it is now necessary to consider the definitional contents of Jameson's work in the broader attempt to produce a *concept* of postmodernism.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism' *New Left Review* 146, 1984, p.87
- 2) For Baudrillard see *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1983, and especially 'Why Theory?' in *The Ecstasy of Communication*, Semiotext(e), 1987. For Lyotard, see *The Differend*, Manchester University Press, 1988, which will be discussed at length in Chapter 4.
- 3) See introduction to *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Capitalism*, Verso, 1991.
- 4) Conclusion, *Postmodernism*, p.297.
- 5) The "rhetorical trick" is admitted in the interview, 'Regarding Postmodernism' in *Universal Abandon*, ed. Andrew Ross, p.30; "code words" are consistently used throughout *Postmodernism*. See, for example p.208, 334, 417-8.
- 6) *Postmodernism*, p.x.
- 7) The following are the Jameson texts which I discuss. All page references will follow in the text, indicated by the initials given below. They are in as chronological order as is possible: where dates of composition are known, this supersedes date of publication. This is by no means a complete bibliography: see *Postmodernism/Jameson/Critique* for a fuller (though itself not complete) list.

Symbolic Act, Methuen, 1981 [PU]. 'On *Diva*, *Social Text*, Fall, 1982 [OD].

'The Politics of Theory: Ideological Positions in the Postmodernist Debate', *New German Critique*, 33, 1984 [PT].

'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster, Pluto, 1983.

'Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *New Left Review*, 146, Jul-Aug 1984 [PMCLC].

'Foreword' to Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. Bennington and Massumi, Manchester UP, 1984.

'Periodising the 60s', *Social Text*, 3:3-4:1, 1984 [PTS].

'Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', *Social Text* 15, Fall, 1986 [TWL].

'Hans Haacke and the Cultural Logic of Postmodernism', in *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business*, ed. Brian Wallis, MIT, 1986 [HH].

'On Magic Realism in Film', *Critical Inquiry*, 12:2 Winter 1986. [OMR].

'Reading Without Interpretation: Postmodernism and the Video Text', in *The Linguistics of Writing*, ed. Fabb, Attridge, Durant and MacCabe, Manchester UP, 1987 [RWI].

'Postmodernism and Utopia', in *Utopia Post Utopia: Configurations of Nature and Culture In Recent Sculpture and Photography*, exhibition catalogue,

Boston ICA, 1988 [PMU].

'Cognitive Mapping', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Grossberg and Nelson, Macmillan, 1988 [CM].

'Modernism and Imperialism', *Field Day Pamphlet*, Field Day Theatre Company, 1988 [M+I].

'Marxism and Postmodernism', *New Left Review*, 176, 1989 [MPM].

'Spatial Equivalents: Postmodern Architecture and the World System', in *The States of "Theory"*, ed. David Carroll, Columbia UP, 1990 [SE].

Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, Verso, 1991. [PMCLC].

I have also had reference to the interview, 'Regarding Postmodernism', in *Universal Abandon?*, ed. Andrew Ross, Edinburgh UP 1988 [RPM].

- 8) for details, see bibliography to *Postmodernism/Jameson/ Critique*.
- 9) Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, translated Donald Nicholson-Smith, Karnac Books, 1988, p.412.
- 10) for specific instances: the opening paragraph is from 'Marxism and Postmodernism', whilst the closing one is from 'Regarding Postmodernism'; ps.413ff are from 'Cognitive Mapping'; ps.409ff. are from 'Modernism and Imperialism'.
- 11) Nicholas Zurbrugg, 'Jameson's Complaint: Video-Art and

the Intertextual 'time-wall'', *Screen* 32:1, Sp.1991, p.23. On Jameson's ignorance of video, see Sean Cubitt's argument that to unite all televisual theory under the concept of "total flow" contradicts much of the diverse work done in this area ('Video Art and Colonialism', *Screen*, 40:4, 1989).

- 12) see 'The Jameson Raid', *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, Routledge, 1990.
- 13) 'Marxism and Historicism', *New Literary History* 11:1, 1979, p. 69. The question of history is vital to any work on postmodernism, and I deal with it separately in Chapter 5.
- 14) Young, 'The Jameson Raid', p.112.
- 15) Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, Blackwells, 1989, p.48
- 16) Cornel West, 'Ethics and Action in Fredric Jameson's Marxist Hermeneutics', *Postmodernism and Politics*, ed. J. Arac, Manchester UP, p. 135.
- 17) Haynes Horne, 'Jameson's Strategies of Containment', *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, 12:3, 1988, p.61.
- 18) for further questioning, see Aijaz Ahmad, 'Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the National Allegory', *Social Text* 17, Fall 1987. It is also worth noting Gayatri Spivak's questioning of the elevation of 'Magic Realism' as the 'Third World' aesthetic: see 'Post-structuralism, Marginality, Post-Coloniality and Value', *Literary Theory Today*, ed. Collier and

Geyer-Ryan, Polity, 1990, and numerous, elliptical, comments in 'Reading *The Satanic Verses*', *Third Text* 11, Summer 1990.

- 19) Is this doubly marginalised footnote the "promising marginal text" (Spivak, 'Translator's Preface' to *Of Grammatology*, p. lxxvii) that opens up the possibility of a deconstruction? Note Spivak's formulation of that process: "If a metaphor seems to suppress its implications, we shall catch at that metaphor. We shall follow its adventures through the text and see the text coming undone as a structure of concealment..."[lxxv]. I am aware that 'cognitive mapping' reveals its concealed premisses *between* texts, and am not suggesting that Jameson's postmodernism is a conception that floats free and complete above these individual texts. Rather, it is constituted every time with each additional text. That these refuse to cohere, refuse more and more to complete a 'total' conception, reveals something of the logic of fragmentation Jameson opposes.
- 20) This argument will be considerably expanded in the following chapter.
- 21) David S. Gross, 'Marxism and Resistance: Fredric Jameson and the Moment of Postmodernism', *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 12:3, 1988, p.77.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CONCEPT OF POSTMODERNISM

Derrida, in his marvellously titled 'Some Statements and Truisms about Neologisms, Newisms, Postisms, Parasitisms, and other small Seismisms'¹, addresses himself to the title of the colloquium he has been asked to contribute to: 'The States of "Theory"'. The singular 'state' has been avoided, Derrida posits, because this would imply "a chart, a table, hence...a legible surface, which would, like any stable and stabilising table, allow for the reading of taxonomic tabularity, the entries and the place, or else the genealogy, finally fixed in a tree of theory"[64]. Such a genealogical tracing is not possible, he argues, because theories are not discrete, sequential units, but rather form theoretical "jetties" which attempt to extend a hegemony over the entire field of theory. Each "jetty" is conflictual, but there is no vying for space on the same terrain, for each believes it dominates the terrain, singularly: "Each jetty, far from being a part of the whole, is only a theoretical jetty inasmuch as it claims to comprehend itself by comprehending all others -- by extending their borders, exceeding them, inscribing them within itself"[65]. The stabilising jetty swallows the entire domain, turning other theoretical positions into its own, via a process of ingestion and/or excretion. Once it has stabilised its structure, gained hegemony (so

it represents itself to itself), it becomes a 'stating' jetty: "at this moment of *stasis*, of stanza, the stabilising jetty proceeds by predicative clauses, reassures with assertory statements, with assertion, with statements such as "this is that"[84].

This reads like Jameson's process of ingesting the "sectoral validity" of other theories within the absolute horizon of Marxism; it is also implied by Derrida that the "stabilising jetty" is currently exemplified by the term postmodernism. No other current theory proclaims such expansive explanatory power, swallowing divergent theories, offering a logic for multiple political practices, synthesizing aesthetics, economics, even global history. There is no better case than postmodernism's claim to take its jetty "beyond the whole and fold it back on the whole to comprehend it and speak before it... to extend beyond the borders of the entire state and to reflect it, by means of a fold"[67].

"Postmodernism", however, as I have tried to suggest, conceals contradictory senses. Between Jameson's "postmodernism theory" and "postmodernism itself" or During's "postmodern thought" and "postmodernity" is an apparent opposition, and a violent process in which the latter terms try to ingest the former. It is confusing that, even as Derrida distances his own work from the processes of stabilisation, he has often, and

non-co-optively, been designated as providing certain strategies for "postmodern thought"². The same term covers totalisation/stabilisation and difference/de-stabilisation.

It is perhaps time to complicate this rather straightforward opposition, and I wish to do so by introducing two new terms for these poles: the concept and the name. The peculiar nature of definitional postmodernism is the attempt to conceptualise what is by its own definition non-conceptualisable. The containment of the non-conceptual by the metaphors of the cartograph is in effect a re-inscription of a concept of postmodernism, a rendering of the illimitable and "unthinkable" within a determinable structure or grid. What I will term the *name* of postmodernism marks precisely the opposite, the attention to the irreducibility of difference. Adopting and adapting the term from Lyotard's *The Differend*, the name does not "have a signification, it is not...the abridged equivalent of a definite description"; in Bennington's gloss "names don't mean anything, they are empty...an indefinite number of unpredictable descriptions can be attached to a given name"³. Names mean only contextually, and since "postmodernism" appears across hugely diverse contexts, to privilege certain meanings is always to privilege certain contexts by a violent suppression of others. If Lyotard ends *The Postmodern Condition* with the call to "wage war

on totality" it is precisely to "save the honour of the name" from such violence⁴.

This, however, is not the *opposition* that Lyotard perhaps suggests, and it is certainly not the choice between, as Jameson would have it, totality (postmodernism itself) and nominalism (postmodern thought), the latter apparently arguing "the necessary incoherence and impossibility of all thinking"⁵. To simply invert the privilege from the concept to the name is to remain within the terms of a rather simplified debate: Jameson *versus* 'post-structuralism'; Habermas *versus* Lyotard. Rather, these terms should be seen to be imbricated, the one entwined in the other. This is an insistent point in Derrida's understanding of deconstruction, which partly works "without changing terrain, by repeating what is implicit in the founding concepts and the original problematic, by using against the edifice the instruments or stones available in the house"⁶. Hence, to return to the "stabilising jetty", Derrida cannot simply oppose it to de-stabilisation, because he more than anyone is aware that deconstruction can become deconstructionism, a powerful institutional 'stating' jetty. Nevertheless if there is a "deconstructive jetty" offering general statements and propositions it is itself open to deconstruction, since the latter "resists theory...because it demonstrates the impossibility of closure, of the closure of an ensemble or totality on an organised network

of theorems, laws, rules, methods" [86]. If it is not propositional but positional, this means it must occupy the 'houses' of other theories to solicit questions of its operations, angling at the exact function of the jetty, its stating of *theses* and its untheorised ground, the "non-place" that allows it to take place.

The concept and the name are therefore mutually dependent, rather than in a flat opposition. However, it is strategically necessary, for clarification, to discuss them separately. This chapter, therefore, constructs the elements of a definitional register in the production of a concept of postmodernism. A more detailed discussion of the logic of the name follows in chapter four, but in returning, for the final time, to the metaphors of the city in the second section of this chapter, I hope to begin to propose how the conceptual *structure* can be set in motion.

I

Thus far I have addressed the problematic relation of the enounced definitions of postmodernism to their enunciation, the latter's metaphorical containment of the former. It is finally time, however, to re-construct the principal descriptive, definitional claims as they are stated.

If I begin with Jameson's 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', this is not arbitrary, since it has been seen as the "debate's foremost canonical text", as "one of the most illuminating analyses of postmodern culture and is probably one of the most quoted, discussed and debated articles of the last decade"⁷. Jameson is given privilege here not only because of the extensive citation of the essay, making it in some senses "paradigmatic" of definitional postmodernism (partly through its unattributed assimilation of other theories), but also because of the assertion of the possibility of a conceptualising of a totality. Most critiques tend to concentrate on that methodological frame, but I will concentrate here on the contents. Jameson's 'template' definition will then be bolstered by a sequence of other definitional writings to elaborate the crucial "debates" for aesthetics that the term introduces.

It is one of the peculiarities of Jameson's work that his descriptions of postmodernist texts are mimed by his own writing practice. When he characterises television "channel switching" between "radically discontinuous" realities as exemplary of postmodern consciousness⁸, this reflects his bewildering and energetic leaps between different registers of theory, different media, and widely divergent cultural artifacts. A less ambitious reading process is constructed for a site-specific museum installation by Robert Gober; a process of "scanning",

"moving back and forth across the text, readjust[ing] its terms in constant modification"⁹. Equally, his own essay can be read as operating this horizontal "scanning"; less a scanning in fact than a *shunting*. After numerous readings, it becomes clear that each unit of the narrative "shunts" onto the next, and the next to the next, and so on down a track. Three effects are apparent: the uncoupled units are forced into a sequential movement by an energy that is not necessarily that of a logical progression; the 'narrative' of this definitional chain can proceed *only* in this sequence; this means that it is difficult to isolate singular units as a definitional moment, for its force relies on the cumulative effect of prior "shunts".

Immediately, postmodernism is identified with an "inverted millenarianism"[53], an epochal shift beginning in the late 1950s. Postmodernism is, in this opening thesis, "the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world"[57]. This 'unfashionable' periodising, structural hypothesis is held out against its detractors. The definitional track is then laid out, the six stations named, and Jameson is off on his journey.

Each station is approached through a specific, textual analysis which ultimately opens out onto global terrain. The 'Deconstruction of Expression' (station one) thus contrasts Warhol's 'Diamond Dust Shoes' to Van Gogh's

'Peasant Shoes' and Munch's 'The Scream'. Warhol introduces depthlessness ("the supreme formal feature of all postmodernisms"[60]), surface, superficiality, the death of the expressive subject for the birth of the subjectless intertext. Derived partly from Barthes and an unattributed Baudrillard (Jameson introduces the thesis that "the object world itself [has] now become a set of texts or simulacra" [60] in parentheses only), the 'waning of affect' is not in fact derived from Warhol, but from a certain critique of Munch's 'The Scream'. The paradoxical pictorial representation of the scream relies on an expressive binarism of subject/ object, inside/outside, that, Jameson argues, poststructuralism "seeks to abandon"[61]. The loss of *theoretical* depth models marks an equivalence with the 'depthlessness' of the postmodern object world. It is difficult, however, to separate the 'depthless' object itself from the 'depthless' theoretical model which seeks to apprehend it -- if it is a case of the theory, wouldn't this be applied to *all* objects apprehended, not just 'postmodernist' ones? This is only compounded by Jameson's attempt to periodise and therefore contain poststructuralism and "contemporary theory in general" as "precisely a postmodernist phenomenon"[61].

'Postmodernism and the Past' (second station) "shunts" the death of the subject and the loss of "the unique and personal style" into pastiche, historicism, and the loss of 'Real' history, the global claim of "the enormity of a

situation in which we seem increasingly incapable of fashioning representations of our own current experience"[68]. Again, the movement to the global claim proceeds through tenuous microanalytic links and I shall try to reconstruct that narrative here. The disappearance of the individual subject leads to the "well-nigh universal practice of today what might be called pastiche"[64]. Parodic imitation paradoxically requires the 'inimitable' style; the diversity of private, idiosyncratic styles in modernism finds its equivalence in the postmodern world's fragmentation "of social life itself"[65]. Without a norm, parody can no longer operate, and slides into pastiche, "speech in a dead language...without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter..."[65]. Without the individual subject's style, "producers of culture have nowhere to turn but to the past"[65]. A certain caricatural historical narrative is necessary to present postmodernist culture as "now a field of stylistic and discursive heterogeneity without a norm"[65]; this must imply a prior moment of normativity, full intention and expressivity for parody to operate at all.

The only possibility being that of speaking in past, dead tongues (an assertion which contradicts later examples of the postmodern sublime and the "weak" representations of the technological content of postmodernism -- but that

leaps ahead, and misses the logic of the "shunt"), this "evidently" arrives at architectural historicism, "the random cannibalisation of all the styles of the past, the play of random stylistic allusion"[65-6]. This is strangely compatible with "consumers' appetite for a world transformed into sheer images of itself and for pseudo-events". It is not entirely clear how or why consumers suddenly desire a world of sheer images, nor how a "random" architectural monument articulates this desire. This emphasis on randomness is forced by the prior "shunt" of pastiche, and negates the possibility that architects may *parodically* cite past styles for particular meaning effects. Jameson establishes something of a law of definitional postmodernism here; the originary definitional moment of postmodernism often cites the 'simple' division between architectural modernism and postmodernism which is then transposed, without sufficient warnings, to other cultural realms (see chapter four below).

In perhaps the weakest shunt, the exempla of pastiche and random architectural historicism comes to indicate "a society bereft of all historicity"[66]. This thesis is further elaborated in the "nostalgia film"'s desperate attempt to restore images of (simulacral) 'pastness'. The nostalgic colonisations of the 1950s as "the privileged lost object of desire"[67] has little to do with 'real' representation, but "approach[es]" the 'past' through

stylistic connotation, conveying 'pastness' by the glossy qualities of the image..."[66]. Such effects not only displace 'real' 'pastness', but invade representations of the present, such that it "endows present reality and the openness of present history with the spell and distance of a glossy mirage"[68]. However, these localised, genre-specific plays with historicity are shunted further into the fundamental loss of 'Real History'; the paradox of an historical epoch without history.

Third station: 'The Breakdown of the Signifying Chain'. In the way that pastiche "evidently" led to the crisis of historicity, the latter now "dictates" an analysis of temporal organisation and its effects on the subject. Another 'poststructuralist' theorist is enveloped by the jetty. Lacan's theory of schizophrenia, as a breakdown in the temporal organisation of language resulting in "a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers"[72], is telescoped out (although hedged by a disclaimer as to its "clinical accuracy", and astonishingly disposing of the Oedipal scenario) into a culture marked by productions of the "randomly heterogeneous and fragmentary and the aleatory"[71]. Taking a fragment from the memoir of a schizophrenic, Jameson establishes the postmodern present as isolated from praxis, engulfing the subject with an overwhelming, immediate materiality, charged with the euphoria of a "heightened intensity". In aesthetic terms this effects the movement from (modernist) work to

(postmodernist) text. The text is now seen as a "virtual grab-bag or lumber room of disjoined sub-systems and random raw materials and impulses of all kinds"[75]; the text as an impossible relation of differences. This does not, of course, prevent the "transcoding" of random differences into one master code, a move finally presented in the following section.

The 'Hysterical Sublime' (fourth station) marks the "final" link in the chain of a definitional postmodernism, the analysis of that euphoric "intensity" of experience. The sublime also shunts hard enough to break the depthless surface of postmodern culture to find fleeting images of the Other. This section again synthesises an unattributed name: Lyotard (there are references only to the "fashionable current theme" of the sublime[77]). The postmodern sublime moves from the alienation and anxiety of modernism to "the extraordinary surfaces of the photorealist city-scape,...gleam[ing] with some new hallucinatory splendour"[76]. As the inextricable concatenation of pleasure and terror, the momentary glimpse by the powerless subject before some absolute, unnamable Power, the Sublime Other was understood from Kant to Heidegger, according to Jameson, as God or Nature. The postmodern sublime is something else, however, discovered over two short shunts. It is not *simply* technology, although a shift to reproductive technologies (The Third Machine Age[78]) presents unique problems for

representation. Marinetti's fetishised car is replaced by the computer "whose outer shell has no emblematic or visual power"[79]. Technology, although symptomatic, is only skin-deep; these "immense communicational and computer networks are themselves but a distorted figuration of something even deeper, namely the whole world system of present-day multinational capitalism"[79]. The narrative thus comes full circle and through 'Postmodernism and the City' and 'The Need For Maps' devises the method of "cognitive mapping" for the representation of the totality.

It is important that the 'Abolition of Critical Distance' is not simply a reflexive concern with his own theorising; it invokes a crucial, perhaps *the* crucial, debate in postmodernist discourse, that "we all...dimly feel that not only punctual and local countercultural forms of cultural resistance and guerilla warfare, but also even overtly political interventions...are all somehow secretly disavowed and reabsorbed by a system of which they themselves might be considered a part"[87]. It is perhaps here that Jameson most clearly displays the decisive influence of Situationism and Debord's theses on the 'Society of the Spectacle' as the totalising and totalitarian movement of capital, which absorbs and neutralises what are now identified as modernist forms of political and aesthetic negation. This opens a series of problematics: the possibility of the avant-garde, the fate

of cultural autonomy and critical negation; whether postmodernist texts have lost this "modernist" designation to become entirely recuperated by 'the system'; whether a different kind of "cultural politics" is possible.

Jameson's definitional structure therefore elaborates a series of critical questions, stations, or sites all of which are "framed" and tied to symptoms of multinational capitalism. If critiques of Jameson usually address the framing device, the contents are often deployed as a structure of discrete and detachable units. Hence Guiliana Bruno's analysis of *Bladerunner* lifts the categories of pastiche and schizophrenia from an essay that "has proved a viable working reference and a guideline in analysing the deployment of space and time in film"¹⁰.

To display the sedimentation of this definitional structure I now propose to follow a brief set of writings in relation to Jameson's essay. I have inscribed here a selection of theorists who attempt a more generalised attempt to define postmodernism. They are in no way representative, but they cannot escape that implication. I cite *specific* texts to avoid the dangers of talking generally about general effects of introductory postmodernist categories.

I begin with Michael Newman's long definitional piece, 'Revising Modernism, Representing Postmodernism' since, as

Hayward and Kerr indicate, the *ICA Document* in which this article appeared marked "In Britain...the first significant signs of any major engagement with the theory"¹¹. Newman does not intend "to offer here yet another definition of postmodernism"[32], but this is disingenuous: the "Critical Lexicon" of terms offered can only help sediment a set of definitional effects, ones which show a remarkable consonance to Jameson: the death of the author, bricolage, simulation, and parody all find their equivalent stations. It is Jameson's liminal framing, the totality, which is attacked by Newman: "What Jameson is attempting, then, is to incorporate a microanalysis of cultural phenomena using poststructuralism within a Hegelian macro-theory of history, so that the whole is to be read within the parts"[49]. This he argues "ends up as another version of cultural imperialism, confirming a totality defined from the point of view of the USA"[50].

Newman's historical narrative, proceeding through art movements leading up to postmodernism, is determined by the problematic of modernism: autonomy and the critical negation of the aesthetic. The dependence on that (Adorno/Frankfurt School) problematic thus ushers in the question of cultural postmodernism's complicity. Arriving via Minimalism and Conceptualism (failed strategies of evading the commodification of art), those artists designated as postmodernist "all accept the inevitability

of recuperation without allowing that to exclude some kind of critical or subversive potential. However, because such 'subversion' foregoes the utopian social aspirations of the early, heroic Modernist period, its success evades assessment in terms of any identifiable social effects, remaining within the limits of Warholian mimicry..."[37]. The conflation of complicity and critique is thus, as in Jameson's structure, central to the conception of postmodernist art.

Fred Pfeil and Lawrence Grossberg, two (broadly) Marxist writers also find analogous contents to Jameson, but tend to reject his framing and methodology¹². Both, in their specific ways concentrate on what Jameson termed 'intensity' or sublimity, that strange hallucinatory euphoria, understood in terms of an opening rift between meaning and affect.

Fred Pfeil comprehends postmodernism as the cultural production (and mode of reception) of the baby-boomer generation (professional-managerial class, or PMCsers), a class fraction constituted out of American post-war embourgeoisment: a suburban, TV generation, marked by the absence of the working father, the doubly socialising role of the mother, and educated into a rigid Cold War, meritocratic, consumerist ideology. Pfeil therefore elaborates, in Raymond Williams' term, a "structure of feeling"[3]. From TV, bleeding into other cultural areas,

comes "the ceaseless power of the consumerised self's construction, fragmentation, and dissolution at the hands of a relentless invasive world of products"[110]; self as product-effect, devoid of meaning. TV teaches the quick edit, with postmodernist objects full of banalities, intertextual and parodic references circulating in a fragmentary way, "draining off...sense and referentiality" [116]. Such texts are highly ambivalent. This ambivalence derives from both the producers and consumers of the PMC generation's position as the hinge between labour on the one hand (working class parents) and capital (PMCers being largely employed in the *reproductive* industries of the American economy) on the other. It is thus difficult to establish the relative complicity of postmodernist cultural objects.

The problems here with the definitional structure are enormous, as Pfeil is more than willing to acknowledge: technological determination knocking against the apparent 'undecided' politics of a "hinged" class fraction; the undifferentiated macro-application of psychoanalytic categories and singular mass determination of an entire class. Grossberg's more Gramscian analysis attempts to elaborate an 'affective economy' divorced from traditional categories of political affiliation. Grossberg hesitates to isolate a single class fragment and concentrates on the more complex procedures of articulation, such that the affective economy extends "from the baby-boomers...to the

younger generation of computer-literate, MTV-watching, politically naive youth...[to] fragments of both working-class and minority youth" [125]. Articulation is also sensitive to the limits of 'postmodernity' as an explanatory grid, it becomes clear.

Grossberg finds access to this affective economy difficult, but reads its pessimistic, apparent conservatism as marked by an ironic, knowing distancing, a fundamental ambivalence which ultimately evades political categorisation. With the much discussed Madonna video, 'Material Girl'¹³, Grossberg quotes Skow's question: "Do the Wanna Be's see materialism glorified here, or mocked?", and the immediate answer: "Of course, they see both, and no contradiction"¹⁴. It is this type of ambivalence that leads Grossberg to state: "If we accept that new practices and events have appeared on the cultural and historical terrain (the postmodern), their significance and politics are never guaranteed in advance. How they are articulated -- interpreted, appropriated, located within larger configurations of social and cultural practices -- will determine their meanings and effects"¹⁵. Despite evidently trading on the contents of definitional postmodernism, Grossberg is keen to insist that 'postmodernity' as such remains only *one* potential mapping of the contemporary, rather than a 'total' explanation.

Linda Hutcheon's work on postmodernism¹⁶ is also one which begins by refusing to totalise. Coinciding with Jameson's abolition of critical distance, she equally determines not to eulogise or ridicule postmodernism: "Many a theorist has noted the problems of saying anything enlightening about postmodernism without acknowledging the perspective from which it is said, a perspective that will inevitably be limited, if only because it will come from within the postmodern"[FP, 15]. However, this is not a renunciation; if many "have refused to define precisely what they mean by their usage of the term, some...because they admit to using a tacit definition, others because they find too many annoying contradictions in its use"[AP,37], Hutcheon proceeds with the aim of clarification. The definition is an *aesthetic* and less of a general 'condition'. It is presented in the significantly titled chapter 'Limiting the Postmodern' in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, in which, again, the structurality of Jameson's structure can be traced.

Hutcheon's postmodernism marks a break with modernism -- she refuses to see it as a formalist/literary historical progression from modernism towards "an extreme form of modernist autotelic self-reflexion"[AP,40]. Rather, the usual cultural theory route is followed: modernism's withdrawal into a realm of autonomous culture as a space of critical negation fails and postmodernism consequently confronts the political and ideological 'real' historical

world from which culture can no longer be separated. The 'poetics' of postmodernism is therefore one of paradox and contradiction, replacing the logic of "either-or" (negative or positive versions of the postmodern from detractors or supporters) with the "and-also". Hence, although the critical impulse of modernism is absorbed by the expansion and the "increasing uniformization of mass culture"[AP,6], the 'culture industry' is not monolithic, but diverse, with spaces of relative resistance. "Postmodernism in general is such a force of resistance...it teaches us about countercurrents if we are willing to listen"[AP, 41]. This 'postmodernism in general' therefore applies only to *specific* artistic practices within a historical conjuncture; it designates a relative resistance.

This space of resistance is not safe or secure, however, and is always open to recuperation. Indeed, by *The Politics of Postmodernism*, postmodern objects are being largely questioned for their "quietism" in apparent contradiction to the potential of the "complicitous critique" posited in the earlier book. Complicity *and* critique effectively contains the Jameson's question as to political efficacy, and draws together the polar positions indicated by Hal Foster, of a postmodernism of resistance and a postmodernism of reaction, the former "concerned with the critical deconstruction of tradition" against the latter's "instrumental pastiche of pop- or

pseudo-historical forms"¹⁷.

The "and-also" paradox, the maintenance of a tension between complicity and critique, is problematised when it comes to the structure of postmodern parody, which Hutcheon reinstates explicitly against Jameson. Parody as "repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signalling of difference at the very heart of similarity" [AP,26] creates a rift in which difference/distance can operate minutely with a knowing laugh -- even if it is sometimes hard to separate a dead pastiche from a critical parody. If postmodernism "does indeed 'close the gap' that Leslie Fiedler saw between high and low art forms, and it does so through the ironising of both" [AP,44] Hutcheon has to struggle to keep at bay from critical postmodernism "kitsch, kitsch that is being labelled as postmodernism: the tacking of classical arches onto the front of modernist skyscrapers for instance. This trendy attempt to capitalise on the popularity of postmodern historicism is not the same as postmodernism itself, but is a sign of its (perhaps inevitable) commodification" [AP, 31]. This parenthetical "perhaps inevitable" seems to deny the centrality of commodification to determining the "complicitous" half of the "complicitous critique". How are these tacky tackings-on then to be separated from 'knowing' critical parody? It seems that for all the body of sophisticated poststructural techniques discovered in postmodernist texts, their critical efficacy is

determined by a return to intentionalism. In *The Politics of Postmodernism* Hutcheon separates "motivated" parody from "the vague and unfocused", "these kitschy shopping plazas or even the gratuitous (or unconsciously ironic?) architectural citations of the Acropolis...in a...Madison Avenue office complex"[PP, 12]. The narrow rift between pastiche and parody is that of the *consciously* critical parody and the unconsciously populist and "trendy" pastiche. This reverts to Foster's division between the radical and reactionary, something supposedly frozen by the logic of the "and-also".

A definitional structure begins to emerge more generally: the 'break' with modernism, the question of complicity, alongside the concerns of intertextuality, parody and history¹⁰. I note, finally, that another definitional moment details the questioning by postmodernism of "centralised, totalised, hierarchised, closed systems: questions, but does not destroy"[AP, 41]. Internally to the category 'postmodernism', the concept of structure is interrogated. This contravenes Hutcheon's aim to create "a flexible conceptual *structure* which could at once constitute and *contain* postmodern culture and our discourses both about it and adjacent to it"[AP, viii, my emphasis].

These four theorists do perhaps appear arbitrarily chosen, but serve to evidence something of the definitional

contents of a conceptualising of postmodernism. Hutcheon's difficulty, of requiring a structure for an aesthetic designated as non-hierarchical, pluralistic and actively de-structuring, once again demonstrates the enunciative contradiction I have been pursuing in the theorising of definitional postmodernism. It is the liminal *structure* that remains the difficulty. For, if Connor states that "The problem faced by postmodernist theory is how to speak of and bring plurality into being, in a way that does not itself limit and neutralise that plurality"¹⁹, this is not simply an *empirical* problem but one of the theoretical approach itself.

Derrida's early essays, in *Writing and Difference*²⁰, indicate this point. The analysis of 'structure' in 'Structure, Sign and Play' displays how it "has always been neutralised or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a centre or of referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin. The function of this centre was not only to orient, balance, and organise the structure -- one cannot in fact conceive of a unorganised structure -- but above all to make sure that the organising principle of the structure would limit what we might call the *play* of structure" [278]. The centre organises the coherence of the structure; as such it is a point "at which the substitution of contents, elements, or terms is no longer possible" [279]. By defining, detailing, categorising this centre it has always been thought, argues Derrida,

that this is the very essence of the structure. However, because it is not in play, whilst at the heart of the structure, it is also outside it: "The centre is at the centre of the totality, and yet, since this centre does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality *has its centre elsewhere*" [279].

The essay 'Force and Signification' is also relevant here, offering a critique of structuralist literary criticism. In this field, structure is not only form, relation and configuration: "There is also inter-dependency and a totality which is always concrete". Derrida describes that totality in the following way:

Henceforth, the totality is more clearly perceived, the panorama and the panoramagram are possible. The panoramagram, the very image of the structuralist instrument, was invented in 1824, as Littré states, in order "to obtain immediately, on a flat surface, the development and depth vision of objects on the horizon". Thanks to a more or less openly acknowledged schematisation and spatialisation, one can glance over the field divested of its forces more freely and diagrammatically"[5]

The links to the metaphors of the map, terrain, the city do not need to be drawn out here.

Derrida then proceeds to analyse Rousset's structuralist approach to Corneille's plays. For Rousset "The work is a totality and always gains from being experienced as such"[13]; this rigour in uncovering the structure extends to suppressing duration, the temporality of reading: "In...reading...the book is revealed only in

successive fragments. The task of the demanding reader consists in overturning this natural tendency of the book, so that it may present itself in its entirety to the mind's scrutiny"[24]. This develops into a structuration of Corneille's *oeuvre*, each play analysed according to some ideal 'Corneillian structure'. This is a transformation whereby the "structure, the framework of construction...becomes *in fact and despite his theoretical intention* the critic's sole preoccupation"[15]. This rigid theoretical structure, however, is returned to the text as objectively recoverable; the metaphoricality of 'structure' is suppressed. Derrida issues this warning: "as long as the metaphorical sense of the notion of structure is not acknowledged *as such*...one runs the risk...of confusing meaning with its geometric, morphological model. One risks being interested in the figure itself to the detriment of the play going on within it metaphorically"[16].

Although the 'structure' of a definitional postmodernism cannot be elided with literary structuralism, this last quote does seem to me absolutely crucial in recognising the process of the conceptualising of the postmodern. A further three points can be taken from Derrida's essays.

Firstly, definitional postmodernism does share startling affinities with the 'old' operation of structure. To generalise momentarily, the function of these texts is to

produce a taxonomic grid, a list, a lexicon, a structure whereby certain cultural objects are allowed the designation postmodernist, and others disallowed. It is also to be noted that the ordering -- first structure, *then* object-within-structure -- is reversed; the objects are seen to possess *intrinsic* postmodernist qualities, which as empirical citations, examples, reinforce the structure, the structure argued to be the *result* of research. Looking specifically at Jameson, there is indeed the operation of a 'centre', which as centre is at once within and outside: History. An historical determination is the only methodology allowed by Jameson for postmodernism, and yet the category of History remains transcendent, the "absent cause", beyond an analysis that the very categories of his own postmodernism demand.

Secondly, the *name* of postmodernism, "postmodern thought", can be inscribed within (but not rendered identical to) Derrida's oblique references to an 'event' in the "history of the concept of structure". This event, 'rupture', 'disruption', Derrida says, "would have come about when the structurality of structure had to begin to be thought"[280]:

Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no centre...that the centre...had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus, but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play. This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence or centre or origin, everything became discourse..."[280]

Following Levi-Strauss' arguments on the impossibility of gaining full knowledge of the body of mythology, totalisation becomes unavailable. This is not, however, *simply* empirical. This is Derrida's crucial point:

If totalisation no longer has any meaning, it is not because the infiniteness of a field cannot be covered by a finite glance or finite discourse, but because *the nature of the field* [my emphasis]...excludes totalisation[.]....[I]nstead of being an inexhaustible field, as in the classical hypothesis, instead of being too large, there is something missing: a centre which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions. [289]

This 'impossible', nontotalisable field is to be grasped as the *name* of that which the *concept* of postmodernism tries to contain, inevitably missing, severing, silencing elements. What is meant by the name in this context? It is not the prior reality, the contemporary 'state of things', upon which the concept of postmodernism works. Elements of that reality may indeed be invoked: the decentering (and hence non-centering) of Western social, political and economic concerns; the alleged 'crisis' of representation (both political and aesthetic). But this is not the category of what social scientists might term 'postmodernity' as an empirically determinable 'condition'. Rather, the name addresses the concatenation of competing discourses which seek to articulate that perceived reality, the impossibility, without introductory violence, of determining the nature of the "field", of uncovering its centre. No definitional *concept* of postmodernism can reach a finality, a conclusion, because

no definitional discourse can attain hegemony; the logic of the "jetty" signals that they are not even on the same "field", because they are actively *producing* it. There is no centre. What the name names, then, is something like the "field" made up of overlapping, parallel, superimposed fields that is invoked as the space on which the concept, the metaphor, then acts.

This leads to the third point: what is missing from the concept of structure? Against (rigid) spatialising, against the suppression of temporality, Derrida argues: "The force of the work, the force of genius, the force, too, of that which engenders in general is precisely that which resists geometrical metaphorization" [20]. The force, that is, of movement, difference, the economy of *différance*, which moves against the rigid, synchronic space of structure. This parallels my initial chapter's suggestion of moving from fantasmatic site of the cartographer to the itinerary, and the necessity of movement and speed.

Detailing the effects of structure, the erasure of force, Derrida likens the result to "the architecture of an uninhabited or deserted city, reduced to its skeleton by some catastrophe of nature or art. A city no longer inhabited, not simply left behind, but haunted by meaning and culture" [5]. The peculiar double aspect of the city in theories of postmodernism, as both containing metaphor

and exemplary site, was an important element of my opening chapter. Having considered the various definitional views of the concept of postmodernism, I return to the city now to illustrate how the role of the 'Concept-city' as containing metaphor consistently founders.

II

Definitional postmodernism, its lexicon of terms, has been examined as a set of sites, stations, 'tourist attractions' on the "Postmodern Grand Tour". Certain texts, which in the definitional register have almost become stations themselves (the film *Bladerunner* especially), invoke the city. Here I want to further elaborate on the contamination between object and theory. As Derrida warns: "Metaphor is never innocent. It orients research and fixes it" [17].

William Sharpe and Leonard Wallock's introduction to *Visions of the Modern City*²¹ positions the collection of essays at a moment of crisis: "We are now at a point of transition to a new kind of city and are thus experiencing a crisis of terminology similar to that felt by observers of early industrial Manchester and later by the modernist investigators of Paris, London and New York. In this third stage of the city's evolution, we find ourselves seeking to delineate a "decentred" city that does not conform to the definitions of the past"[1]. It is to be

noted that, although Sharpe and Wallock are not contributing to a postmodernist debate, the shape of the argument is haunted by the tripartite structure so often invoked by Jameson: market-monopoly-multinational capitalism; realism-modernism-postmodernism. Sharpe and Wallock's designation of the 19th century city as "an integrated, ordered and knowable entity"[3] and the 'modernist' city as paralleling the texts produced within it ("multiplicity of meaning, loss of sequential or causal connection, breakdown of signification, and dissolution of community" -- but, it should be noted, "with certain demonstrable boundaries"[5]), should and can be contested as empirical certainties²². However, they are not discussing, at this introductory moment to their essay, actual cities, but rather a brief history of interpretive -- theoretical and aesthetic -- methods for "reading" the city. No matter then what the city *names*, these are the conceptual structures which contain it. Hence, Engels' and Booth's empirical ordering of the city was motored by a scientific rationality that would have (attempted to) shut down and rendered absolutely identical the concept of the city and its name; there would have been no difference. Once the "structurality of the structure had to begin to be thought", however, the concept of the city becomes problematical.

What Sharpe and Wallock move on to elaborate is the crisis of conceptual language about the city. Their introduction

is a history of metaphors. From 19th century images of organicism or rationalised totalities, they chart a movement to what Mumford termed the "non-place of the non-city"[17], and the desperate, continuing quest to make the modern city legible again. Metaphors here proliferate in as many directions as the city. Anthony Downs alone suggests five directions: redevelopment, peripheral sprawl, planned peripheral growth, satellite growth, and non-metropolitan growth. Even the US Government's statistics office gave up trying to define the city, and dropped the minimum size requirement, as old centres (and it is the loss of definable city centres that is key here) were dispersed into 'plug-in cities', knots of shopping facilities on a string of endless suburban sprawl[31]²³.

Sharpe and Wallock's conclusion proves to be peculiarly relevant:

Now that even an aerial view may not reveal the extent or outline of the metropolis, we rely more and more on diagrammatic metaphors (such as atoms, satellites, doughnuts, and tiers) to represent its contours. The use of such metaphors is likely to continue as long as the urban environment appears unintelligible, for they satisfy a deeply felt need to comprehend the city in visual terms. That a number of recent critics have stressed the importance of "mapping" the contemporary city is indicative of a nostalgia for urban legibility [36].

This oblique critique of Jameson's postmodernism can also be extended, in their additional comments, to the arguments I signed under Derrida's name: these diagrams tell us only how the city looks, they "will not

characterise growth...[or] specify the logic of its development"[36]. They conclude: "Today the challenge of urbanists is to develop a vocabulary that can speak to the ongoing process of urban development rather than its spatial contours at any given moment" [38]. What is missing from the ahistorical, fixed structure is the force of change.

Sharpe and Wallock believe that it is only a matter of finding the right vocabulary, the right metaphor. This is also implicitly suggested by Burton Pike, when he argues that through the lack of perceived order "the dispersed city has signally failed to give rise to meaningful monuments or meaningful culture"²⁴. However, following Derrida, it is not a problem of lacking the right totalising metaphor, "it is not because [of] the infiniteness of a field...but because [of] *the nature of the field*" [289].

Jameson proposes that the city is "one of the last few thinkable "representations""²⁵. This digression into urban studies, however, displays that such a stabilising metaphor is profoundly de-stabilised. This produces a strange effect: the city for postmodernism is a metaphor for which no metaphor can be found; it repeats the impossibility of conceptualisation proposed for the name of postmodernism. As a frame, it can only attain a quasi-conceptual status.

Within Jameson's structure of postmodernism, within the stabilising jetty of an introductory definitional postmodernism, I have marked a certain logic of the "shunt", the necessary movement between stations. This movement defies the map, the aerial view, for it must occur on the ground, through the streets. For Pfeil:

Down on the ground -- at street-level, as it were, instead of up in the towers of the Westin Bonaventure Hotel -- postmodernism seems less a single cultural dominant than an ongoing situation in which no one aesthetic, narrative, or cognitive strategy of cultural production or consumption holds sway²⁶.

"Now that even the aerial view may not reveal the extent or outline of the metropolis", to quote Sharpe and Wallock again, postmodernism must be revealed on the ground, in a strategy of walking, driving or taking the train between stations. What is introduced here *within* the quasi-concept of the city, is the necessity of speed, of the temporality of reading. And this accords with de Certeau's strategy for the city: "to locate the practices that are foreign to the 'geometrical' or 'geographical' space of visual, panoptic, or theoretical constructions...an *opaque and blind* mobility...A *migrational* city" [93].

Going back to one of the earliest statements now documented in the archive of a definitional postmodernism -- Venturi's *Learning from Las Vegas*²⁷ -- the following statement can be read:

A driver thirty years ago could maintain a sense of

orientation in space. At the simple crossroad a little sign with an arrow confirmed what was obvious. One knew where one was. When the crossroads becomes a cloverleaf, one must turn right to turn left...But the driver has no time to ponder paradoxical subtleties within a dangerous, sinuous maze. He or she relies on signs for guidance -- enormous signs in vast spaces at high speeds [9]

The sequence of photographs attempts to re-present the Las Vegas strip, but, Venturi and Scott-Brown emphasise, "its enormous spaces must be seen as moving sequences" [35]. It is the cumulative, temporal revelation rather than the fixed, spatial photographs or maps of land-use (maps which "impede our understanding" [75]) which best represent a space, which, paradoxically, can no longer be spatially captured.

These signs, these billboards ("billboards are almost right"[8]) are precisely the image taken by Grossberg to describe the effects/affects of postmodernist culture, specifically television²⁸. The common gestures of self-reflexivity in programmes like *Miami Vice* and *Moonlighting* are to be understood as:

billboards to be driven past, roadmarkers that do not tell us where we are going but merely advertise or better, announce (because they comprise and mark the boundaries, they are both the inside and the limits of) the town we are passing through. Of course, billboards do more than advertise; they are a space in which many different discourses, both serious and playful, appear...Its direct appeals, its inscribed meanings, its specific message, seem oddly irrelevant and rarely useful...it is not a sign to be interpreted, but rather, a piece of the puzzle to be assembled [31-2]

This is crucial; what this marks is that individual

isolated signs are "rarely useful". Slapping the label on, situating a text in the definitional frame of postmodernism serves little purpose (Grossberg emphasises that "any individual billboard is in-different"[32]). What is at stake here is the speed at which billboards are passed, their temporal accumulation. Of course, this refers to the specificity of televisual practice; it might be remembered that Jameson emphasises the action of the "total flow", the difficulty of isolating a single text for analysis. It can, however, also be extended to travelling in the city of postmodernism, where the movement, the line, the speed of following the line is that which establishes some provisional form of meaning.

The billboard-as-text, as strategy for artistic intervention, has been used by those artists again frequently stationed in definitional postmodernism. Again, the question of complicity/critique arises, given the advertising space that is appropriated. Jacqueline Rose sees in Barbara Kruger's billboard art and Jenny Holzer's paradoxical slogans speeding around the information board on the Times building the potential for subversion: "There is a violence in these slogans that works at the level of content, but also, and more crucially in the disruption caused by their presence and their very mode of address. They add to the confusion of city space and then appropriate that confusion for a blatant political intervention"²⁹.

Jerry Herron's discussion of postmodernism unfolds between two termini⁹⁰. Detroit, for Herron, is "America's first postmodernist city", the capital of Jameson's "inverted millenarianism"[61]. The modern(ist) city built by Henry Ford was one of apparent democratisation, making the city "accessible to everyone": "it defined a destination, within which historical differences -- of race, religion, language, national origin -- were transformed by work into a "modern" individuality..."[63]. That clear destination and "narrative economy" has been shattered, like the city. The symbolic centre of the city, its industrial hub, is now emptied. What has been inscribed on that absence Herron interprets through postmodern categories. Without a centre, it is difficult to determine the nature of the city, and Herron constructs it narratively by taking a trolley car from the Downtown terminus to the new Renaissance Centre (built by Portman, incidentally, the same architect for the Bonaventure). The downtown area is full of abandoned buildings, 'modernist' factories, slum dwellings. The only space that is safe here is Trappers Alley, a kind of theme park/market place modelled on Detroit's past, a pastiche simulacra that is "not Detroit, nor is it meant to be, and this is precisely why it succeeds"[68]. At the other end of the line, lies the RenCen, a massive project that was designed to recentre the city away from the old industrial base. "(T)hings worked out too well", Herron notes ironically, for "Portman recentred Detroit by revealing its total absence

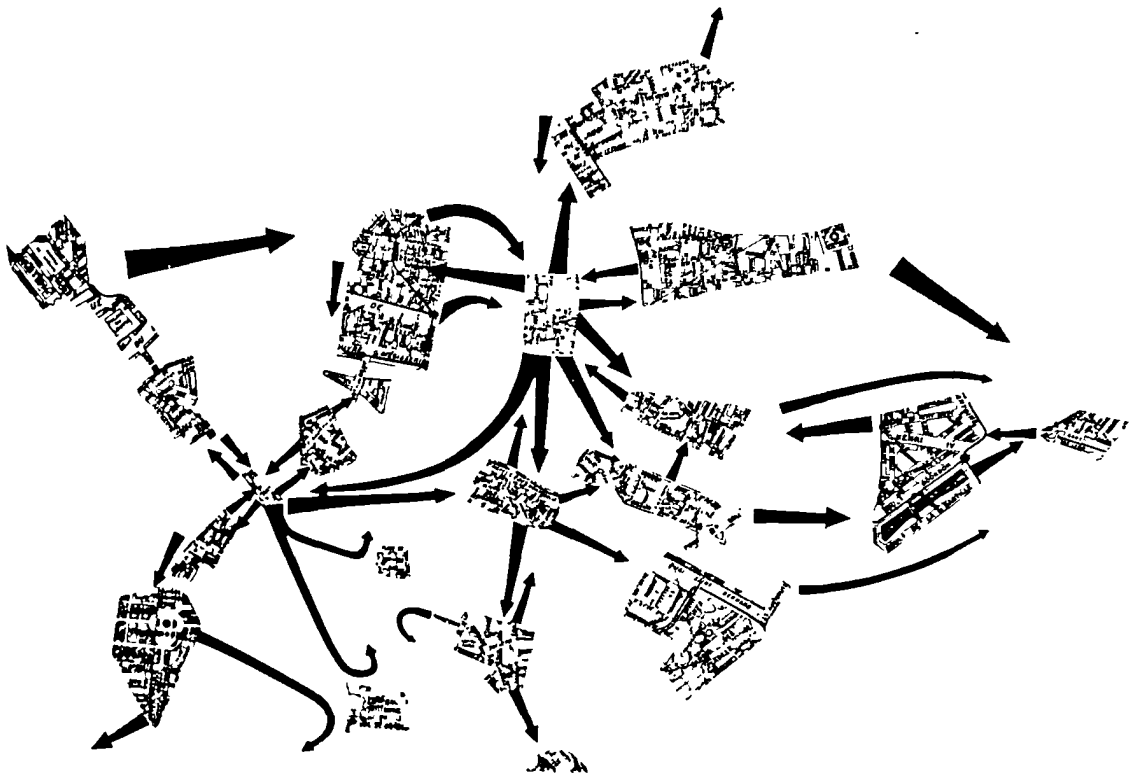
of centre, thus the failure of the "renaissance" as both imaginative and economic venture: the inevitability of getting lost inside; the incidents of violence that disorientated, postmodern subjects frequently fell victim to" [67].

Herron's essay moves usefully away from Jameson (even if, as ever, remaining definitionally dependent), for the city is revealed, not in the enclosed spaces which attempt to suppress the degraded city-space outside, but in the journey, the movement between these spaces. It is in the trolley car's endless turning and re-turning between these sites/stations that the space is unfolded. And it is the trolley car, de Certeau notes, that in Greece is called *metaphorai*: "To go to work or come home, one takes a "metaphor""³¹.

How does Jameson himself treat these mechanised journeys I have been detailing here? He is certainly aware of something of the theoretical strategy I have been adopting: "recent architectural theory has begun to borrow from narrative analysis in other fields, and to attempt to see our physical trajectories through such buildings as virtual narratives or stories, as dynamic paths and narrative paradigms which we as visitors are asked to fulfill..."[PMCLC, 82]. For Jameson, however, within the Bonaventure, such movement, such narrativising is denied, because "the escalators and elevators here henceforth

replace movement...the narrative stroll has been...replaced by a transportation machine which becomes the allegorical signifier of that older promenade we are no longer allowed to conduct on our own"[82]. Here, as ever, space wins out with its fixity and draining of subjective agency. However, if Jameson's sense of the 'totality' owes much to Debord's notion of "spectacular" culture, he ignores the earlier work of the Situationists as subversive urbanists, precisely resisting this freezing of city space into the 'Concept-city'. I offer Debord's collage, *The Naked City* (see Fig. 1), as a fruitful text on which to complete this work on city spaces, displaying how, in the interstices of structure a different logic may emerge. I also want to begin to suggest how individual texts, usually entirely subordinated to structure, to being placed within a taxonomic grid as "postmodernist", resist this more or less violent action: texts, perhaps, as itinerants.

No precedent is set by 'using' Debord's artwork. It appears in Greil Marcus' *Lipstick Traces*, Robert Hewison's *Future Tense* and is also discussed by Scott Bukatman³². Hewison uses the icon of *The Naked City* as a parable for postmodern culture. The Situationist International, a group of now virtually unknown (by their own design) intellectuals centering around Guy Debord produced a startling body of work in the 1950s and 60s, work which can be seen as a major influence on thinkers as diverse as



de Certeau and Baudrillard²³. The "subversiveness" of the 'theory' is that it is difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct, in that it was produced and dispersed simultaneously with the occurrence of that mysterious 'situation'. For Hewison it is bitterly ironic that this politically explosive *because* ephemeral 'theory' becomes, in 1988, the object, the fixed objectified body of work for a museum exhibition, sponsored by a major bank. This is the ultimate co-optation and becomes exemplary for the evacuation of the political in postmodernist art in its marriage with commerce. If my use of *The Naked City* is more "formalistic" than this, it will also serve, I hope, to question this 'spatial' political model (margin = critical politics; centre = co-opted politics), which tends to deny the very real and very powerful effects of engagement with the 'commercial', not least in the Situationists' own strategy of *detournement*.

The space of *The Naked City* can be seen as a model for the definitional construction of postmodernist space. The strategies are familiar: the flat ("depthless") representation, seen from above in its entirety. The fragments of map are the "clusters" of theorisation, the 'stations' of key definitional points, which seek to impose certain centres, and certain flows of traffic along which literary (and other) texts must move if they are allowed entry into the postmodernist taxonomy. The rest of the city space is blank, unimportant or beyond the

strictures of postmodernism. The arrows in this reading are the "shunts" of Jameson's texts, the quick passage between stations, passing over the unmapped routes between them.

The 'map', however, is plainly incomplete. Arrows point towards the frame, suggesting connections beyond the borders. Certain mapped sites appear to resist penetration by arrows and deflect them. This is all in accord with the situationists' theory of the *dérive*, or drift, in which one wanders through the 'officially' mapped city in a semi-random manner to discover the variable 'climates' within the city: "cities have a psycho-geographical relief, with constant currents, fixed points, and vortexes which strongly discourage entry or exit from certain zones"³⁴. The first phase of a psychogeography was to move with the 'flow' of the official city to discover the centres of attraction and repulsion. The second was a derangement and transgression of such flows by *dériving*, drifting through the city to discover another form within it. In its first formulation ('Formulary for a New Urbanism', Ivan Chtchlegov) this was a highly subjective experience in which the city could be transformed into the expression of the desires of the *deriviste*. Moving away from this psychologism, Debord proposed that the *dérive* could "permit the drawing up of the first surveys of the psychogeographical articulations of a modern city"³⁵ The influence of such ideas is evident

in de Certeau's theorisation of walking rhetorics, leaving the viewing platform of New York's World Trade Centre for the complexity of the streets. With this in mind, *The Naked City* could be read now as follows: the fragments of map are the extent of the construction of a definitional postmodernism. It does not run to the extent of the 'city limits' (there are none), being rather a cluster of privileged zones from which it hopes to control the interpretation of and passages through the city. Literary texts may certainly be found within the 'streets' of postmodernism, but they do not solely inhabit it. In this sense, the arrows over blank spaces represent the *dérives* of texts, their constant divergences from the definitional structure. These *dérives*, however, are only seen as such *from the point of view of the structure*; they diverge *because* the taxonomy is in place. This is a very important point. The *dérive* is meaningless without the structure. Wandering into unmapped space causes "bafflement" (to recall Huyssen) -- is it possible for the critic to follow them?

This space might be read through Baudrillard:

A strange pride obliges us not only to possess the other, but also to force out his secret...[.] First follow people you meet in the street, at random, for an hour, two hours, brief sequences, disorganised -- with the idea that people's lives are arbitrary trajectories...and for this very reason they are fascinating. The network of the other is a means of absenting yourself from yourself. You exist in the other's trace, but without his knowledge...[.] It is therefore not in order to discover something about the other, nor about where he's going, nor a drift in

quest of some random aleatory course...You seduce yourself into being the destiny of the other, the double of his course, which for him has meaning, but which, duplicated, no longer has any³⁶

The critic begins with a desire to "possess" the text, to open its secrets, but finds that, once led into unmapped space, she or he can only follow the trace, weakly parody it, gleaning nothing of its secrets; one version of Baudrillard's death of the theorist (as Barthes says: "if one were to manage it, the very utterance of drifting today would be a suicidal discourse"³⁷). Baudrillard's description of this wandering is not new. In *Charles Baudelaire*, Walter Benjamin quotes an 1858 distinction between the *flâneur* and the *badaud*. Baudrillard evidently, ecstatically, belongs to the latter:

The *flâneur* must not be confused with the *badaud*; a nuance should be observed here...The simple *flâneur* is always in full possession of his individuality, whereas the individuality of the *badaud* disappears. It is absorbed by the outside world...which intoxicates him to the point where he forgets himself...he is no longer a human being, he is a part of the public, the crowd³⁸

'The art of disappearance', as Baudrillard terms it in *Fatal Strategies*, is of the *badaudier*. Whilst this cedes the authority of the theorist, it does so only by inversion, by one authority replacing another: the revenge of the object.

This is not to suggest that the *flâneur* as a model for the theorist is any less problematic³⁹. Fred Pfeil has revived this figure as a methodology to establish an

"impressionistic non-method" in order to cover a number of texts quickly [194]. Pfeil, however, in his discussion of the problems of 'bourgeois secularity', of the series of failed attempts to give immanent meaning to a 'reading of the streets', uses the figure of the *flâneur*, who was, in Benjamin's terms, the epitome of such bourgeois attempts to read; the writer-as-stroller constructed 'physiologies' of city stereotypes as reassurance for readers against the growing illegibility of the city. For Benjamin "There was the pedestrian who wedged himself into the crowd, but there was also the *flâneur* who demanded elbow room and was unwilling to forego the life of a gentleman of leisure" [195]. This was the methodology of the sociologist Georg Simmel, deploying the *flâneur's* stroll "through a variety of social situations and contexts and remains detached from them because he or she is merely an observer"⁴⁰. This 'elbow room' is another form of critical distance, even if it has left the tower for the streets. Pfeil's method is still a structure, for the 'display windows' of his analysis are discrete units, fixed spaces, and the *flâneur's* movement is lost. Movement, *force*, is central here, as in Venturi's Vegas Strip, Herron's Detroit trolley car ride, Grossberg's billboards passed on the highway. Pfeil's use of the *flâneur* suppresses the process of revelation by walking, in the *action* of walking. But if the *flâneur* still retains vestiges of distance, there is another figure in Baudelaire himself. Benjamin, noting that Baudelaire did not have the economic

leisure time for *flâneurism*, likens his progress through the streets to that of the fencer, in that "the blows he deals are designed to open a path through the crowd"⁴¹. Rather than charging through in straight lines carved out by violence, his movement and his poetry are to be comprehended "as a continuous series of tiny improvisations"⁴².

This, I think, provides the figure on which to return to *The Naked City*. Having constructed a definitional postmodernism, the theorist follows texts as the *flâneur* through its mapped spaces; the *flâneur* builds a taxonomy or 'physiology'. As soon as texts leave the mapped areas, however, the *flâneur* risks falling back into the practice of the *badaud*, unable to make the text 'mean' anything because its trajectory cannot be foreseen by the rigidities of the structure. In this sense, no text is intrinsically postmodernist, although it may pass through its centres. The theorist must try to follow this movement not with a fixed structure in mind but through a "continuous series of tiny improvisations" in which the force of the movement is constantly foregrounded; a 'travelling theory' as Edward Said has called it⁴³, which traces transformations of meanings through space, across thresholds and boundaries. Texts cannot be bounded to fixed and mapped areas. The text remains 'unfinished' (which does not mean "indeterminable"), and no single context, like definitional postmodernism, can exhaust it:

arrows will always point beyond it, linking to other more or less determinable contexts.

Thus far I have read *The Naked City* purely in terms of its spatial relations. The arrows, I want to suggest, may also be seen as temporal leaps. Meaghan Morris' article on the problematics introduced to cultural studies by the speed of change of objects of analysis proposes that cultural theory should move away from the 'object' towards a conception of it as *event*. In *Des dispositifs pulsionnels*⁴⁴ Lyotard conceives the event not in terms of something that is brought about by prior causes and has subsequent effects, but as an instance that "produces itself of itself" and disrupts narratives of cause and effect. The event is 'inane'; meaningless until contesting narratives try to close on it, and narrate it in their terms. This has obvious analogies to *The Naked City* in that texts are either inane *until* brought into the mapped spaces of a definitional postmodernism or as a result of wandering from the map; they won't conform to a consensus narrative (which, it should be said, constructs this before/after temporality of text's relation to the structure). This draws attention once again to the arrows over blank space. In concentrating here, the whole way I have been 'framing' these commentaries can be transformed.

It is a question of Lyotard's understanding of the sublime. In 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde'⁴⁵, Lyotard

affirms that the event, the occurrence, is "infinitely simple", but that in order to understand it "thought must be disarmed". Thought, in terms of 'discipline' systematises what has been done but also presupposes something that is yet to be determined; its rules attempt to predict the 'what next? what now?'. What the system doesn't foresee is that *nothing* may happen, or that there is a pause, a time of waiting, filled with the anxiety that the next word or sentence or line or colour may not happen. This time of anxiety, but also pleasure, is that of the sublime. 'Answering the Question' puts it succinctly:

A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. These rules and categories are what the work of art is itself looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*. Hence the fact that work and text have the characters of an event...⁴⁶

The trace of that 'inane' event can still be seen here, in that the 'sublime' text is written in the paradoxical temporality of the future anterior, written apparently without rules, which only become apparent as the text is completed, by which time it is too late. The link Lyotard makes between the rule-bound art and determining judgment as opposed to 'sublime' art and reflective judgment is also relevant here. These Kantian terms might be crudely schematised as the determining judging from Law, from

precedent, whilst the reflective judges without criteria, each case judged in its singularity. The 'faculty' of judgment, as analysed in *The Differend*⁴⁷, is that which makes connections between incommensurable faculties. Its status as a faculty is problematic, however, in that it appears to have no object proper to it; rather, it "appears as a force of "passages" between the faculties". Since it has no object, Lyotard employs a symbol; that of the archipelago. There are 'islands' without connection except by the 'sea', which is the "milieu" of reflective judgment, the 'provider of ships'. It is paradoxically by this passage between islands "which has enabled the territories and realms to be delimited, which has established the authority of each genre on its island". Linking this passage of reflective judgment to the 'sublime' text, I return to *The Naked City*.

The situationists proclaimed: "Our situations will be ephemeral, without a future: passageways"⁴⁸. One of the rhetorics of walking analysed by de Certeau is that of *asyndeton*: the suppression of linking words becomes, in walking, the selection and fragmentation of the space traversed: "it skips over and links whole parts...[it] opens gaps in the spatial continuum ...[.] A space treated in this way and shaped by practices is transformed into enlarged singularities and separate islands"⁴⁹. The 'sublime' text creates passageways which are each time singular, unique situations or events. This reading

reverses the whole tendency of the commentary I have been offering on *The Naked City*. If definitional postmodernism is a set of rules, a structure to which texts must *subsequently* enter, then here the "postmodern" text becomes the formulator of the rules for the passage between mapped fragments: this is the *only* way such islands can be understood. Each passage is a unique event, however, the passage, *per force*, cannot be determined once and for all. If the structure is to be retained it is better to see it in a constant process of (re)structuration, open to that "continuous series of tiny improvisations".

To conclude, I want to turn to Scott Bukatman's analysis of Disneyland, for here he cites *The Naked City* only to suggest that in such "controlled" semi-public spaces the Situationist notion of the *dérive* has been neutralised. As an administered place, one could still expect the operation of "tactics" in de Certeau's sense: "A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety"⁵⁰. This is an everyday refusal of pre-programmed 'traffic controls'. However, Bukatman finds that the passageways through the Disney site were not finalised until months of surveillance of visitors had determined principal tactical routes. These were then incorporated into determined trajectories; the itinerary is pre-empted and collapsed into the map.

Bukatman is careful not to extend Disney into an exemplary site for 'postmodernist space'; that Disney is the *dream* of a totally administered space. However, Jameson's Bonaventure does become an allegorical exemplum of a global spatial order where all movement is frozen or encoded for the system. One wonders what the point of *theoretically* constituting such a totalitarian space can serve, and it is to be suspected that what is occurring here is the risk Derrida notes in "being interested in the figure itself to the detriment of the play going on within it metaphorically"⁵¹. Jameson is perhaps locked into a notion of opposition that conceives it largely in terms of negation. The strength of the itinerary, at least as de Certeau theorises it⁵², is that it occupies the same place, but refuses its dictates. Equally, the singularity of named itineraries can question the generality of a concept of postmodernism, metaphorically constituted on the Concept-city.

This ends the obsession with the metaphors of the city as the contradictory exemplum for the constitution of the concept of postmodernism. The following two chapters will further interrogate the "stabilizing jetty" of postmodernism by analysing first the *modern* and subsequently the *post* with the aim of questioning the methods by which postmodernism is constituted as distinct epoch.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) in *The States of "Theory"*, ed. D. Carroll, Columbia University Press, 1990. All references follow in the text.
- 2) by non-co-optive, I mean that his work is not "contained" by some simplistic history of "post-68" French thought, or taken as epiphenomenal to some economically determinist narrative. Robert Young, who has attacked such narratives, nevertheless states: "If deconstruction forms part of a more widespread attempt to decolonise the forms of European thought, from this perspective Derrida's work can be understood as characteristically postmodern", *White Mythologies*, Routledge, 1990, p.19
- 3) Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, Manchester University Press, 1988, p.39; Geoffrey Bennington, *Lyotard: Writing the Event*, Manchester University Press, p.121
- 4) Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, Manchester University Press, 1984, p.82
- 5) Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Verso, 1991, p. 218
- 6) Derrida, 'The Ends of Man', *Margins of Philosophy*, Harvester, 1982, p.135
- 7) Fred Pfeil, *Another Tale to Tell: Politics and Narrative in Postmodern Culture*, Verso, 1990, p.142 and Douglas Kellner, 'Jameson/Marxism/Postmodernism'

- in *Postmodernism/Jameson/ Critique*, Maisonneuve Press, 1989, p.2
- 8) Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p.373
- 9) Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Utopia', p.23
- 10) Guillian Bruno, 'Ramble City', *October*, 41, Summer 1987
- 11) Hayward and Kerr, Introduction to *Postmodern Screen*, Vol.28:2 1987, p.4. Newman in *ICA Documents 4/5: Postmodernism*, ed. Geoffrey Bennington, 1986. All page references follow in the text
- 12) Fred Pfeil, *Another Tale to Tell*, Verso, 1990. Page references follow in the text. Grossberg's articles are footnoted separately
- 13) See E. Ann Kaplan's 'Whose Imaginary? The Televisual Apparatus, Female Body and Textual Strategies in Select Rock Videos on MTV' in *Female Spectators*, ed E. Deirdre Priham, Verso, 1988, which also discusses the contradictions of this video
- 14) Lawrence Grossberg, 'Rockin' with Reagan: or, the Mainstreaming of Postmodernity' in *Cultural Critique*, 10, Fall, 1988, p.141
- 15) Grossberg, 'Putting the Pop Back into Postmodernism', in *Universal Abandon?*, Edinburgh University Press, 1988, p.170
- 16) Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* [AP], Routledge, 1988 and *The Politics of Postmodernism* [PP], Routledge, 1989. All page references follow in the text.

- 17) Hal Foster, 'Postmodernism: A Preface', in *Postmodern Culture*, Pluto, 1985, p.xiv
- 18) Hutcheon's central novelistic form of postmodernism is 'historiographic metafiction' which, explicitly against Jameson, "reinstalls historical contexts as significant and even determining" [AP, 89]. I return to this in Chapter 5
- 19) Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, p.80
- 20) *Writing and Difference* (1967), translated by Alan Bass, Routledge 1978. All page references follow in the text.
- 21) *Visions of the Modern City* ed. Sharpe and Wallock, John Hopkins Press, 1987 edition.
- 22) see, for example, Fred Pfeil's excellent analysis in 'Flaneur at the River's Edge', also discussed below. Pfeil takes a trajectory from Balzac through George Eliot, Conrad et al. right up to the 80s film *River's Edge*, tracing the attempt to unify meaning and signification. It is only momentarily and precariously that any real achievement of 'organicism' is gained -- in Eliot. This soon collapses, however, and cannot be extended over the whole "realist" genre/epoch.
- 23) It is interesting to note that Pfeil sees the 'terrain' of postmodernism as a "multiply determined cultural sprawl", *Another Tale*, p.146
- 24) Pike, *The Image of the City*, p. 133. This accords with his view of "the basic biological need of any living organism to be able to orient itself spatially

- in relation to its surroundings", p.120
- 25) Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p.373
 - 26) Pfeil, *Another Tale*, p. 145
 - 27) Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown, *Learning from Las Vegas*, MIT Press, 2nd edition, 1977
 - 28) Lawrence Grossberg, 'The In-Difference of Television', *Screen*, 28:2, 1987. See also 'Putting the Pop back into Postmodernism' for a similar use of the "billboard" metaphor (p. 181ff).
 - 29) Jacqueline Rose, 'Fantasies of the Modern and the Postmodern' in *Universal Abandon?*, ed. Andrew Ross, p.247
 - 30) Jerry Herron, 'Postmodernism Ground Zero, or Going to the Movies at Grand Circus Park', *Social Text* 18, Winter 87/88
 - 31) de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 115
 - 32) Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, Secker and Warburg, 1989, and Robert Hewison, *Future Tense: A New Art for the Nineties*, Commedia/ Routledge, 1990, Scott Bukatman, 'There's Always Tomorrowland: Disney and the Hypercinematic Experience', *October* 57, Summer 1991
 - 33) Sadie Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age*, Routledge, 1992 for a detailed discussion of the relation between the SI and Baudrillard
 - 34) 'Theory of the Derive', *Situationist International Anthology* ed. and trans. Ken Knabb, Bureau of Public

- Secrets, 1981, p.50
- 35) *ibid.* p.53
- 36) Jean Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies*, trans. Beitchman and Niesluchowski, Semiotext(e), 1990
- 37) Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller, Hill and Wang, 1975
- 38) Victor Fournel, quoted by Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, Verso, 1968, p.69,fn. 12
- 39) See Elizabeth Wilson's 'The Invisible Flaneur', *New Left Review*, 191, Jan/Feb 1992, which has some useful correctives about the use of the figure of the *flaneur*, which, she argues has been used "in postmodernist feminist discourse as the embodiment of the 'male gaze'" [98], but is more accurately to be linked to *dysfunctional* and marginal men
- 40) David Frisby *Sociological Impressionism: A Reassessment of Georg Simmel's Social Theory*, Heinemann, 1981, p.78
- 41) Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, p.120
- 42) Benjamin, p.70 43) Edward Said, 'Travelling Theory', *The World, The Text, and The Critic*, Faber and Faber, 1984
- 44) The details of this text taken from Geoffrey Bennington's summary in *Lyotard: Writing the Event*, Manchester University Press 1988, p.107-110
- 45) in *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin, Blackwell,

1989, p.197

- 46) Appendix to *The Postmodern Condition*, p.81
- 47) All quotes from *The Differend*, Third Kant notice,
ps. 130-5
- 48) Debord, 'The Theory of the *Derive*', p.51
- 49) de Certeau, *Everyday Life* p.101
- 50) Scott Bukatman, 'There's Always Tomorrowland', p.68
- 51) Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p.16
- 52) Jameson, of course, does offer a "homeopathic"
strategy of immanent critique; however, the wayward
position of Hans Haacke, as exemplary of this
strategy, is a problem discussed in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NAME OF POSTMODERNISM

The conceptualising of postmodernism as object, mode or terrain depends on figures of liminality, decisive and determinable edges, a narrative of a *break*, the emergence of a new space. In that sense it relies crucially on the determination of a prior moment: the modern. As Zygmunt Bauman has noted, this narrative of break and emergence is written backwards: "The concept of 'modernity' has today a quite different content from the one it had before the start of 'postmodern' discourse...It is situated in that [postmodern] debate, it draws its meaning from it, and it makes sense only jointly with the other side of the opposition, the concept of 'postmodernity'"¹. This constitutes what de Certeau terms the reverse writing of history, the differential identity of the present being established by a definitive break and periodisation of the past, such that "each "new" time provides the *place* for a discourse considering whatever preceded it to be "dead""². Conceptualising postmodernism involves the constitution of the very modern/ism it then rejects.

This chapter aims to present two arguments, one demonstrably and one reflexively, within the same action. It is to be *demonstrated* that the attempt to produce a 'global', cross-discipline concept of postmodernism elides and damages very specific meanings ascribed to the

"modern" within different discursive regimes, meanings which are often incompatible. This will involve attending to architectural, sociological, philosophical and literary 'versions' of the "modern". *Reflexively*, I want to suggest that this elision can be analysed through Lyotard's 'ethics of discourse' in *The Differend*². In this philosophy of "phrases" it is proposed that "incommensurable" genres of discourse compete to link "phrases" according to their own rules and goals: Lyotard is concerned at the 'injustice' to certain genres resultant from the dominance of some genres over others³. The difficult proposal of *The Differend* is, not that each 'genre' should be respected in its "purity", but that every time a genre links a phrase to its purpose there is an injustice to all other *potential* linkages.

In this proposal, the *name* is vital because, although it is the 'same' each time it appears, its meaning depends entirely on the genre in which it appears. The name, however, is a central element in linkage: "phrases from heterogeneous regimens or genres "encounter" each other in proper names, in worlds determined by the network of names" [no.39]. If Postmodernism is a name then a generalised concept of postmodernism is unjust, because it misrecognises the name 'postmodernism' as equivalent in every utterance, every genre, whereas its meaning in fact derives from the phrase or genre in which it is situated. This then repeats the argument proposed that the specific

senses of the "modern" are elided: it is reflexive, because what is sometimes called a "postmodern ethics" is here addressed to the very name of postmodernism.

I

To begin with architecture, because it is "in the realm of architecture...that modifications in aesthetic production are most dramatically visible", because "architecture...may be the most overt and easily studied example of postmodernist discourse", because it is "an area of cultural practice in which movements and stylistic dominants are much more conspicuous and less arguable than elsewhere"⁵. None of these statements are made by architects, and yet it is architecture which is seen to provide the "best model", "the one art form in which the label seems to refer, uncontested, to a generally agreed corpus of works"⁶ for postmodernism.

Architecture, in many senses, 'begins' a definitional postmodernism, since it can provide a clear delineation of the stakes and a certain narrative which can serve to characterise and fix the modern. Those stakes are: a decisive break from modernism, a determinable "essence" of the modern, and an aesthetic form which is conditioned by the interpenetration of culture with economics, thus foregrounding questions of relative complicity/critique. It is a beginning in another sense, however. Jameson

deploys architecture as the first functionalist "shunt" to his argument. It is through but beyond architecture that the "mutation in the object world", the problematic of a new spatiality, is discovered. If both Sharrett and Shumway (and indeed Jencks)⁷ contest Jameson's use of the Bonaventure Hotel as a definitional postmodernist work, they miss the little phrase "a work which is in many ways uncharacteristic" [PMCLC, 80]; it is the *space* it reveals, not its architecture. The same concern with space over the visible signifiers of architecture is marked in the discussion of Gehry's Santa Monica house, which has, he admits, "little enough in common with the ostentatious decorative frivolity and historicist allusion"⁸ that signals a definitional architectural postmodernism. Elsewhere in the 'Cultural Logic' essay, postmodernist architecture functions to introduce and "shunt" towards the global collapse of history. Architecture, then, in Jameson's term, is to be "transcoded" to other realms, not to be analysed in and of itself. To some extent Jameson performs this operation with all cultural "symptoms", but it is the *originary* use of architecture as a model which is important here. Hutcheon's chapter 'Modelling the Postmodern' [in AP] is also concerned with this transcoding operation.

What eases architecture into the opening of a definition is the preparedness of the proponents of architectural postmodernism to make declamatory and definitional

statements. It is not the form, the visibility, or even the economics of architecture (problematics which are shared by other art forms), but its dictates that render it valuable. A certain reading of the 'appropriations' of architecture might suggest that it is its perceived 'un(der)-theorised' state which allows a relatively unproblematised articulation to broader cultural, social or philosophical questions; that the former becomes a simplified pictorial commentary for the latter. Hence Porphyrios' demarcation of the four definitional elements of architectural postmodernism (fragmentation, "the disintegration of the compositional and stylistic systems"; parody, the postmodern architect "no longer...the celebrant of human or technological order, but instead reaches for a redeeming image in the world of parody, mockery or nostalgia"; a melange of styles at the expense of significant meaning; the demise of *res publica* for the pressures of real estate markets⁹) can become the originary generation of a general definitional postmodernism.

Perhaps more important than these positive definitional elements, however, is the negative one, which constitutes the break with modernism. It is this narrative which is far more difficult to transpose, and yet is the one frequently called on to mark the boundary limit of the postmodern. This narrative is often taken from Jencks' *The Language of Postmodern Architecture*, but it should not

be forgotten that he terms this narrative "a caricature, a polemic"; "The virtue of this genre (as well as its vice) is its license to cut through the large generalities with a certain abandonment and enjoyment, overlooking all the exceptions"¹⁰. The narrative of the Moderns runs something like this: modernist architecture (to be dated variously from Loos' 'Ornament and Crime'[1908], the Bauhaus manifesto [1919], Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture*[1923] or the CIAM manifesto [1933]¹¹) posited a self-identity with the 'new', with the technologies of modernisation and its liberative potential. The aesthetics of architecture were to be elided if not erased with scientific rationality; no 'aesthetic' superfluity, ornament or extravagance, but rather pure form and function. Le Corbusier's aristocratic engineer and his abstract geometries allow no divergence of taste, but the necessity of rational calculation toward a single end; form exclusively dictated by function. This austerity of pure rationality was tied, initially, to socio-political ideals of the transformation of society to such rational and technological ends, although not directly. The 'social problem' was displaced and re-addressed through spatial form. Architecture was taken to be the rational solution to the dangerous irrational ferment of the city's morass. The closed, "organic" purity of the form, the exclusionary single massing of the building was to be representative of that ideal of ordered coherence.

The narrative of its demise is equally well-known, and equally open to parodic summary: the rationality so celebrated by the Moderns in terms of architectural practice, in its very abstraction, came to be articulated by an instrumental reason; its ideology of spatial politics open to "bureaucratic implementation"¹², its 'solutions' transformed by the state into administered, mass-produced housing-estates as 'hospitals' (Jencks' metaphor) to correct the populace into bourgeois ideological orders. For Jencks, then, modern architecture, with its univalent form, its claims to universal reason, was summarily ended by the demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe estate on July 15 1972.

This narrative of the 'modern' in architecture to some extent constitutes a reverse writing of history. The elements of postmodernist architecture are secured and sedimented by a narrative of the modern in which each element finds its now repudiated binary opposite. Jencks' modernist univalency, universality of grammar, and contempt for the problematics of specific sites is opposed at each turn by postmodernist multivalency, a multiplicity of embedded 'languages' to be responsive to diverse cultural systems of 'reading' (compare Venturi's complexity and contradiction), and a contextualism in which the architect works with the unique problematic of each site. Modernism was elitist, exclusivist, ahistorical; postmodernism is liberal, inclusivist,

resolutely historicist. Modernism's utopian politics, and the universalising abstracted forms it took, was open to articulation by bourgeois statism, bureaucratic socialism and corporate capitalism; postmodernism renounces "the implicit or explicit conviction (if not the pretence) that such forms also designate new social solutions"¹³.

This is not to say that the narrative of the modern movement is *simply* a caricatural reversal of postmodernist forms. Modernist architecture is open to critique, in terms of the elision of aesthetics with scientific rationality; the refusal of symbol and ornament. Venturi reveals the underlying logic of that rejection: "By limiting itself to strident articulations of the pure architectural elements of space, structure and programme, Modern architecture's expression has become a dry expressionism, empty and boring"¹⁴. Expression is the key; a total identity and elision of aesthetics and science is impossible, and the gap between them is the distance of expression; not of *being* rational, but of representing it. Hence, although there was an explicit rejection of *appliqué* ornament (Loos' "the evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornament from utilitarian objects"¹⁵), the entire structure and form of the building became one huge ornamental symbol of rationality. It becomes, in Venturi's terminology, a 'duck', where overall symbolic form distorts and dictates the architectural systems of space and structure.

Further, Modern architecture's symbolism has an erased history which undermines the self-declared aims of ahistorical universality; Venturi traces the dependence on nineteenth century industrial architecture for Modernism's symbolic expression of technological triumph.

This is further elaborated by Stephen Watson¹⁶, who traces the etymological erasure of the figural/symbolic from the term 'construction' and its elevation to a pure science. The etymology of the science of 'construction', its rational programme, cannot avoid contamination from that of 'construal', of the relativity of interpretive systems. It is this remainder that comes to subvert the modernist self-nomination of a rational project. Watson traces this through Kant¹⁷, making his analysis an apposite one here, being precisely concerned with the movement between disciplines, between architecture and philosophy. Kant takes the architectural, the architectonic, as the paradigm for rationality: "By architectonic I understand the art of constructing systems. As systematic unity is what first raises ordinary knowledge to the rank of science...architectonics is the doctrine of the scientific in our knowledge" [quoted, 87]. It is the translation, the construal of an aesthetic for a paradigm (that is representative, symbolic) of science that undermines the attempt, for this rationality is totally at odds with the spontaneity and freedom of the aesthetic sphere from which it is borrowed. But then, even within the aesthetic

sphere, architecture holds a problematic status, for it cannot attain the status of the 'beautiful' because it remains tied to use; beauty equates with pure form, erased of utility, such that it expresses only what is "universally communicable"[89]. In these terms, the modernist architecture's aim to produce 'organically' self-enclosed, self-completing wholes accords with the aesthetic sphere, but is contaminated by utility and morality in the first case, and in the second the attempt to unite 'pure form' with the systematicity of rationality does so with a violence to incommensurable spheres.

Further, Watson's reading of Kant reveals that the pure form of the architectonic does not reside in itself, of itself, but depends on specific perspectival conditions. If the triangle represents the purest form of reason, its architectural expression, the pyramid, must be viewed in the following way:

We must keep from going very near the pyramids just as we must keep from going too far from them, in order to get the full emotional effect of their size. For if we are too far away, the parts to be apprehended...are only obscurely represented...[.]But if we are very near the eye requires some time to complete the apprehension...so the comprehension of them is never complete. [quoted 90-1]

The totality of the beautiful thus depends on distance and mode of perception; failure to comprehend the whole opens the beautiful onto the abyss of the sublime. Once the sublime enters, the form can no longer stand of or for itself and declare its rationality; rather it 'stands-in'

for something else, becomes representative of the sublime Other -- a *symbolic* architecture. Form, even pure form, cannot escape the figural: as Watson says "What the 'modern' lacked was the recognition of the problem of interpretation, the figuring which haunts all engagement with the formal"[93].

In this narrative, then, modernist architecture's attempt to conflate the aesthetic and the rational fails. The unproblematic celebration of postmodernist architecture simply re-instates the figural, the symbolic with a multiplicity of referential functions which stitch the building back into the urban fabric. It remains to be seen, however, whether such a simple, corrective re-instatement succeeds.

The narrative of the "essence" of the 'modern' in architecture, the trajectory of its failure, is constantly re-iterated, with minor variations, by most critics analysing the postmodern. It is this perceived stability of narrative that opens it up as 'exemplary' for transformation into other arts, other disciplines sharing the name of postmodernism.

The effects of this can be seen by returning to Linda Hutcheon, whose definitional work on postmodernist literary forms depends on the narrative of architectural modernism for its coherence. The definition of

'historiographical metafiction' as the postmodernist form is placed in opposition to the International Style; an opposition achieved through the slippage of disciplines, since the intensely historical concerns of modernists like Faulkner could not support such a simple binarism within the literary. The keystone chapter on architecture in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* does not make such dangerously overt claims, but it is the general claim that postmodernism's assertion of "historical, social, ideological contexts" against their absence in modernism that is of concern; that "This is as true of music as of painting; it is as valid for literature as it is for architecture" [AP, 25].

Hutcheon re-states the failings of modern architecture. Its naive political decision to break with the historical city to construct utopian spaces meant "a destruction of the connection to the way human society had come to relate to space over time" [PP, 12], and a "tyranny" of pure form over clients and residents, treated as experimental subjects: "The lessons of the past were rejected in the name of this new brand of liberal elitism or idealistic paternalism" [AP, 28]. Le Corbusier's view of the architect as apolitical technocrat was precisely what opened his projects to articulation by political regimes, such that "the ideological assumptions behind his aesthetic theories of purist rationality might be seen to have played a role in his collaboration with the Vichy

government and the failure, in practical terms, of his rather simplistic theory of social good through pure form" [AP, 28]. Hutcheon then deploys Jencks' break and unproblematic celebration of postmodernist forms. Hence, there is a critical return to history, a parodic re-inscription of past forms with a 'knowing' distance; a return, a paradoxical critical dependency, on historical citation for the problematics of specific sites; a re-engagement with public, civic space "that would overtly eschew modernist aestheticism and hermeticism and its attendant political self-marginalisation" [AP, 23]; a pragmatic, populist use of citation that allows the users and 'readers' of architecture to decode the encoded parodic references against the elitism of modernist forms. Hutcheon thus merrily re-deploys Jencks' binary oppositions and further extends them to literature, music, painting &c, *despite Jencks' explicit warning that this should not be generalised*: his narrative of modernism is "The direct opposite of the more widespread modernism in the other arts and philosophy..."¹⁸, and since his conception of postmodernism is so crucially dependent on the 'modern', Hutcheon's generalisation performs a violent elision of disciplines, the suppression of their difference. Indeed, the texts from which she borrows such terms merit closer analysis.

Jencks' *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* is part descriptive, part anti-modern polemic, and part call to

arms; by the time *What is Postmodernism?* was written (1986) Jencks has found the term disseminated through innumerable disciplinary contexts, and disarmingly claims it as virtually his own invention [WIP, 14]. The former book celebrates "inclusivist" historical citation as the postmodern 'solution' to modernism's failure to communicate to society, using multilevelled semantic meanings to address a multi-faceted society: "mixed styles are an aid to communication...an architect must master at least three or four [semantic levels] to articulate any complex building" [LPMA, 78]. It might be questioned whether this reception model of encoded/decoded semantic levels operates with the success Jencks suggests; his vision of the "mixed" society more so. Postmodernist architecture is seen as a response to a perceived democratisation and free access to diverse cultures: "We can reproduce fragmented experiences of different cultures and, since the media have been doing this for fifteen years, our sensibility has been modified...Everyone has a well-stocked *musée imaginaire* and is a potential eclectic"[LPMA, 95]¹⁹. The book ends with the appeal: "Why, if one can *afford* to live in different ages and cultures, restrict oneself to the present and the locale? Eclecticism is the natural evolution of a culture with choice" [127, my emphasis]. Jencks' version of postmodern liberalism has become more strident and less attached to stylistic concerns (*What is Postmodernism?* suggests the following periodisation: Pre-modern 10000 BC--1450 AD,

Modern 1450--1960, Postmodern 1960--). This might seem to free Hutcheon and others to generalise from Jencks, but this broader notion of postmodernism is inextricably tied to his liberal universalism, his belief that *global* post-industrialism is here to stay "in spite of the many attempts in Iran and elsewhere...to return to a previous culture and industrial form" [WIP, 7]. In the narrower scope of the earlier text, the political and economic complicity so assiduously criticised in modernism is jettisoned in a postmodernist architecture that now unproblematically represents and speaks to a free culture of "choice" (which might, Frampton suggests, be the most complicitous position of all, architects "merely feeding the media society with gratuitous, quietistic images"²⁰). In the broader scope of *What is Postmodernism?*, the very universality comes to contradict the tenets of a postmodernist architecture. As Steven Connor notes, Jencks' critique of modernist architecture rests on its mass production, and yet it is the very intensification of mass production that allows for the hybrid forms of postmodernist architecture to become universal *themselves*: "the sign of the success of the anti-universalist language and style of architectural postmodernism is that one can find it everywhere, from London, to New York, to Tokyo and Dehli"²¹.

Hutcheon's critical postmodernist architecture (remembering her problematic differentiation of the

critical and the "kitsch") thus takes its terms from a text which advocates multiply embedded, parodically cited historical reference because society has progressed to a liberal paradise of free cultural access to different cultural positionalities, thus paradoxically erasing difference. That, in turn, depends on a "caricature" of the modernist movement. This in itself might not seem so problematic if postmodernist architecture did not come to model the entire realm of postmodernist cultural production. Modernism as pure form, scientific rationality, the dictatorship of elitist utopianism cannot *really* be applied to literature, music and painting. Postmodernist parodic re-inscriptions of history might well be discovered across disciplinary boundaries, but it depends for its emergence on a narrative of the modern that is highly specific to one discursive "place". Ironically, if Gropius, of the Bauhaus group, aimed at a universalism which would "embrace architecture and sculpture and painting in one unity"²², then Hutcheon's definitional attempt to unite music, painting, literature and architecture has, it seems, a decidedly modernist ring.

This transportation of the name of postmodernism from one 'genre' to another can be seen in the terms suggested by Lyotard, but Gillian Rose has also analysed this process, termed 'the postmodern complicity'²³. She argues that the declamatory and definitional statements of the proponents

of postmodernist architecture are unproblematically transposed to philosophy and social theory in three ways. Architecture proposes a simple periodising of movements from modernism's reaction to nineteenth century historicism, and postmodernism's reaction to the post-war failure of modernism: "The conclusion is then drawn that a plural account and a plural alternative will remedy this" [362]. Secondly, an architectural definition of rationality, something like "form follows function", is elided with that of the Enlightenment, to modernity in its entirety, and as such, its 'failings' "may be easily analysed". Propositions like the end of the Enlightenment, rationality and so on, are thus based on a rationality defined from a specific group of architects within a specific discipline. Finally, "it is argued that the theoretical and practical solutions in architecture are relatively simple" [362]. In this way, "the development of architecture is exploited to obscure the way in which an *unexamined opposition of positions within the 'modern'* is thereby recreated and perpetuated in both *architecture and philosophy*" [362]. Rose is certainly right to suggest that the proponents of postmodernist architecture, and the way in which it is transported uncritically across boundaries, create the illusion of a radical 'break' or 'opening' which "disowns previous openings...by characterising the other position without differentiation as 'total', 'closed', 'functionalist', 'rationalistic', 'dominatory', instead of drawing on the

experience of those openings and their subsequent subversions..." [368].

This does not, however, and cannot, as Rose seems to want to do, condemn all postmodernist discourse outright as involved in this complicity. In the first place, it depends from which discursive site the trajectory from the modern to the postmodern is drawn from; the 'modern' is not the homogeneity that the definitional postmodernists want it to be. Secondly, it is the *concept* of postmodernism that necessitates the closure and stability of rigid definitional structures. By attending, bearing witness to the differences in the *name* of postmodernism, the "unexamined opposition of positions within the 'modern'" is precisely revealed.

How does the name function in Lyotard's 'philosophy of phrases'? When a name is situated in a phrase it signifies nothing, it can only designate: "it does not...have a signification, it is not... the abridged equivalent of a definite description"[no.57]. Names are simply received, supplying no knowledge of *what* they name. Since they are 'empty' and can be replaced by any number of, say, descriptive phrases, but also because they are 'rigid', the name is a crucial "linchpin" in linkage. However, rigid though they may be, "This is not to say that something which has the same name in several phrases has the same meaning. Different descriptions can be made of

it, and the question of cognition is opened and not closed by its name"[no.60]. The early sections of the book are keen to contest what is seen as the hegemony of the cognitive genre, a genre which includes sociology, psychology and 'the sciences'. This genre operates by a protocol whereby the referent must be proved 'real' by directing the linkage of phrase regimens toward a given end: the consensual establishment of a reality through ostensive proof (the ostensive phrase 'fixes' the referent in space and time by using deictics: *Now, here it is*). This genre presupposes that "names must be proper, an object in the world must answer without any possible error to its call (appellation) in language"[no.55], and can thus prove the referent as real, as an object of knowledge. In the first case, however, Lyotard suggests that a wrong is done to those referents that have no real object, that "There are no procedures, defined by a protocol unanimously approved and renewable on demand, for establishing in general the reality of an object of an idea" [no.5]. In this way architecture is used as an *analogy* in order to ground the idea of postmodernism in ostensive proof. The cognitive genre, however, does not have a monopoly on sense; there are always other linkages. In the second place, Lyotard rejects the notion that a name designates an object in reality singly and across all phrases: "phrases belonging to heterogeneous families can effect the referent of a single proper name by situating it upon a different instance in the universes they

present"[no.80]. The name stays rigid, but its meaning fundamentally alters. As such, the name is determined more in terms of its location among networks and relations of names, and "feebly" by meaning "by dint of the large number and of the heterogeneity of phrase universes in which it can take place as an instance"[no.81]. For postmodernism, this would mean the 'meaning' of the infinite descriptive containments of it are less useful in its determination than its relation to other names: hence the emphasis on the 'modern' here.

The 'postmodern complicity' suggested by Gillian Rose can certainly be witnessed in a definitional postmodernism that would seek to generate a general account through extension of specific 'genre' narratives. However, to state again, "postmodern thought" is precisely concerned to interrogate such 'total' conceptions. In this sense, it is sensitive to the fact of the differential deployment of the name. If Lyotard's 'ethics' attune to the wrongs done by certain privileged genres, a case in point, from the 'cognitive genre', is a body of texts I place under the heading of social sciences.

II

If architecture, as one specific cultural practice, is transposed to become representative of/for general culture, in sociology this culture-in-general is

'appropriated' for the delineation of a social condition, of society-in-general. This might be characterised as a move from postmodernism to the 'condition of postmodernity', the shift in terminology coming with the shift in genre or site. However, it is not as simple as this; rather what is dramatised is the attempt to deploy an apparently secure *conceptualisation* of cultural postmodernism to sociology, only to discover the name, as an instance of the 'cultural' evades the cognitive demands of social science.

The texts gathered here articulate a series of anxieties sedimented around the *cultural* term 'postmodernism'. For Bauman, the very existence of sociology is as "an adjunct of modernity"²⁴; with postmodernism there is the "unease" of a threat to the very status of sociology, both in its methodology and the potential 'loss' of its object (the social). Less radically, sociology is felt to have been tardy, that it came to the term too late to prevent the confusions and contradictions of mere cultural theory. Inheriting that confusion, it has to sort through the morass and systematise it into something deployable for a science.

It is significant that here, more than anywhere else, a central definitional element of postmodernism is the erasure of boundaries, the "scepticism towards the separation and autonomy of disciplines and fields"²⁵, the

putting "into radical question the previous discipline and boundaries of social theory"²⁶, a "'discipline' that threatens to escape disciplinary confines into a realm of dissemination and conversation [sic!]"²⁷. The anxiety comes, it seems, from a sociological discourse that depends on clear boundaries and a 'zoned' typology of the social.

I am aware that the strategy of *dispersing* the concept of postmodernism undertaken here is anathema to those in the social sciences. Scientists must look for cognitive proof, ostensible objects of knowledge; if the 'post' means what it "obviously" indicates, if the 'post' means "after" or "beyond" the modern, then its conceptualisation, its structural and social formation should be got on with, the confusion should be cleared up. Sharon Zukin warns that "if social scientists don't move beyond the sensual evocation...that postmodernism now represents, they risk being overwhelmed by another of the "chaotic concepts" that have plagued recent urban studies. To use postmodernism reasonably, we must conceptualise it as a social process and periodise it in terms of production as well as consumption"²⁸. There is, however, continual frustration at competing and contradictory claims surrounding the name, the difficulty of "finding an adequate periodisation"²⁹, the "lack of specificity... particularly in relation to...historical referents"³⁰. This is the result of having to depend on the "sensual"

field of cultural studies, and yet the final recourse is often, as in Turner's case, to "the notion of postmodernism in art history and aesthetic theory" where it is "relatively well established"³¹ -- established but hardly pinned to a rigorous and 'scientific' conception. Noel Carroll's argument that the monster from the horror genre shares noticeable similarities to postmodernism -- interstitial, 'against nature', confounding scientific rationality, a horrific cross-breed of categories -- seems apposite here at least³². It becomes a monstrous, "sensual" beast, however, only in terms of the demands for scientific classification, and yet the only classificatory categories available derive from the monster itself.

It is clear from the above statements that postmodernism can only be saved for sociology by establishing its rigorous historical difference from the modern; to delineate the precise nature of the break or rupture, and the different structural form a 'postmodern' society takes; the elaboration of the social condition of postmodernity. Further, the related realms and levels suggested but elided by the "chaotic concept" of postmodernism must be distinguished. Martin Donoghoe offers the following crystallisation:

- (i) Postmodernity as *Lebenswelt*, a structure of experience or mode of sensibility with certain specific features
- (ii) Postmodernisation, or some form of "late capitalism", "postindustrial" *social technology*...
- (iii) Postmodernism as an *artistic practice*
- (iv)...postmodernism as *theoretical reflection* on the

previous areas...³³

These terms echo those transcribed from sociology by Marshall Berman in his *All That is Solid Melts into Air*³⁴. There, *modernism* is a specific movement arising from the experience of modernity as the contradictory 'creative destruction' wrought by capitalist modernisation. This maintains a relatively stable constellation ('modernity' is defined by Berman as an experience emerging with capitalism from the sixteenth century on); postmodernism, however, resists this splitting, this structural isomorphism with 'modernity'. Jameson, again, appears here, in his refusal to differentiate the cultural name postmodernism from broader structures. Hutcheon notes: "The slippage from postmodernity to postmodernism is constant and deliberate in Jameson's work: for him postmodernism is the 'cultural logic of capitalism'"³⁵. This is precisely the point in the terms of his analysis; the "prodigious expansion" of culture explodes the categorisation of autonomous or semi-autonomous realms, rendering such analysis difficult or impossible.

Nevertheless, the sociological introductions attempt to transfer this structural model from the 'modern' to the 'postmodern', to force a coherence onto the confusions of cultural deployments. Bryan Turner, in the introduction to *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*³⁶, transposes the Weberian model of modernisation. Hence, the process of

modernisation is one of "cultural differentiation and semi-autonomisation", with division into three autonomous spheres of science, morality and art, each perfecting procedurally incommensurate rationalities. The result of this involuted rationality in art gives rise to "a new aestheticism under the slogan 'art for art's sake'" [3] -- modernism. It 'follows', then, that "If modernisation is differentiation, then postmodernism is cultural de-differentiation"[3]. Here, the slippage has already occurred; Turner does not structure a process of 'postmodernisation', but collapses the de-differentiating effects of "consumer life-styles and mass consumption...a modern mass technology of communications..." &c. with aesthetic postmodernism, which, in its "populist" form "threatens to shatter hierarchies of taste established by expert opinion" [4]. The language of "threat", postmodernism with its "playful (in fact, distasteful) mixing of kitsch culture with *haute couture*"[4], attends directly to the 'expertise' of sociology, itself dependent on modernisation ("differentiation was an important condition for the emergence of sociology and the idea of the 'social' as a separate and autonomous sphere" [3]). A monstrous postmodernism thus threatens the ordered spheres of the social with discursive promiscuity.

The struggle enacted in this collection of sociological essays and elsewhere is grammatical, a contest over the syntactic power and placement of 'postmodernism', its

effects on the other instances of the phrase. The choice articulated by Turner, is between a "postmodern sociology", the adjectival pre-modifier re-positioning the sender 'sociology' as addressee, thus "deconstruct[ing]...foundational assumptions, and which would regard the 'social' as problematic" [6], and "a sociology of postmodernism", where postmodernism is the addressee of cognitive proof, an object of knowledge, thus saving the 'modern' categories of sociology and its rationality from the disruptive categories of "sensual" culture. The contradiction is in the demand for the elaboration of an epochal postmodernity using precisely the 'modern' methodologies alleged to have been superseded in the epochal hypothesis ³⁷.

The strategies for this shifting of postmodernism to object of cognitive proof are numerous, and I want to spend some time analysing their various operations. Firstly, in the more economically determining analyses, the effects of postmodernisation are seen to 'produce' the definitional contents of aesthetic postmodernism. R A Beauregard witnesses the derangement of modernist, rational urban planning, the "belief in the efficacy of human action... 'comprehensive' solutions that have a unitary logic", by post-Fordist political economy and postmodern cultural sensibilities. The latter are committed to "losing" disciplined urban form, the efficacy of rationalism and "political neutrality" [!] almost in

wilful perversion³⁸. The list of postmodernisation methods -- post-Fordist accumulation, hypermobile capital, concentrations of advanced services &c. -- rests alongside the fragmentation, explosion of canons and so on characterised by postmodernism, though the articulation of the two remains mysterious. Harvey, as seen in Chapter one, is more explicit in his reflectionism, containing all manifestations of cultural postmodernism as "mimetic of social, economic and political practices in society", but again suffers the name's erosion of the concept, being uncertain as to "exactly what postmodernism might be mimetic of"³⁹. It is precisely this quote that reveals the attempt to write the reverse of cause/effect, the manifestations of cultural effects *remaining* the initial site of discursive elaboration on postmodernism, the putative causes undermined by its shape-shifting, monstrous nature.

The second move, carried out by Barry Smart⁴⁰, confesses something of a crisis wrought by postmodernism on sociology, something that "can not be met by the strategy of 'business as usual', for the game and the customers have changed" [26]. The effects on 'empirical-analytical' and 'interpreting' sociology may have been damaged by the modifying presence of the 'postmodern', but Smart argues, after Bauman, that, providing "laws, foundations and groundings" are replaced by "values, assumptions and purposes", a "sociological analysis of postmodernity which

seeks to "preserve the hopes and ambitions of modernity" can continue to offer relevant analysis [26]. The threat of postmodern sociology is thus pragmatically outmanoeuvred, a sociology inextricably and inescapably in and of itself modern simply reframes its ground and can "survive the 'postmodern flip' inflicted upon the modern paradigm" [26].

The third move, undertaken by Douglas Kellner⁴¹, is a simple if violent one. Postmodernism is again signalled as "tend[ing] to subvert boundaries between disciplines and draw upon a sometimes bewildering variety of disciplines, discourses and positions" [241]. Kellner's response is to characterise these discourses simply as products of 'social theory' and then condemn them for failing the protocols of the establishment of cognitive proof demanded by sociology. Kellner's internally contradictory statement "All postmodern social theory thus puts into radical question the previous discipline and boundaries of social theory" [241] places the postmodern within the very genre of discourse whose premisses are interrogated. Bizarrely, then, both Lyotard and Baudrillard are recruited to social theory as 'postmodern social theorists' only to be dismissed in favour of a 'sociology of postmodernism', which, Kellner states programmatically, must "historicise or periodise...[and] must provide an account of the previous social order (modernity), the new social condition (postmodernity), and

the rupture or break between them" [256].

That Lyotard and Baudrillard fail to conform to these dictates is hardly surprising, and to place them there is to violently link them to the cognitive genre. Lyotard is perhaps more open to this *if, and only if* he is read (as he frequently is) in terms of the one "occasional" text, *The Postmodern Condition*, which consciously adopts the strategy of invading the 'sociological' to contest Habermasian formulations. The text, "strongly marked by sociology, by a certain historicism, and by epistemology"⁴² risks a reading as 'weak' sociology, and *The Differend* can be considered as a refinement of the earlier text by removing the supremacy of the narrative genre to place it not in opposition to, but in contest with the cognitive (the 'scientific' or performative) alongside many other genres. The translators of *The Postmodern Condition*, however, have cleverly undermined even that cognitive claim on the text by including an appendix where, even though the *name* postmodernism is repeated, its meaning is utterly different. In the appendix, the apparently definitional language of *The Postmodern Condition*, the perception of outlining a new social order, is contradicted by a formulation of aesthetic postmodernism as "undoubtedly part of the modern...not modernism at its end but in the nascent state", to be "understood according to the paradox of the future (post) anterior (modo)"⁴³. This "crazy",

"embarrassing" appendix (as Jencks terms it⁴⁴) unsettles the *simple* placement of Lyotard within 'social theory'. It is the incommensurability of the *name* postmodernism as it moves between the main text and the appendix that again undermines Lyotard's frequent usage as a key definitional moment for the concept of postmodernism, whether in social theory or elsewhere. Given the nagging presence of the appendix, Kellner is forced to admit that, after all, Lyotard "doesn't really have much of a social theory" [254].

As for Baudrillard, whatever or wherever he is, Kellner can only fall into all the lures, traps and provocations that Baudrillard presents precisely for Kellner's type of analysis. The notion that Baudrillard is elaborating a set of theses on the state of society which can subsequently be evaluated by cognitive proof would delight a theorist who sees the role of theory as "preserv[ing] the enigma of the object through the enigma of discourse...If the world is hardly compatible with the concept of the real which we impose on it, the function of theory is certainly not to reconcile it, but on the contrary, to force them into an over-existence which is incompatible with that of the real"⁴⁵. Baudrillard fails to 'fit', because he deliberately flouts the protocols whereby the referent is established as ostensive reality.

Kellner also criticises Habermas for his defence of

modernity; his wholly negative appraisal of postmodernity reneges on the first generation Frankfurt Critical Theorists' dialectical analysis: "If it is the case that new socio-historical conditions, forms and experiences have emerged, then Critical Theory should obviously analyse, criticise and conceptualise these phenomena" [265]. This is again a misreading, for Habermas equates postmodernity purely with a strain of irrationalist anti-modern thought from within the Enlightenment tradition. Kellner's misreading is premised on another shift in the name of postmodernism to philosophical discourse. Habermas is not dealing with objects of knowledge, but with a theoretical 'genre'; postmodernity is not "new socio-historical conditions", but rather an infracture of anti-modern thought. This marks the fourth move in the containment of postmodernism by social theory. It does not mark a new epochal condition, being rather a set of discourses emanating largely from France (but holding a large proportion of the Anglo-American humanities in its sensual thrall), whose irrationalist thrust can be neutralised by simply referring to the Habermasian critique. 'Modern' categories can be re-instated, and a 'sociology of postmodernism' is rendered operative again.

Kellner, Turner and others rely on Habermas' refutation by again misrecognising the name as equivalent in sociological and philosophical discourse. Habermas' formulation itself, however, rests on a journey into alien

territory, something which George Trey has irreverently likened to Alice's journey through the looking-glass⁴⁶. Habermas' *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*⁴⁷ would require extensive analysis, and I can only introduce the relevant moments here.

Habermas' delineation of a 'postmodern' thought involves a line from Nietzsche to Foucault and Derrida. Briefly, Nietzsche is said to initiate a critique of modernity which "dispenses for the first time with its retention of an emancipatory content. Subject centred reason is confronted with reason's absolute other" [94]. The basic argument with which Habermas contests each of the theorists addressed is that, as for Derrida "The totalising self-critique of reason gets caught in a performative contradiction since subject-centred reason can be convicted of being authoritarian only by having recourse to its own tools" [185]. Nietzsche's attempt to replace scientific reason with aesthetics is thus still tied to reason, for aesthetics as a Kantian category is "still at least procedurally connected with objectifying knowledge and moral insight in the process of providing argumentative grounds" [96]. Derrida can only get philosophical texts to say "what they do not, manifestly, say" [189] by erasing the boundary between the genres of philosophy and literature, replacing the logic of the former with the rhetoric of the latter. This leads to an intolerable relativity, an erasure of rational categories

and the aestheticisation of politics. Habermas reinstates the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere by arguing that literature can only address itself, and, as "impaired and incomplete speech-acts" are not part of the lifeworld: "the rhetorical means of representation depart from communicative routines and take on a life of their own" [203]; it is thus the duty and function of literary criticism to act as a bridge between the autonomous sphere of art and the everyday, "bring[ing] the experiential content of the work of art into normal language [208]. With this hierarchy re-established, literature no longer contaminates philosophy, a philosophy which properly contains an "intimate... relationship with the totality of the lifeworld" [208].

It is difficult to understand where this narrative of anti-modernity and irrationalism has been discovered in the texts of Nietzsche, Foucault and Derrida. I have already quoted Derrida's insistence on the impossibility of getting 'outside' reason or 'metaphysics' or 'Enlightenment' problematics which is a crucial element of any understanding of 'deconstruction'⁴⁹. With Lyotard's perhaps intemperate language of Enlightenment thought as threatening "terror", however, a more fundamental opposition appears to be invoked.

Indeed, with Lyotard's insistence on heterogeneity and Habermas' refusal of any departure from the telos of the

Enlightenment as anti-rational, the opposition of 'totality' versus 'difference' is staged here once again, if on a different level. If the postmodern is, in Bauman's phrase, "incurably pluralistic"⁴⁹, the response seems to fall into two utterly opposed positions: differences *within* a system that can still be thought against differences that precisely *exceed* systematic thought. The Habermas/Lyotard 'debate' is just about stageable, since both depend on Kantian categories. If Habermas, as is clear from the above attack on Derrida, insists on the autonomy of spheres, he remains with Kant in that the Enlightenment provides the only potential final unification of the spheres; Lyotard attempts to deploy Kant by maintaining dissensus and refusing any final consensus. The latter exercises "terror" over heterogeneous genres since, like the speculative dialectic, "there are no true discussions" [no.152] if an end, a final destination, is already in place.

Lyotard's effort to produce an ethics of the heterogeneous is difficult and troubled. As has often been noted, *Just Gaming* seems to operate with two incompatible notions of justice⁵⁰. On the one hand, there is the specific 'game of the just', which must be protected from the attempt to reduce it to knowledge (deducing prescriptions from descriptions: that is, from a set of principles and precedents already established). On the other hand, there is a justice which involves respecting the singularity of

all language games, privileging none. If this means not privileging the 'game of the just', it is also self-contradictory, since in effect this is a meta-prescription to avoid all meta-prescriptions. Steven Connor also sees this operating in *The Differend*²¹. Against the totality, which reinscribes all difference within it, Lyotard insists on "incommensurability". To be incommensurable, however, a measure of commensurability is necessary: it relies on a "preliminary homogenisation"[111] otherwise it would have no meaning. In that sense, Connor argues that far from opposing totality to difference, Lyotard *could* be read, perversely, as arguing that Habermas' totality is *insufficiently* total, because it cannot yet contain all incommensurabilities under Lyotard's meta-prescription. In this reading, the effort to think difference, heterogeneity, falls back into what it criticises.

This, I think, concentrates too much on what is taken to be an *achieved* state of incommensurability. This is not the case. Attending to Lyotard's use of Kant, the answer becomes apparent. In discussing the problem that moral law cannot be deduced, that it is sent by an unknown sender and received as a feeling in the addressee, there appears an abyss between the moral and the cognitive. If this is the case, moral law remains entirely abstract and would have no translation into the empirical. Lyotard answers: "Now, there is no abyss, as in general no limit, except

because each party...grants itself a right of inspection over the other's argumentation, and so extends its pretensions beyond its borders. It is at this price that each party discovers its borders" -- that is, that "a family of phrases not only encroaches upon another but also that it cannot avoid resorting to another in order to establish its own legitimacy" [Kant notice 2, p.123]. The function of reflective judgment is to discover "passages" between genres. However, the analogy of genres as an archipelago, with reflective judgment as the "provider of ships" (discussed in the last chapter), still remains an *idea*, in the Kantian sense, and can therefore still be seen in terms of a plurality inscribed *within* a totality.

It is suggested by Richard Beardsworth that this difficulty be thought of less as a paralysing contradiction than introducing an "alogical temporality"⁵². For incommensurability to be thought there must be some kind of originary contamination between faculties, such that "What is 'organising' the 'field' before its legislative enshrinement into an *Idea* of a field or of an archipel is a tension of unity and disunity running through the 'faculties' which will allow their heterogeneity to be *either* intensified analogically (a la Lyotard) or synthesized analogically (a la Kant)" [74]. In this sense, the thinking of difference, of plurality "must both depend on the regulative *Idea* of justice and resist it as itself totalising"[61]. There is, then, no

simple opposition between totality and difference, but a *tension*. As Connor states, the 'debate' between Habermas and Lyotard is undecidable, since to favour Lyotard means discovering that his conception of heterogeneity depends, at some point, on totality, but to favour Habermas is to find that his totality performs injustices on the heterogeneous. And this is equally to suggest that the concept of postmodernism cannot do without the name, which yet disrupts it in its plurality, whilst the name of postmodernism cannot do without the concept, or else its excessive plurality, its overrunning of conceptual thought has no meaning.

An ethics of the heterogeneous is an *attempt* to produce a notion of justice that remains in tension with the problematic of the Enlightenment, not in flat opposition to it. If this is portrayed as a division between the modern and the postmodern, then Lyotard's "crazy" suggestion in *The Postmodern Condition* that "A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern"[79] suggests their imbrication. The temporality of the postmodern artwork, that "The artist and the writer...are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*"[81] is precisely the alogic given to "philosophy" in *The Differend*: "its stakes are in discovering its rules rather than in supposing their knowledge as a principle"[xiv]. As is suggested for the artwork, these rules "always come too late for their

author, or...always begin too soon"[PMC, 81].

This notion of the avant-garde work opens up another division between Habermas and Lyotard, explicitly on the role of art. Habermas' 'Modernity -- an Unfinished Project'⁵³ delineates again the Weberian process of modernisation. Cultural modernity, as has been indicated, is marked by the splitting of culture into three autonomous spheres. In Weber's terms, however, the rational-purposive, or instrumental reason became dominant, a process of rationalisation that organised and directed the spheres to accord with the dictates of scientific performativity. In these terms modernism as such is conceived as perfecting the rationality of its inner autonomous laws, whilst, in a much vaunted distinction⁵⁴, the avantgarde seeks to negate this process of rationality by re-engaging art with life, with the overarching *Lebenswelt*. Habermas dismisses these false attempts of negation, arguing that surrealism, for example, fails because "A rationalised everyday life... could hardly be saved from cultural impoverishment through breaking open a single cultural sphere -- art -- and so providing access to just one of the specialised knowledge complexes". In order to succeed an overarching "cultural tradition covering all spheres" is required, and only Enlightenment modernity can achieve this. The logic of the programme offered, then, is "to develop objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art

according to their inner logic. At the same time, this project intended to release the cognitive potentials of each of these domains from their esoteric forms...for the enrichment of everyday life -- that is to say, for the rational organisation of everyday life" [9].

Lyotard's objection, that the aesthetic is here submitted to the logic of another (overarching) genre, should be plain. However, I want to return Habermas' proposal to the more general logic of the 'sociological' approach to art. It is to be noted that for Habermas "The idea of modernity is intimately tied to the development of European art, but what I call the 'project of modernity' comes only into focus when we dispense with the usual concentration upon art"[8]; the same initial dependence on art, the same "threat" that irrational sensuality may erupt. As far as aesthetics is concerned, Habermas only develops his argument up to the failure of the (modernist) avantgarde. Sociologists, re-situating the name postmodernity from the philosophical to the epochal, perceive two options. The first is to continue to argue within Habermasian terms, Jochen Schulte-Sasse suggesting that if modernism perfects the internal laws of differentiation, and if the avantgarde is the first to reflect on that differentiation and attempt to overcome it, then postmodernism is "that movement in the history of art that does not attempt to overcome the separateness of art and life anymore; it accepts the fact that the

functional differentiation of society is irreversible..."⁵⁵. The other has already been indicated; postmodernity signals for sociology a de-differentiation, the collapse and elision of autonomous spheres.

Thus far I have perhaps overly caricatured the traffic between the 'cultural' and the 'social' as a one-way street; the 'appropriation' of the name of postmodernism from aesthetics. This is not to deny the extensive borrowing from sociology of a certain, and influential narrative of modernism in the arts. This narrative emanates from the more orthodox Marxist theorists, and runs something like this⁵⁶. The furious activity of innovation and experimentation between the somewhat arbitrary dates of 1890-1930 marked a series of breaks from the coming-into-hegemony of bourgeois culture in the late nineteenth century: for Perry Anderson, the academicisation of highly formalised codes, institutionalised as bourgeois culture; the transformation of cultural production by new technology, resulting in the organisation of an administered mass culture; the proximity of sites of cultural production to revolutionary struggles throughout Europe⁵⁷. The result of the first two, the result of modernisation, is a culture of withdrawal from the instrumentalisation of the everyday. This is portrayed either (as in Habermas) as a necessary and correct attention to the internal rationality of autonomous aesthetics, or else as a 'political'

withdrawal, the formation of defensive groupings against the commodification of culture, adopting the position of negating cultural instrumentalisation from a position 'outside' it. In these latter terms modernism is a rejection of Enlightenment modernity (thus contradicting the position given to architecture). This defensive, anti-bourgeois stance continued until the second world war, articulated as the limit, the close and failure of the modernist project. Modernism, because of its 'elitist' stance, because of its reification of cultural negation, becomes the *official* bourgeois culture, paradoxically a dominant minority culture, its experimentations "routine diversions" ⁵⁸ appropriated and deployed by Hollywood and the advertising machine. The final limit comes with Abstract Expressionism in the 1950s, simply and immediately articulated by Cold War rhetoric "as a marvellous exemplar of US commitment to liberty of expression, rugged individualism, and creative freedom"⁵⁹. Equally, the 50s saw the academicisation and 'museumification' of modernism.

Out of this, the narrative of postmodernism develops, the opening edge of reaction to this institutionalisation being Rauschenberg, Pop Art, surfiction; arts surging from the new subject positions created outside a narrow class politics with the mythical moment of 1968 -- postmodernism as the "proliferation of the modernist legacy across...ideological fronts"⁶⁰ (optimistic version), or

else as losing the 'outside' position of negation as culture is colonised, inevitably complicit, the endless round of innovation parodying the drive of capitalist accumulation (pessimistic version). It is marked, in either case, by the loss of modernist autonomy.

The attack on the (inherent) 'conservatism' of aesthetic postmodernism -- I think here particularly of Eagleton -- has recourse to the 'heroic' narrative of modernism, the radical infracture *before* its instrumentalisation. Postmodernism is a "sick joke", a "monstrous" parody of "the formal resolution of art and social life attempted by the avantgarde", its slick, commodified artifacts and surrender to the market⁶¹. This question of complicity, central, as has been displayed, to a definitional postmodernism, thus depends on the formulation of a narrative of literary modernism as occupying an autonomous position, a position since lost.

This narrative of the modern is open, as always, to question, operating, in Raymond Williams' terms "the machinery of a selective tradition"⁶². It rests, I would argue, on an elision of the structure of Weberian modernisation *in which* Clement Greenberg's aesthetics is inserted and shored up by an appeal to Adorno's concept of negation. Greenberg's influential statement 'Avantgarde and Kitsch'⁶³ finds a place in narratives of postmodernism, written *a posteriori* as it were, as a

fundamental statement of modernist culture. For Roberts, Greenberg's notion of the avantgarde is "the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticise the discipline itself -- not in order to subvert it, but to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence"⁶⁴. The artistic avantgarde escapes bourgeois culture, not into radical politics, but purely into an involuted self-validation by pursuing only its own disciplinary rules, "the disciplines and processes of art and literature themselves"[6]. The inevitable trajectory is towards increasing abstraction, with any attempt to reengage with what lies outside the discipline as "reactionary". This is to protect against the emergence of kitsch, "ersatz culture, kitsch, destined for those who, insensible to the values of genuine culture, are hungry nevertheless for the diversion that only culture of some sort can provide"[10] (it is interesting to note that kitsch, so clearly identified here with mass culture and inextricable from the strategies of modernism is yet the object that both Hutcheon and Huyssen defend postmodernism against).

This purely apolitical withdrawal is then stitched onto Adorno's theory of the negation of administered culture, whose "manipulators suppress everything in culture which enables it to go beyond the total immanence of the existing society and allow only that to remain which serves society's unequivocal purpose"⁶⁵. Adorno argues

that such a 'withdrawal' is resolutely political, or at least *potentially* political. Adorno's attack on the 'Culture Industry' has marked him as a key figure in theorising the autonomy of modernist culture, but it has been too easy to forget, in this elision with Greenberg, the *dialectical* relation between autonomy and its 'outside'. Adorno, especially in the later writings, attacks those who see culture as *simply* an autonomous sphere, for to propose an independent logic of culture "is to collaborate in the hypostasis of culture [and] to deprive it of the ferment which is its very truth -- negation"⁶⁶. Negation is maintained as the truth of culture, but, as *Aesthetic Theory* goes on to elaborate, the *economy* of modernism, in every sense, is constitutive of its project. The autonomy of art, here, can never escape, can never even be formulated, without dependence on the empirical: "Works of art are after-images or replicas of empirical life, inasmuch as they proffer to the latter what in the outside world is being denied them"[6]; they contain "The unresolved antagonisms of reality" which "re-appear in the guise of immanent problems in artistic form"[8]. It is this which allows a questioning of the conceptualisation by social theory of the pure autonomy of 'l'art pour l'art'. Adorno constantly resorts to economic metaphors of art's operations, metaphors which Raymond Williams adopts, but as *subsequent* to the routinisation of modernism by capitalism. It is clear from Adorno, however, that the 'economics' of aesthetics is originary

and constitutive of modernism. In that sense a narrative of postmodernism which depends on a reverse writing of modernism as the last bastion of autonomous critical culture founders in the formulations of the critic, Adorno, perceived as perhaps the theorist of aesthetic modernism. Further, if the political radicalism of modernism is maintained and asserted alongside 'economic' complicity, then the simple dismissal of postmodernism as 'complicit' (as if it were an unequivocal charge) is invalidated and a more sensitive and complex evaluation required.

Further, this narrative of modernism as the site of autonomous critique in opposition to the market is *empirically* untrue, as the important work of Peter Nicholls suggests. It is not just the Italian Futurists, but Apollinaire, Cendrars and Delaunay who ecstatically embraced the market (see, for example, Cendrars' 'Poetry = Advertising', 1927⁶⁷). In terms that distinctly recall postmodernism, the body was to be released, erotically liberated, into the circuits of global capitalism⁶⁸.

Where does this leave a definitional postmodernism? It is said to glide, drift over, erase disciplinary boundaries, a monstrously promiscuous formulation. Such claims to a 'non-placed' discursive practice are disingenuous, however, for whilst the name of postmodernism occurs in and between discourses, the conceptualisation of the name must

inevitably take its dictates from the laws and statements of specific "places", and begins to take on radically different meanings according to the particular discursive route from the modern to the postmodern. I have really only detailed two here; they are in principle innumerable, however. The introduction may attempt to utilise one exemplary instance (architecture) or a cluster (culture in general), but the name is not equivalent in every utterance. There is a sense, then, that as the names (but the same name) proliferate, the task of the introduction becomes impossible.

But what else happens? As the reverse writings of the 'modern' become unravelled, as its histories are revealed in their *a posteriori* construction, the rigid break or rupture between modernism and postmodernism becomes problematised. A series of questions must now be addressed to *postmodernism*.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity*, Routledge, 1992, p.95
- 2) Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, translated Tom Conley, Columbia University Press, 1988, p.4
- 3) Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Differend*, translated George Van Den Abbeele, Manchester UP, 1988. Numbers rather than page references will be given, except for quotations from the 'Notices'. Geoffrey Bennington's commentary *Lyotard: Writing the Event* has proved valuable.
- 4) As discussed below, *The Differend* is concerned to contest the privilege given to the "cognitive" genre, with its standard test of ostensive proof. This recalls, then, the concern in *Just Gaming* to protect the 'game of the just' from the hegemony of descriptives, and the proposal of guerilla tactics of "paralogism" against the increasing power of the 'performative' in *The Postmodern Condition*.
- 5) quotes from Jameson, PMCLC, p 54, Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p.36 and Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, p.66
- 6) Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p. 22
- 7) Christopher Sharrett, 'Defining the Postmodern: The Case of Soho Kitchen and *EI International*' and David Shumway, 'Jameson/Hermeneutics/Postmodernism' in *Postmodernism/ Jameson/Critique* both refute the claims

for the Bonaventure Hotel to be considered as a postmodernist building. Jencks, prior to Jameson's functionalisation of the building, discusses it as an example of late modernism, *The Language of Postmodern Architecture*, p.34-5

- 8) Jameson, 'Spatial Equivalents', p.126
- 9) Demetrios Porphyrios, *ICA Document 4:Postmodernism*, p.30
- 10) *The Language of Postmodern Architecture*, Academy Editions, 1977, p. 10
- 11) these dates derived from: Connor's *Postmodernist Culture*, Howard Cargill's 'Architectural Postmodernism: the Retreat of an Avante-Garde?' in *Postmodernism and Society* ed. Boyne and Rattansi, Macmillan 1990.
- 12) the phrase is Cargill's
- 13) Jameson's phrase, from 'Spatial Equivalents', p.126
- 14) Venturi and Scott-Brown, *Learning from Las Vegas*, p.103
- 15) quoted by Cargill, p. 266
- 16) Stephen Watson, 'In Situ: Beyond an Architectonics of the Modern', *Postmodernism -- Philosophy and the Arts*, ed. Hugh Silverman, Routledge, 1990. Page references follow in the text
- 17) Kant, it should be said, is a crucial moment for the terms 'modern' and 'postmodern'.
Foucault's essay 'Was Ist Aufklärung?' on Kant's text of the same title, suggests that Kant's approach, "in

the reflection on "today" as difference in history and as motive for a particular philosophical task", marks an exemplary moment of the beginning of a mode of reflection that might be termed 'modernity' (*The Foucault Reader*, p.38). For Lyotard, however, the 'Pretext' (see Preface to *The Differend*, xiii) for his work lies with "the Kant of the third Critique and the historico-political texts" and the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Lyotard continues: "they are the epilogues to modernity and prologues to an honorable postmodernity". Lyotard's reworking of Kant is dealt with later in this chapter. These two suggestions together -- Foucault's Kant as an 'originary' modern and Lyotard's Kant as ringing the death-knell of the modern's "universalist doctrines" -- illustrates in the most extreme way the imbrication of the modern and postmodern.

- 18) Jencks, *What is Postmodernism?*[WIP], Academy Editions, 1986, third revised and enlarged edition, 1989, p.28. All page references follow in the text. See also *The Language of Postmodern Architecture*[LPMA] Academy Editions, 1977, revised 1978. Page references follow in the text.
- 19) Whether consciously or unconsciously, Homi Bhabha uses precisely this phrase -- "musée imaginaire" (first used by Andre Malraux in *Voices of Silence?*)-- to criticise liberalism's conception of cultural diversity.

- Bhabha's theorisation of cultural difference, groups of incommensurate socialities in a society which can no longer be conceived of in the universalist terms of liberalism, has much in common with Lyotard's notion of the differend. See, 'The Third Space', an interview, in *Identity*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford, Lawrence and Wishart, 1990, esp. p.208
- 20) Kenneth Frampton 'Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance', in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster, p. 19
- 21) Connor, *Postmodern Culture*, p. 80
- 22) quoted by Connor, *Postmodern Culture* p.68
- 23) Gillian Rose, 'Architecture to Philosophy -- The Postmodern Complicity', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 5: 2-3, 1988. All page references follow in the text
- 24) Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity*, Routledge, 1992, p.54
- 25) Brian Turner, 'Periodisation and Politics in the Postmodern', introduction to *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity* ed. B S Turner, Sage, 1990, p.5
- 26) Kellner, 'Postmodernism as Social Theory: Some Challenges and Problems', *TCS* 5: 2-3, 1988, p.241
- 27) Donoghue, 'Postmodern Jameson', *Postmodernism/Jameson/Critique* p.76
- 28) Sharon Zukin, 'The Postmodern Debate over Urban Form', *TCS* 5:2-3, 1988, p.434
- 29) Turner, 'Periodisation and Politics...', p.1
- 30) Barry Smart 'Modernity, Postmodernity and the Present'

- in *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*, p.15
- 31) Turner, 'Periodisation and Politics...', p.2
- 32) Noel Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, Routledge, 1990.
- 33) Donogho, 'Postmodern Jameson', p.76
- 34) *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, Verso, 1982
- 35) Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, p.25
- 36) Turner, 'Periodisation and Politics...', page references in the text.
- 37) Bauman also attempts this shift from "postmodern sociology" to a revised "sociology of postmodernism", in 'Sociological Responses to Postmodernity', *Intimations of Postmodernity*
- 38) R A Beauregard, 'Between modernity and postmodernity: the ambiguous position of US planning', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 7:4, 1989, ps. 384-5, 381
- 39) David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p.113-4
- 40) Barry Smart, 'Modernity, Postmodernity and the Present', all page references in the text
- 41) Douglas Kellner, 'Postmodernism as Social Theory', all page references in the text
- 42) Lyotard in interview (*TCS*, 5:2-3, 1988), p.277
- 43) *The Postmodern Condition*, p. 79, 81
- 44) Jencks *What is Postmodernism?*, p.36
- 45) Baudrillard, 'Why Theory?', *The Ecstasy of Communication*, *Semiotext(e)*, 1988, p. 97-8. See also Kellner's *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to*

Postmodernism and Beyond, Polity, 1989, which has some valid analysis but becomes increasingly *funny* precisely through taking Baudrillard so seriously, missing his mockery of academic sociology.

- 46) George A. Trey, 'The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Habermas's Postmodern Adventure', *Diacritics*, 19:2, 1989
- 47) *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. F. Lawrence, Basil Blackwell, 1987 all page references in the text
- 48) 'The Ends of Man' ends explicitly on the question of inside/outside:

...one has nothing, from the inside, where "we are", but the choice between two strategies:

- a. To attempt an exit and a deconstruction without changing terrain, by repeating what is implicit in the founding concepts and the original problematic, by using against the edifice the instruments or stones available in the house...Here one risks ceaselessly confirming, consolidating ...at an always more certain depth, that which one allegedly deconstructs...
- b. To decide to change terrain, in a discontinuous, irruptive fashion, by brutally placing oneself outside, and by affirming absolute break and difference. Without mentioning all the other forms of *trompe-l'oeil* perspective in which such a displacement can be caught, thereby inhabiting more naively and more strictly than ever the inside one declares one has deserted, the simple practice of language ceaselessly reinstates the new terrain on the oldest ground. (*Margins of Philosophy*, p.135)

Derrida indicates that neither 'choice' is adequate, suggesting rather "A new writing [which] must weave and interlace these two motifs". There is no question, then, of an inside or an outside of rationality or modernity, no question of an end or

break with modernity. Elsewhere Derrida says "Breaks are always, and fatally, reinscribed in an old cloth that must continually, interminably, be undone" (*Positions*, University of Chicago Press, 1981, p.24). His specific, astonished response to Habermas' critique is found in a long footnote to the 'Afterword' of *Limited Inc.*. See also Christopher Norris' adequate 'Deconstruction, Postmodernism and Philosophy: Habermas on Derrida', in *Derrida: A Critical Reader*, ed David Wood, Blackwell, 1992.

- 49) Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity*, p.30
- 50) Alex Segal, 'Language Games and Justice', *Textual Practice*, 6:2, Summer 1992
- 51) Connor, 'The Ethics of Discourse: Habermas, Lyotard, Rorty', *Theory and Cultural Value*, Blackwell, 1992. Page references in text.
- 52) Richard Beardsworth, 'On the Critical 'Post': Lyotard's Agitated Judgement', *Judging Lyotard* ed. Andrew Benjamin, Routledge, 1992, p.74. All page references in text.
- 53) in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster. All page references in the text.
- 54) this distinction attributed to Peter Burger's *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Manchester University Press, 1984, which is discussed in chapter nine below.
- 55) Schulte-Sasse, 'Modernity and Modernism, Postmodernity and Postmodernism: Framing the Issue', introduction to the special issue of *Cultural Critique* on

- postmodernism, Winter 1986/7, p.7
- 56) this narrative is drawn from Raymond Williams, Alex Callinicos' *Against Postmodernism*, Eagleton's 'Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism' and Jameson
- 57) Anderson summarised by Callinicos, p 39-40
- 58) Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism*, Verso, 1988, p.130
- 59) Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 37
- 60) John Roberts, *Postmodernism, Politics and the Arts*, Manchester UP, 1990, p.25
- 61) Eagleton, 'Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism', *New Left Review*, 152, 1984, p. 60
- 62) Williams, *The Politics of Modernism*, p.32
- 63) in *Art and Culture*, Beacon Press, 1961, all page references in the text
- 64) Roberts, p.20
- 65) Adorno, 'Cultural Criticism and Society' in *Prisms*, Neville Spearman, 1967, p. 26
- 66) Adorno, 'Cultural Criticism...', p.28 All page references for *Aesthetic Theory* (RKP, 1984) follow in the text
- 67) see Blaise Cendrars, *Selected Writings*, translated Walter Albert, New Directions 1966
- 68) Peter Nicholls, 'Futurism, Gender and Theories of Postmodernity', *Textual Practice*, 3:2, 1989; 'Consumer Poetics: A French Episode', *New Formations* 13, Spring 1991; 'Divergences: modernism, postmodernism, Jameson and Lyotard', *Critical Quarterly*, 33:3, Autumn 1991

CHAPTER FIVE

POSTINGS: "POSTMODERN THOUGHT"

I have nearly completed my interrogation of definitional postmodernism. It remains, however, to draw together something of the *temper* of the definitional. Temper is apt, for whilst suggesting a *frame* of mind, it might also evoke the frustration (*temper*, *temper*) at postmodernism for failing to cohere; attitudes can be tempered up, hardened, but they can also be tempered down, softened. But *temper* is more than apt because it is caught in an illuminating network of etymologies. As the last chapter displayed, the name of postmodernism is open to mistranslation between genres of discourse (Old Eng. *temprian*, to mingle, mix). The concept of postmodernism is constructed by a process of repressing the very excess it produces; its temperance (Lat. *temperare*, to regulate) of promiscuity. With *temper*, deriving ultimately from *tempus*, time, the definition must inevitably have a historical framework within which postmodernism is understood. As Jameson indicates: "The various positions which can logically be taken on [postmodernism], whatever terms they are couched in, can always be shown to articulate visions of history, in which the elevation of the social moment in which we live today is the object of an essentially political affirmation or repudiation"¹. This chapter is devoted to that *tempus*, to the *post* of postmodernism.

The questions of history addressed to postmodernism can be presented, a little schematically, as three proposals. The first is that it indicates, as an epoch, the loss of 'Real' history. This position can be modulated to suggest that postmodernism is a *theory* which involves the rejection of history, rather than any 'real' event. This is either to be ecstatically embraced or roundly condemned for a failure of political efficacy and responsibility. The second proposal reverses the first and sees in postmodernism the *return* of history following the abstracted withdrawal from the 'real' in modernism. This time round, however, literary texts are aware of the (necessary) fictions of history, or rather of the epistemological methodologies of representing that history -- its narrative. This thesis, then, might be termed the investigation of the problematics of historiography. The third thesis could be summoned by that tricky, or as Jencks would have it "crazy", proposal by Lyotard, that the 'post' comes before the 'modern', and not just grammatically. Lyotard is certainly not the only theorist to propose such a rethinking or at least reinscription of the concept of history and these re-questionings I would place, following Docherty, as investigating the 'historicity' of history itself².

My position has, in some senses, already become clear in tracing the failure of a definitional postmodernism to

construct a clear 'break' from, and coherent Other in, modernism. In the construction of a binary logic of oppositions across a rupture between modernism and postmodernism, terms and elements drift or slide between the two, the different conceptions of the 'modern' in various genres of discourse frustrate the notion of a generalisable break. The postmodern, it is to be suggested, haunts the modern from its very constitution. However, definitional postmodernism must define it by taking the 'post' at its literal best, as historically "after", in order to produce the fictive coherence of a hermetically sealed epoch, whether stylistic or 'real'. As my strategy has hitherto been to reach *through* the readings of other texts to see another logic developing, I will continue by analysing the first two proposals in this way.

Fredric Jameson's 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', is, ironically, the text which so mimics "postmodernism theory" that it is seen as one of the key instituting moments of the thesis of the loss of Real history. I have analysed how this 'loss' is forced by the logic of the "shunt": its dependence on an intentional pragmatics of parody which has collapsed into pastiche, the 'flattened' history of styles each immediately accessible. In the opening comments of this article there is, however, the insistence on offering "a periodising hypothesis... at a moment in which the very conception of

historical periodisation has come to seem most problematical indeed" [PMCLC, 54]. This is the core of the paradox that needs to be questioned here; how a 'total' definitional conception of postmodernism as ahistorical is yet conceived in determinately historical terms.

Hebdige states: "To say "post" is to say "past", hence questions of periodisation are inevitably raised whenever the term "postmodernism" is invoked"³. In his work there is a tension between the introduction of the term as a set of descriptions of 'real' historical conditions (epoch) and postmodernism as a mode of theorising, "postmodern thought" perhaps, which wilfully jettisons history from its considerations. This is dramatised by Hebdige's referring solely to the capitalised Post, since, he adds in parenthesis: "...the links between poststructuralism and postmodernism are in places so tight that absolute distinctions become difficult if not impossible"⁴. The rejection of 'real' history is thus unstably caught between historical 'reality' and the (more or less) incidental ahistoricity of a theoretical 'school'. The rejection of the 'rejection of history' is usually (and this is the case for all those discussed here) premised on the refutation of 'poststructuralist' claims and subsequently either the rejection of postmodernism as such, or its rescue to a more vital historical frame. So, for example, Hebdige counters the negations of the Post

with the political strategies of the neo-Gramscians for the construction of a historical bloc to answer the conditions of a postmodernist 'reality'. Similarly, John Roberts undertakes a consistent separation of 'poststructuralist' conceptions of politics and history (deemed apolitical and ahistorical) to emphasise their difference from a socialist position in which the cognitive functions of art intervene in 'real' historical conditions⁵.

Both of these theorists misrecognise the reinscription of the concept of history offered by, for want of a better word, poststructuralism. It is as if the temper of the introduction is one of impatience, of reading, say, Jean-Luc Nancy's argument that "Our time is no longer the time of history, and therefore history itself appears to have become part of history"⁶ without following the attempts to theorise a *finite* history beyond this; or, of reading Lyotard's "crazy" statement of the postmodern as the "nascent state" of modernism without pausing on its -- predominantly -- Kantian context. Such statements are received with the epochal definition already in place, and are read by the terms of that definition. Postmodernism can thus be portrayed as another fin-de-siecle rhetoric, slotted in with the 'litany of woes' on the 'end of history' that Corcoran lists. Corcoran's temper is clear:

Something moves serious thinkers to throw methodological caution to the winds. Thinkers on both the political left and right discern a *finis* or *telos* of decline, decadence or apocalypse...an "after time" in which the deceptions and false hopes of modern philosophy and science are disavowed. Thus "post-"modernism can only begin to be erected on the humble acknowledgement of the end of "humanity"⁷

This last reference picks up on Foucault's infamous 'end of man', which Corcoran fails to contextualise in terms of 'man' as a category of human sciences, an 'end' which is then linked to Derrida's 'Ends of Man', a text which calls for an examination of the *history* of the concept of man (hence the plural 'ends')⁸.

This temper of misreading is evident in John Roberts' book. For him, postmodernism is just another "infantile" excess of French philosophy; it names a "rhetoric of the 'break' and 'rupture' that is unprecedented"[10]. This, he says, is a result of the 'political foreclosure' of 1968. His project is to rescue a postmodernism that is a diversification of modernism, a putative continuity albeit in different historical conditions, and to reject a poststructuralist postmodernism as offering a naive ruptural narrative. It has to be said, although it is a "cheap" point, that equating the narrative of rupture simply from 1968 is itself fairly naive⁹. If the 'post' does mean 'past' then "the resolute anti-historicism of poststructuralism and much postmodernist theory has often failed to give the most basic account of the historical process" [12] by which it came about. Translated into

epochal terms, postmodernism can thus only erupt *tout court* in a discontinuous relation with the past: "Thus *pace* Lyotard, postmodernism tends to be seen in purely ruptural terms as a ruptural break with modernism" [14]. This reading presumably comes from *The Postmodern Condition*, but with a convenient forgetting of the appendix; if a plainer statement is required, Lyotard in interview has said: "I have said and will say again that 'postmodern' signifies not the end of modernism, but another relation to modernism"¹⁰. If both Foucault and Derrida are attacked for a ruptural narrative, then Foucault has questioned the 'harmful habit' of "the analysis of the present as being, precisely, in history, a present of rupture, or of high point, or of completion, or of returning dawn &c."¹¹, whilst Derrida has stated "I do not believe in decisive ruptures, in an unequivocal "epistemological break", as it is called today. Breaks are always, and fatally, reinscribed in an old cloth that must continually, interminably be undone" ¹².

Postmodernism 'itself' is historicisable as an ahistorical epoch; "postmodern thought" is simply ahistorical. The flat opposition once again tediously asserts itself. Staged this time through the question of history, the Enlightenment provides a singular historical narrative whilst 'poststructuralism' relativises it, leaving, for Roberts, no ground on which "one model is to be preferred over another"; history becomes "literary discourse" [132].

A capitalised History is at an end, just like the subject, truth, and so on that "infantile" poststructuralism puts an end to. In 'Of An Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy', however, Derrida notes that 'Enlightenment' thought could not but be thought of as equally eschatological: are not Kantian finality, Hegelian sublation, Marxist utopia, Nietzschean 'last man' "discourses of the end", each supposing some radical transformation of thought and reality as it is now?¹⁹ Complexly ventriloquising Kant's attack on 'mystagogues' who proclaim the end of philosophy (a pamphlet from which Derrida takes his title), Derrida is nevertheless keen to display the competition in "eschatological eloquence" *continued* by the Enlightenment: "the end of history, the end of the class struggle, the end of philosophy, the death of God, the end of religions...the end of the subject, the end of man, the end of the West, the end of Oedipus, the end of the earth, *Apocalypse Now*" [20-1].

Derrida's inclusion of 'subject', 'man' and 'Oedipus' also, by implication, includes a generalised 'poststructuralism' in this competition of "going-one-better" in pronouncing the end. If Derrida distances his own work from this, in saying "I was aware of speaking of discourses on the end rather than announcing it, that I intended to analyse a genre rather than practice it, and even when I would practice it, to do so with iron[y]" [30], he is also aware that the

"apocalyptic" is integral to the tradition of enlightened critique; "apocalypse" means, after all, revelation, elucidation, *enlightenment*¹⁴. In the first place, then, "postmodern thought" cannot be considered as announcing a sudden new eschatology. It is *not* announcing a historical rupture from modernity, but retains its problematics. This does not mean, however, that it cannot interrogate the narrative of a capitalised History as formulated within that tradition. That interrogation, equally, does not involve, as Eagleton sees it, "the very capacity to stop our ears to the siren calls of history"¹⁵. Such rejections of 'the rejection of history' argue that the *post* means "after" the present, somehow beyond or outside history. They are given some fuel, to be fair: Foucault has since criticised his own rhetoric at the close of *The Order of Things*¹⁶. Ironically, though, in the case of postmodernism, this rhetoric seems to stem from Jameson's definitional work.

The aporias of Jameson's capitalised History have been well documented¹⁷. It might be encapsulated by the first two sentences of *The Political Unconscious*. The demand "Always historicise!" is given as the one absolute and "transhistorical" imperative¹⁸; that is, that the prescription "Always historicise!" can never itself be historicised, but floats as a demand of history, outside it. In fact, 'Periodising the Sixties' confesses to a minor wobble in History's history, for "traditional

Marxism, if "untrue" during this period of a proliferation of new subjects of history, must necessarily become true again..." [PTS, 209]. The function of this periodised history is, as Haynes Horne has irreverently suggested, to act as a prophylactic to prevent the dissemination of poststructuralist ideas beyond their period of formation¹⁹. The status of this closure is problematic, however, as I suggested in chapter two.

'Periodising the Sixties' is, nevertheless, the text which most overtly presses the claims for the validity of thinking in terms of the historical period and periodisation, "models...which are at the present moment theoretically unfashionable to say the least" [PTS, 178]. That they are unfashionable is presumably something to do with the 'period' itself; recall at the empirical level the evidence from film and architecture that "we seem increasingly incapable of fashioning representations of our own current experience" [PMCLC, 68]. This historical period -- postmodernism -- rejects history. A question immediately poses itself: how can a period which jettisons historical understanding be understood, from within that period, in terms of history? How can there be a history of that which has no history? Would not this rejection of history render *all* periods and epochs meaningless, becoming, for Jameson's postmodernist-schizophrenic subjectivity a mass of instantly juxtaposed fragments? For Jameson, of course, this is strategy, but for others

-- Eagleton, Hebdige, Huyssen -- who are ambivalent about whether postmodernism denotes epoch, are they proposing this loss of history 'for real'?

What would such a history look like? Baudrillard offers an answer. In one of those happy accidents, the text in question has appeared both as 'The Year 2000 has already happened' and 'The Year 2000 will not happen', precisely making the point²⁰. Baudrillard is replying to Elias Canetti's proposal that "beyond a precise point of time, history was no longer real. Without being aware of it, the totality of the human race would have suddenly quit reality...but we would not be able to know it. Our task and duty would now be to discover this point" [35]. Baudrillard's response is in the form of three utterly contradictory hypotheses on this putative disappearance of history, which work through analogy. The first, taken from astrophysics, suggests that the 'acceleration' of modernity has reached escape velocity, pulling out of the gravitational pull of history. Once in zero gravity there are no given trajectories, certainly not linearity or progress, only random atomisation. The second takes the same analogy, but this time in terms of deceleration; the matter, the sheer mass of information that could 'make' history becoming condensed and disappearing into a black hole. The third hypothesis follows from the obsession with producing 'high fidelity' technology to capture the "perfect" recording. At some point the music itself

disappears into the multiplicity of technical apparatus designed to make it appear. So it is with history; there is so much sophisticated information-gathering equipment that it either disappears or is distorted into feedback, the receptors too close to the source.

Canetti suggests it is a "duty" to discover the point at which history disappears. Baudrillard is absolutely correct, within the logic of Canetti's statement, to offer a series of contradictory hypotheses, since the concept of the point of origin is rendered meaningless. To theorise on that is "none other than an exercise in simulation. I am no longer able to "reflect" on something. I can only push hypotheses to their limits, snatch them from their critical zones of reference, take them beyond a point of no return" [36-7]. This throws light on the entertaining competition to discover the earliest reference to 'postmodernism', as if the discovery of the original or originating statement could set the "precise point" for a periodisation²¹.

Baudrillard's text offers an insight into what a post-(as in "after")historical analysis would look like. It also clarifies the case that postmodernism, as epoch, is somehow ahistorically historical can only be a re-affirmation of a linear history, for the 'end of history' can only be understood in history, re-investing the very history that is said to have been superseded. If

the 'end of history' affirms a narrative of progress and the rejection of the 'rejection of history' misreads the claims of poststructuralism and postmodernism, it is established that the *post* registers *within* the historical. The question then turns to what notion of the historical is being suggested. I turn to the second proposal.

"To say "post" is to say "past"; this is not to say "after history", but within history as subsequent. In the last chapter I indicated the cognitive proofs demanded by the sociological to establish the validity of that 'posteriority', and the frustrating mobility of the 'modern'. This problem is also encountered in what may be problematically called literary history. Brian McHale proposes that "postmodernism is not post modern, whatever that might mean, but postmodernism; it does not come after the present...but after the modernist movement...a poetics which is the successor of, or possibly reaction against, the poetics of early twentieth century modernism"²². In the project of a 'descriptive poetics', the question of history, beyond a 'literary' one, is largely incidental. Fokkema's intentional pragmatics defines period as "the code designed by a group of writers often belonging to a particular generation, literary movement or current, and acknowledged by their contemporary and later readers". For postmodernism, Fokkema envisages "a code dominating all of Western literature since the 1950s"²³. This dispenses with the vexed and never simply determinable questions of

literature's relations with other 'moves' in the social, political &c.. Rather, it simply offers propositions of a structurally determinable shift in the 'dominant' of literature from modernist to postmodernist. This is an internal history in which, in effect, history is over. The shift has occurred, little analysis is offered of the process of this shift. The comparison of the 'poetics' of modernism and postmodernism is that of two *completed* structures. It is significant that in his preface, McHale admits that "a longish historical essay on the prehistory (or "archeology") of postmodernism" has been jettisoned²⁴. This may prove economical for a definition, but this structure is the most restrictive, and thus the one most open to the promiscuity of postmodernism. The pedagogical imperative for the quick definition is served, however, and this may be provisionally effective until the status of history is itself introduced to the paradigm shift. Once again, Hutcheon's definitional texts display the contradictions that result.

Hutcheon's structural poetics of postmodernism centres on texts nominated as 'historiographical metafiction'. The 'debates' around the status of the historical do not interest her beyond the fact that they return history to literature 'after' "the hermetic ahistoric formalism and aestheticism that characterised much of the art and theory of the so-called modernist period" [AP, 88] and that, secondly, they elevate 'history' to perhaps *the*

problematic. The 'official', unauthored Authorised version of history has its context-bound, unreliable narrators exposed and questioned. Hutcheon follows the by now familiar thesis that "The "real" referent of...language once existed; but it is only accessible to us today in textualised form" [AP, 92]. History as such is constructed by the narratives of historiographical practice. This acceptance of all historical accounts as provisional is deemed to open the ledger of history to politically motivated, strategic 'rewrites', encountered, for example, in feminist her-stories²⁵. This connects, via parody, to the explosion of continuity or the linearity of traditional historiography by tracing the operations of intertextuality, which interweave potentially random traces of the past in the textual 'present'. The problems arise when Hutcheon attempts to force this operation into an intentional poetics. Citing Derrida's 'Signature Event Context' on the citationality of every utterance -- that they can "break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable"²⁶ -- Hutcheon insists that postmodernism is "less promiscuously extensive", accepting from intertextuality:

...its usefulness as a theoretical framework that is both hermeneutic and formalist [which] is obvious when dealing with historiographical metafiction that demands of the reader not only the recognition of textualised traces of the literary and historical past but also the awareness of what has been done -- through irony -- to those traces.

A number of things need to be said here²⁷. Citationality cannot be so easily elided with intertextuality, especially given Hutcheon's intentionalist pragmatics (sender and addressee exchanging 'static' message); *because* of citation no context is ultimately determinable, and that includes the contexts of 'encoding' and 'decoding'. Further, the citationality is the structural *possibility* of every mark, and not a strategically placed reference in one text from another. This possibility within every mark suggests that the contexts invoked by a text can in no way be fully and finally determinable on the part of the reader. Certainly, Hutcheon's claim that the reader must recognise every intertextual resonance is disengenuous given the amount of time 'uncovering' intertexts, presumably for the benefit of readers who have not recognised them. Most importantly, however, I would suggest that this containment of Derrida's 'promiscuous' statement is absolutely necessary, in Hutcheon's usage of it, to retain any definable concept of periodisation, of the *post* as "after". Hutcheon states that history returns "after" the ahistoric formalism of modernism, but in a form where historiographical constructions are fully opened up to display their narrative form. Such an interrogation of historiography does not extend to the absolute divide between modernism and postmodernism, and the construction in a 'descriptive poetics' of a fundamental paradigm shift in 'literary history', the necessity for rupture. Citation insists that no text is

ever fully "present" to itself, and with Hutcheon's foregrounding of parody of prior texts it would be expected that historiographic metafiction would 'overrun' such historical divides.

The definition, however, seems to require the structure of an epoch. In de Certeau's *The Writing of History*²⁸ it is argued that the notion of period founded on rupture is necessary to legitimate the very utterance of historiography itself: "each "new" time provides the place for a discourse considering whatever preceded it to be "dead", but welcoming a "past" that had already been specified by former ruptures"[14] (which suggests the familiar chain of Romanticism--Realism--Modernism--Postmodernism). This constitutes the reverse writing of history, the "past" periodised from the place of the present. The rupture, for de Certeau, is motivated by the need to promote "a selection between what can be *understood* and what must be *forgotten* in order to obtain the representation of a present intelligibility"[4]. In de Certeau's terms, every historiographical operation is procedurally involved in forgetting; no less so a periodised postmodernism which is said to 'open' history.

That this methodology be retained, the period as totality, a totality that is perceived as ontologically linking texts but which can be "extended, stretched or shrunk at will"[28], is all the more intriguing given de Certeau's

presentation of a transformation of the practice of the writing of history as a result of the introduction of computer databases. It is surprising, perhaps, that definitionists have not noted this. In de Certeau's argument the major task of the historiographer, that of the accumulation of data, has been replaced by computer storage. In that sense, the construction of models for interpreting the data can be achieved with a few keyboard operations. The subsequent task, that of evaluating the "degree of meaning" of these models, becomes prioritised. De Certeau theorises that this shift of the centre of analysis comes to concentrate on "granting relevance to *differences...former* "interpretation" becomes the manifestation of a *deviation relative to these models*" and the "production of "errors" -- insufficiencies, lacunae -- that may be put to scientific use" [77-8]. What this suggests is that the totalisation of an 'epoch' of postmodernism is *itself*, in epochal terms, anachronistic. This is I think what Lyotard means in criticising his methodology in *The Postmodern Condition* as being 'modern'²⁹. For de Certeau "The historian is no longer a person who shapes an empire. He or she no longer envisages a paradise of global history" [79] but works toward the production of 'significant deviations' and testing "the frontier where the law of an intelligibility meets its limit"[84].

This tends to suggest that both of the above theses are

working with conceptions of history that belie their claims for postmodernism. As Derrida says: "The taking into account of the periodising and successive elements of...new-isms and post-isms is in itself *a priori* historicist, even if the supporters or promoters of such new-isms and post-isms want to be anti-historicists, or claim that they are"³⁰. What is required, then, is a 'history' that is more sensitively aware of the traps and snares even as it attempts to reinscribe history elsewhere. Does this mean that the 'period' has to be jettisoned? The answer, before explicating the position, would have to be yes... and no. Now (temper, temper) this is not to deliberately frustrate, but to be aware of the risks of simply displacing. In *Positions* Derrida is concerned at the 'metaphysical concept of history', but not history as such; it is always precarious to reinscribe it, always open to the risk of falling back. He calls for "a new logic of *repetition* and the trace, for it is difficult to see how there could be a history without it" -- a history not of the order of (a Hegelian) general history, but history in general, or rather "histories different in their type, rhythm, mode of inscription -- intervallic, differentiated histories". Simply to pluralise, however, still suggests a common ground, an essence of History, so the call here is for a new conceptualisation that is not simply or only that of the concept, but that which "inscribes and overflows its limits"³¹.

A new logic of *repetition*; this frees the *post* from the enforced denotation of simply "after". Robert Young has emphasised that whilst 'post' means "after", in the relations of space it means "behind", and thus in some senses before. For him poststructuralism comes behind and after structuralism as a kind of uncanny repetition³². Bennington offers a "parodically" poststructuralist answer by noting that the 'post' is a *pre*-fix, but continues: "This type of obsession is not just a joke, however, and the (serious) claim that the post comes first, at the beginning, at 'the origin', does not imply that the truth is to be found in the so-called 'materiality of the signifier'"³³. Indeed, with postmodernism, the post may be a prefix, but when Hebdige starts referring to the capitalised Post, the '-modern' becomes an adjectival post-modifier of the noun Post. The post- is *pre*-, and the modern *post*-. Bennington performs an elegant play on Vaille's history of the French postal network, and his claim that "As an institution indispensable to social life, the post, whose utility is manifest from the beginning of civilisation, must have appeared along with the constitution of that life"³⁴. Vaille's first chapter might be translated as 'The Post Before History'. The reason for this play is serious: "History begins to lose its grip at this point: or rather history...only maintains its grip by a violent reduction of this scandalous instability of the prefix 'post-'"³⁵. The *post* it could be said, demands of History's demand "Always historicise!"

a history of History's claims to be the answerable authority; that is, it poses the question of history to history itself, opens up the *historicity* of history, a historicity which must be shut down for History to proceed with its long forward march. This is, then, the third proposal.

This three part argument has some similarities to that proposed by La Capra in 'Intellectual History and Defining the Present as "Postmodern"'³⁶. La Capra rejects both a strategy of distancing and so objectification of the present in a frame (something like the structure of a poetics) and that of the complete immersion in the present (something like Baudrillard's 'post'history). Both of these positions operate in a transcendent mode at extreme ends of the subject-object axis and posit "the lure of a state of being itself removed from historical becoming"[49]. In rejecting these, La Capra rejects the term 'postmodernism' although this is to remain, I would argue, within an understanding of the *post* as "after". His third way seems to capture that process of historicity I am trying to outline here; that attention should shift to "the intricate processes of interaction between past and present and the cognitive or existential modes of repetition with variation relating them to one another. Historicity itself would be rethought, not in terms of continuity or discontinuity, but in terms of interacting continuity and discontinuity" [49-50]. Postmodernism,

then, is not to be understood as a 'once and for all' rupture or paradigmatic shift, since to replace one 'rejected' totality with another is open to precisely the same risks of repression and exclusion; the problem is the conception of totality itself. The relations of modernism and postmodernism should be understood, to cite Marion Hobson from another context, as "a complex pattern of forward and recursive loops"²⁷. This imbrication, Lyotard's *post* before the modern, *post* haunting the modern from its inception, is, La Capra suggests, "itself the 'form' of historicity -- one allowing the hyperbolic quest as a continually resurgent pathos that rearranges the lines of thought and perhaps of life itself without ever becoming a stable state of being" [54].

'History' in postmodernism begins to take on a different aspect. Parody, to take a key definitional point, constantly exceeds the paradigmatic and epochal, moving in forward and recursive loops of historicity. No text is simply (of the) present: the "history of the work is not only its *past*...but is also the impossibility of its ever being present"²⁸. 'Postmodernist parody' displays how radically such texts cannot be simply of an epochal or literary historical postmodernism.

A new logic of *repetition*; what does this *mean*? Repetition problematises the 'originary', the *post* is both behind and after the structural, the modern²⁹. I have

proposed Jameson's 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism' as a kind of institutional originary moment. This is not to deny that there was a vast literature around postmodernism in the 60s and 70s, but that Jameson's text organised and fixed certain narratives. There is, however, in the 'prehistory' of the 1980s conception of postmodernism, a text which ghosts Jameson's, which, as a transparency placed over Jameson's text, reveals remarkable similarities. Leslie Fiedler's 'Close the Border -- Cross the Gap'⁴⁰ follows the same itinerary as the logic of the "shunt" I analysed in Jameson's text in chapter three. To "inverted millenarianism" there is the announcement of an "apocalyptic and antirational" postmodernism [462]. Postmodernism is signalled as those texts which 'cross the border' between high and low culture, which brings forth the question of complicity. Unlike Jameson's anxious concern, Fiedler is unambivalently jubilatory: "It is not compromise by the market-place they fear; on the contrary, they choose the genre most associated with exploitation by mass media" [465]. He is unambivalent since such positioning can "be mitigated without essential loss by parody" [465]. This question of parody follows exactly Jameson's shunt into the question of history, on which Fiedler is again celebratory, recognising in postmodernist texts "meanings as valid as myth rather than history" [472]. Again, the logic exactly echoes Jameson, moving from the loss of history to a new form of sublimity in the

'schizophrenic' subject -- excessive sexuality and 'post-pornography' alongside the blurring of history as 'real' figures enter fictions (cf Jameson on Doctorow). Fiedler finally arrives at an anticipation of the simulacra: "dreams themselves can be manufactured, projected on TV..." [483]. With Jameson's concluding remarks on the necessity of cognitively mapping this 'Third Machine Age', Fiedler also appeals to the imagination, but this time that it "must be naturalised to a world of machines...To live the tribal life among and with the support of the machines" [484].

I have said that Fiedler follows, echoes, repeats Jameson, just as the influence, in chronologies, would offer the reverse. But both statements are valid, for if Fiedler is a 'pre-'text for Jameson, his often bizarrely celebratory and anarchic rhetoric can only be read, only makes "sense", having discovered its structure repeated elsewhere. Fiedler is both behind and after Jameson in a loop of repetition in which the originary is problematised.

This effect is also found in Lyotard's 'postmodernising' of Kant: "The name 'Kant' (it is not the only one) marks at once the prologue and the epilogue to modernity. And as an epilogue to modernity, it is also a prologue to postmodernity. The historian assigns to this name a definite chronological place (the end of the eighteenth

century), but the philosopher accords this name (and others) the status of a sign, a sign of thought, which is not only determined by its historical context, but which gives 'food for thought' with respect to many other historical contexts, with respect to the context which is ours"⁴¹. Lyotard is not suggesting that postmodernism, as epoch, begins with Kant, but that Kant's name is (re)opened to assist in formulating a mode of thought which (re)thinks modernity. Modernity is identified, in 'Universal History and Cultural Differences' as those (grand) narratives which have foundered on "the multiplicity of the worlds of names, on the part of the insurmountable diversity of cultures"⁴². The *defaillancy* of the modern is marked by certain proper names, 'signs' of history against which the narratives of the modern are paralysed: Auschwitz for speculative genre; Budapest '56, Czechoslovakia '68 for Marxism; May '68 for parliamentary democracy. These are 'historical names', but, as in 'Kant', they are "not only determined by its historical context". This has become, for some, an ecstatic release from the tyrannies of the 'modern'; Iain Chambers is rhapsodic: "Here there is no linear supersession of earlier contradictions. There is no *Aufhebung*...no linear progression or logic carrying us directly into the future...in metaphysical terms, we can say that the struggle is...over what is 'good' and beneficial for us"⁴³. The collapse of 'grand narratives' of History may well open it to a more striated view, but this is not

purely the 'freedom' Chambers eulogises, as Lyotard emphasises: "It might be said that this retreat into local legitimacy is a reaction to and a form of resistance against the devastating effects of imperialism and its crisis are having on particular cultures. This is true; it confirms the diagnosis, and makes it worse"⁴⁴. The context for 'postmodern thought' is still the *modern*, not somewhere beyond it.

This is again made clear in another problematic relation of main text to Appendix. In 'Rules and Paradoxes and Svelte Appendix' Lyotard begins by saying that "'postmodern' is probably a very bad term, because it conveys the idea of historical 'periodisation'. 'Periodising', however, is still a 'classic' or 'modern' ideal. 'Postmodern' simply indicates a mood, or better, a state of mind"⁴⁵. The appendix, however, links this to the development in capital over the last twenty years of "the transformation of language into a productive economy"⁴⁶. This latter point could conceivably be integrated, as in Jameson, to something approaching 'period'. In Lyotard, however, the relation of the 'mode of thought' to the effects of capital is far from a simple homology. This mode of thought, which is the *post*, might be understood in terms of Benjamin's thesis that "The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it is recognized and is never seen again"⁴⁷. In a highly complex constellation, it might be

said that the 'present' opens a window, not onto history, but to an event which is "blasted out of the continuum of history" to become a 'now', and which reinscribes history, although its appearance is initially dependent on it. Kant once more becomes specifically 'meaningful' again in terms of present conditions, who then (re)turns again to reconceptualise that very 'present'. Kant is 'postmodern' for Lyotard just as he is unequivocally the very 'originary' modern for Foucault.

This, then, is the operation of "postmodern thought". With the *post* and the *modern*, the understanding of "postmodernism" has been shifted away from rupture, from (simple) periodisation, from the structure of a definitional taxonomy. Postmodernism does not identify a set of empirical objects; it is not a structural poetics which can organise these objects. Rather, I would want to see postmodernism as a 'mode of thought' for which it would be problematic even to give the term Theory, since it marks "a state of difficulty, a name for a conflict"⁴⁸ within the explanatory categories of the 'modern'. Against the presupposed conceptions of Theory, which can determine each 'event' as it arises, Lyotard terms the philosopher as "an uncertain watchman who is always on guard as to cases or rules -- a sentinel" who attempts to "save the honour of the name"⁴⁹. But if I have 'moved' the term this far, why keep it, why distinguish, as Simon During has done, between 'postmodernism' as a totality and

a postmodernism which precisely resists totality⁹⁰? Is this not deliberately obscuring? This decision needs to be defended, and since most tempers fray at the *-ism* I write under that heading.

BRIEF NOTES ON POSTMODERNISM

"Postmodernism is not post modern, whatever that might mean, but postmodernism". To simplify McHale's statement it is clear that he is saying postmodernism is postmodernism; perhaps the best, but also the most useless, definition yet encountered. The *-ism* here marks a system, a systematising of diverse texts into a poetics. But the *-ism* as suffix also means doctrine, a body of beliefs, which can slide, like the *post*, into a noun, and Isms are often spoken of in derogatory terms. As doctrine, this implies a 'school', a 'discipline' and so the question of the institution. The contempt for postmodernism is at its most intemperate here; Charles Newman argues that postmodernism is perhaps *the* symptom of an "inflationary" culture⁹¹. The fact that no-one can define it (certainly not Newman) is all to the good, it conforms to a kind of hyper-inflation where the term spirals out of control, the value of precise academic languages becomes meaningless, there is simply more upward pressure (more academic texts, dissertations), more words wasted. For Donald Kuspit: "The contradictory character

of the term expands its meaning; its inflationary character follows from this contradictoriness. That is, the inflation signals that the contradictoriness is unresolvable...[.] The only historical reality "postmodernism" comes to signal is that of its exaggerated significance for theorists, which is one way of understanding how it is that a term can become a signifier without a reference"⁸².

The narrative of this position is that by refusing to define, the industry in its 'crisis' is served by promoting ever more explanatory texts, glosses of glossaries of glossaries &c.. The 'theorising' that has exploded around the term is explainable as a 'crisis' of the university institution, a "malaise which is specific to these sites"⁸³. The decentering of the subject, to take one cliché, is thus a product of the now displaced role of the university intellectual, his [sic] inability to speak any more for an organic, authentic Culture. This is seen as a result of the financial restructuring of the university, the erosion of research and the disappearance of the need for intellectual 'legitimation' as the exercise of power shifts from political coercion to a non-coercive dependence on the market. Without the need for the University, except in the production of skilled work forces, the political pretensions of the humanities become subject to attack by the New Right across Europe and America⁸⁴.

There is, of course, an alternative or at least attendant version of this, as Connor has noted⁵⁵. The 'crisis' in this narrative is actually the result of the vast expansion of access to the institution, of the disruptive interventions to canonical teaching by feminism and (far less so in Britain) black studies, of the cross-fertilisations between disciplines which have (to a very variable degree) realigned academic divisions. In this sense, a 'crisis' narrative emanates from those concerned at the erasure of former academic verities. And further, this implies that the 'crisis' is embodied *not* by proliferating texts on postmodernism, but precisely by the demand for a fixed, closed 'system', a final definition on which everyone can agree. The failure (always) of this demand is undermined by the very effects of postmodernism that the 'crisis' narrative is meant to contain. Crisis demands a system to manage it. The crisis of crisis is that no such system can be effectively implemented. One may respond to this 'accusation' by refusing to add to the accumulation of definitional texts. It has been shown how the name, in Lyotard, can never be exhausted by descriptions, that there are potentially infinite descriptions available. In these terms, "description never reduces the complexity...but adds to it"⁵⁶.

With this another set of accusations follows: postmodernist *theory*, so Connor asserts, has the particular desire "to project and to produce that which cannot be pinned down or

mastered by representation or conceptual thought...a theory which itself continually projects the categories of its own discomfiture"; that it "advertises its commitment to indeterminacy, openness and multiplicity, but provides in itself the means to limit the force and implications of such questions"⁸⁷. My readings of the definitionists have, I hope, precisely aimed to uncover the contradictions between enouncing postmodernism as the end of history, loss of critical distance, and so on, and the "authoritative" enunciations which refute those very terms. Returning to the institutional question, Jonathan Culler has argued that one of the effects of academic restructuring (primarily in America) has been the pressure to publish to keep tenure and increase status, such that "'Visibility', as we call it, may have become more important than what is called 'soundness'"⁸⁸. This, regrettably, has a certain element of truth in relation to the vast amount of material published around 'postmodernism', which may be why the term merits such contempt in some quarters.

My interventions here are, to parodically quote Lyotard, to save the honour of the name; it would be disingenuous but also dangerous, however, to deny that the attempt to retheorise in terms of "postmodern thought" contributes to a 'debate' that is centred on 'postmodernism', and is thus pulled back into it. If the aim has been to 'trouble' a definitional postmodernism in its "authoritative disavowal

of authority", however, is there not a contradiction in citing 'authorities' (Derrida, Lyotard et al) to do this? This argument is similar to the one frequently addressed to Derrida that he cannot complain about misreadings of his work because 'deconstruction' can make a text say anything; one that he has vigorously rejected⁵⁹. I do not claim to be any 'authority' on Derrida or Lyotard; their works are immensely, but productively, difficult. However, I feel authorised to cite from my readings and re-readings to signal misunderstandings of their work; to extend reading, particularly in the case of Lyotard, beyond *The Postmodern Condition* to other works where postmodernism is conceived in different ways.

The alleged "commitment to indeterminacy" is not directed to any name, but it might be reinscribed as similar to Hebdige's claim that poststructuralism transforms historical contradictions into a timeless *agon* without resolution. I cite Derrida: "I do not believe I have ever spoken of "indeterminacy", whether in regard to "meaning" or anything else. Undecidability is something else again...[U]ndecidability is always a *determinate* oscillation between possibilities...These possibilities are themselves highly determined"⁶⁰. Here, "indeterminacy" is not in question, there is no 'authority' claiming nothing can be determined; undecidability, however "calls for a decision in the order of ethical-political responsibility...There can be no

political responsibility without this trial and passage by way of the undecidable. Even if a decision seems to take only a second and not to be preceded by any deliberation, it is structured by this *experience and experiment of the undecidable*"⁶¹. This, then, *foregrounds* the ethical process of coming to decision, and its problematic path.

A similar argument might be made for Lyotard, in that the "incredulity" towards the 'modern' narratives and the intransigence of names is not a cause for celebrating incommensurability and (so the argument would go) indeterminacy. The authority of such narratives might be exposed to the exercise of 'Terror', but *The Differend* is searching no less than for a new conception of justice whereby the authority of the name might speak without being silenced.

As I deploy these arguments on definitional postmodernism, I am not deliberately frustrating attempts to 'decide the issue', celebrating the "indeterminacy", say, between the complicit and the critical, but wish to emphasise something of the contradictions that occur when an impatient temper rushes to decide. "Postmodern thought" serves to question the *-ism* of Theory, of inductively proven and repeatably demonstrated theses, foregrounding rather the lengthy diversions through the undecidable before a "decision" can be made. And this rests, I would argue, on the singularity of the text in question.

One of the principal irritations of the contributions to define an aesthetic of "postmodernism" is the level of generality, non-specificity. In a process I have analysed it *appears* that texts produce the 'structure' which is seen as resultant to researching individual texts; in fact, the structure is developed and texts are *subsequently* placed in its grid. The "impressiveness" of such structures is their ability to marshall massively diverse forms of cultural production within the arc of a single trajectory. However, this can result in complex and demanding texts being reduced to a paragraph or even sentence within a larger argument. Many of these texts, I would argue, if read in detail, with respect to their singularity, contest this "gridding"; none more so than the work of J G Ballard.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Jameson, 'The Politics of Theory', p.53
- 2) Thomas Docherty, *After Theory: Postmodernism/Postmarxism* Routledge, 1990, see introduction
- 3) Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light*, Commedia/Routledge, 1988, p. 183
- 4) Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light*, p.186
- 5) John Roberts, *Postmodernism, Politics and the Arts*, Manchester University Press, 1990. Page references follow in the text.
- 6) Jean-Luc Nancy 'Finite History', *States of Theory*, ed. David Carroll, Columbia University Press, 1990, p. 150
- 7) Paul E. Corcoran, 'Godot is waiting too: Endings in thought and history', *Theory and Society*, 18, 1989, p.504
- 8) 'The Ends of Man', *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, Harvester Press, 1982
- 9) This attempt, to offer an explanation/containment of deconstruction by referring to May '68, is one which expends much of Geoffrey Bennington's voluminous reserves of contempt (see, for example, 'Deconstruction and the Philosophers (The Very Idea)' *Oxford Literary Review*, vol. 10, 1988, pages 127-8). Robert Young suggests that if a historical moment for 'poststructuralism' is deemed necessary, it is more convincing to denote the Algerian War of Independence (Derrida and Cixous were born in Algeria, Lyotard

campaigned for the Algerians, and the distance from the prior generation of intellectuals might be measured by Camus' deeply problematic relation to the Independence movement). See introduction to *White Mythologies*, Routledge, 1990

- 10) interview with Van Reigen and Veerman, *Theory, Culture and Society*, 5:2-3, June 1988, p.277
- 11) 'Structuralism and Post-Structuralism: An Interview with Michel Foucault' (by Gerard Raulet), *Telos* 55, Spring, 1983, p.206
- 12) *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass, University of Chicago Press, 1981, p.24
- 13) Derrida, 'Of An Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy', *Oxford Literary Review*, 6:2, 1984. Page references follow in the text.
- 14) See chapter eight, below, on the meanings ascribed to "apocalypse" in relation to J G Ballard's catastrophe novels.
- 15) Terry Eagleton, 'Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism' *New Left Review*, 152, 1984, p. 68
- 16) Foucault, interview with Raulet, *Telos*, 1983. Foucault does not forbid the historical analysis of the 'present' "With the proviso that we do not allow ourselves the facile, rather theatrical declaration that this moment in which we exist is one of total perdition, in the abyss of darkness or a triumphant daybreak &c." He adds: "I can say so all the more firmly since it is something I have done myself"

- 17) see, for example, Hayden White 'Getting Out of History' and Bennington's 'Not Yet' in *Diacritics* vol. 12, 1982; see also David Shumway and Radhakrishnan in *Postmodernism/Jameson/ Critique* ed. Kellner, Mouton Press, 1990. Most especially, however, see Robert Young, 'The Jameson Raid', *White Mythologies*, Routledge, 1990
- 18) Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, Methuen, 1981, p.9
- 19) Haynes Horne, 'Jameson's Strategies of Containment', *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 12:3, 1988
- 20) In *Body Invaders: Sexuality and the Postmodern Condition*, ed. A and M. Kroker, Macmillan, 1988 and also in *Futur*fall: Excursions into Postmodernity* ed. E Grosz et al. Power Institute of Fine Arts, Australia, 1986. Translation and page references from the former.
- 21) The search for the origin of the term continues apace. Andreas Huyssen doesn't try very hard, with the perennial Howe and Levin pieces from 1959 and 1960 respectively. A common appeal is to Arnold Toynbee, 1947, to describe a new phase in history, beginning in 1875. Jencks does quite well in discovering Joseph Hudnut's use of the term in 1945, but then offers himself in 1975 as the origin. Ihab Hassan finds the Italian de Onis using 'postmodernismo' in 1937, but the prize goes to Corcoran, who discovers 'postmodern man' in the works of Pannwitz in 1917. One wonders

what this achieves.

- 22) Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, Methuen, 1987, p.5
- 23) Douwe Fokkema, *Literary History, Modernism and Postmodernism*, John Benjamins, Amerstam/Philadelphia, 1984. p. 11 and 40
- 24) McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, p. xi-xii
- 25) Linda Hutcheon's later book, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, significantly alters perspective, by rigidly (and problematically) separating postmodernist politics from feminist politics, arguing that the former undermines the ground of the latter.
- 26) quoted by Hutcheon [AP, 132]; for its context in Derrida, see *Limited Inc.*, Northwestern University Press, 1988, p.12
- 27) For a more detailed discussion of this, see Roger Luckhurst, 'Gliding Lessons', *Bete Noire* 10-11, 1991.
- 28) Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans Tom Conley, Columbia University Press, 1988. All references follow in the text.
- 29) Lyotard, 'Defining the Postmodern', *ICA Documents* 4, p.6
- 30) Derrida, 'Some Statements and Truisms...', *States of Theory*, p.68
- 31) *Positions*, op. cit., quotes, 57, 58, 59
- 32) 'Post-Structuralism: The End of Theory', *Oxford Literary Review*, 5:1-2, 1982, p. 4
- 33) 'Postal Politics and the Institution of the Nation',

- Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha, Routledge, 1990, p. 123
- 34) 'Postal Politics', p. 124
- 35) 'Postal Politics', p. 123
- 36) in *Innovation/Renovation*, ed Sally and Ihab Hassan, University of Wisconsin Press, 1983. All references in the text
- 37) Marion Hobson, 'History Traces', *Post-Structuralism and the Question of History*, ed Bennington et al, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 109
- 38) Derrida, 'Force and Signification', *Writing and Difference*, p.14
- 39) on the strange logic of repetition, see chapter ten, below.
- 40) in *The Collected Essays of Leslie Fiedler, Volume II*, Stein and Day, 1971. All references in the text.
- 41) 'The Sign of History', in *The Lyotard Reader* ed. Andrew Benjamin, Basil Blackwell, 1990, p.394
- 42) in *The Lyotard Reader*, p.319
- 43) *Border Dialogues: Journeys into Postmodernity*, Routledge, 1990, p. 9
- 44) *The Lyotard Reader*, p. 322
- 45) 'Rules and Paradoxes and Svelte Appendix', *Cultural Critique*, no.5, winter 1986-7, p.209
- 46) 'Rules and Paradoxes', p.217
- 47) Thesis V, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, Harcourt, 1968, p.255

- 48) Robert Young, 'The Politics of 'The Politics of Literary Theory', *Oxford Literary Review*, vol.10, 1988, p.146
- 49) Lyotard, 'Judiciousness in Dispute, or Kant after Marx', *The Lyotard Reader*, p.328; honouring the name, last paragraph of 'What is Postmodernism?', appendix to *The Postmodern Condition*, p.82
- 50) Simon During, 'Postmodernism or post-colonialism today', *Textual Practice* 1:1 1987
- 51) Charles Newman, *The Postmodern Aura*, Northwestern University Press, 1985
- 52) Donald Kuspit, 'The Contradictory Character of Postmodernism', *Postmodernism -- Philosophy and the Arts*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman, Routledge, 1990, p.53
- 53) Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light*, p. 224
- 54) this is the thesis of Zygmunt Bauman's 'Is there a Postmodern Sociology?', in *Intimations of Postmodernity*, Routledge, 1992
- 55) Stephen Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, Basil Blackwell, 1989, opening chapter.
- 56) Alessandro Dal Lago, quoted in Chambers, *Border Dialogues*, p.8
- 57) Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, p.19 and 20
- 58) Jonathan Culler, 'Criticism and Institutions: the American University', in *Poststructuralism and the Question of History*, p.90
- 59) *Ltd. Inc*, p. 146. "this definition of the deconstructionist is false (that's right: false, not

true) and feeble; it supposes a bad (that's right: bad, not good) and feeble reading of numerous texts, first of all mine, which therefore must finally be read and re-read"

60) *Ltd. Inc.*, p. 148

61) *Ltd. Inc.*, p. 116

PART TWO

SECOND PREFACE

This interleaved preface serves mainly to provide orientation, an *itinerary* through the following chapters. As the logic of the *post* proposes an "interacting continuity and discontinuity"¹, so the relation of the two parts of this thesis is one of both convergence and divergence. The principal border problematic, between modernism and postmodernism, which has concerned much of Part One, finds itself multiplying into diverse formulations in confronting Ballard's work. The figure of the "angle between two walls" becomes increasingly overdetermined in related yet diffuse areas. As a result of this divergence the following chapters are perhaps more discrete than the developmental argument in Part One.

As distinct from the monographs produced by Pringle and Brigg², this is by no means a comprehensive 'survey' attempting to cover Ballard's oeuvre. Rather, specific texts have been selected to illuminate crucial facets of his work. These facets are at times openly, at times tangentially, related to the problematics discussed in Part One. Chapter 6 addresses the question of aesthetic judgement, the border between high and low, and Ballard's place within and between science fiction and postmodernism. Chapters 7 and 8 concentrate on catastrophe narratives, beginning with postmodernism, but diverging into the generic catastrophe novel. Ballard's

quartet of disaster novels are related both to the generic form of catastrophe as well as contemporaneous discourses of apocalyptic consciousness. Chapter 9 effects a decompression of Ballard's most difficult and condensed text, *The Atrocity Exhibition*, and attempts to articulate the boundaries between avant-gardism, postmodernism and the popular. Chapter 10, finally, is a reading of Ballard's work through Derrida's analysis of the signature, which aims to trouble the divide between fiction and autobiography. It questions the privilege that has increasingly been given to Ballard's two "autobiographical" novels as works which decipher the oeuvre.

Ballard's position as the crucial innovator of the 'New Wave' science fiction in the 1960s, in the group associated with the *New Worlds* magazine, has been excellently covered by Colin Greenland⁹. I have chosen not to repeat this, but to offer contextualisation in a wider and more diffuse manner, initially in relation to critical perceptions of the science fiction genre as a whole. Concentrating purely on the New Wave can exaggerate its 'break' from prior forms of science fiction. The second contextual element proceeds by discovering intertextual resonances with contemporaneous texts from highly divergent disciplines: art history, psychiatry, philosophy, media theory and science. Ballard seems to me a crucial 'switching-centre' for the

cross-fertilisation of such discourses in the 1960s. *The Atrocity Exhibition* is certainly one of the most important texts produced in/on the decade, hence the substantial space devoted to it. A different mode of reading texts, inevitable in the shift from 'theory' to 'literature', is thus adopted in this part of the thesis.

On this second form of contextualisation, I am aware that the '1960s' is a difficult and much contested denotation, freighted with ideological problematics, both Left and Right. I am not proposing some kind of final determination of a distinct epoch (or sub-epoch), as Jameson has attempted. Although Ballard's work is clearly related to many forms of counter-cultural practice, there was, Seed and Moore-Gilbert argue "no single monolithic counter-culture...with a coherent programme"⁴. Many cultural historians of the period note a profound ambivalence, a paradoxical imbrication of the 'conservative' and 'radical', within counter-cultural forms. Ballard's interpenetration with these forms should be read with this non-monolithic conception in mind.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Dominick LaCapra, 'Intellectual History and Defining the Present as Postmodern', *Innovation/Renovation*, ed. Sally and Ihab Hassan, p.49-50
- 2) David Pringle, *Earth is the Only Alien Planet*, Borgo

Press, 1979; Peter Brigg, *J & Ballard*, Starmont House, 1985

- 3) Colin Greenland, *The Entropy Exhibition: Michael Moorcock and the British 'New Wave' in Science Fiction*, Routledge, 1985
- 4) John Seed and Bart Moore-Gilbert, introduction to *Cultural Revolution? The Challenge of the Arts in the 1960s*, Routledge 1992, p.1

CHAPTER SIX

J G BALLARD AND THE CATASTROPHE OF GENRE

The limits the institution imposes...are never established once and for all (even if they have been formally defined). Rather the limits are themselves the stakes...boundaries only stabilize when they cease to be stakes in the game.

Lyotard¹

Charles Nicol's analysis of two Ballard stories, 'The Drowned Giant' and 'The Voices of Time' confronts a paradox. The former is a fiction that is "poetic but not necessarily within the poetry of science fiction", the latter is science fiction "[b]ut I doubt that a mainstream reader can appreciate the subtlety and beauty of such SF works, because his own set of literary values is limited by a tradition that excludes them"². Ballard, it seems, occupies a terrain which crosses two mutually exclusive constituencies, science fiction and the mainstream. Each is reading a Ballard incompatible with the other.

The question of boundaries is ever-present in relation to the work of J G Ballard. This chapter is concerned with his problematic place within a set of crucial borderlines: the limits of the academy coming face-to-face with the 'popular'; the contingency or necessity of the divide between the 'high' and the 'low'; the imperatives which condition and legitimate such processes of inclusion and exclusion; the question -- the "problem" in fact -- of

genre and the generic. All these boundaries mark a series of negotiations around a structure of an inside/outside relation. Even before beginning to read, such limits must be analysed.

This "before", however, is strictly inaccurate. Rather, these marks of inside/outside are announced *in the process* of reading Ballard. What needs to be displayed here is Ballard's shifting "place", the situating of Ballard across and between the sites of science fiction, the 'mainstream' and postmodernism. Ballard has been placed in each of these sites, each has claimed exclusive rights to the possession of 'J G Ballard'. Each does so through modes of legitimation which must be patiently analysed for their "legal" procedures -- the "case" presented, the laws invoked, the justification and notion of justice.

The catastrophe, whether it is announced or not, for those wishing to claim for Ballard the status of a 'major' writer is the glutinous adherence of his name to the "popular", the generic: *science fiction*. To praise this name always seems to involve attempts to legalise it. This process of legitimation is invariably a border negotiation between the academic and the "popular". Ballard must be shifted *out* of the "popular" if he is to be legitimate. Such a proposal would seem to artificially construct an absolute divide between the two, given the increasing presence of science fiction in university

syllabuses, particularly in America, the rise of "cultural studies" and the claims of definitional postmodernism to witness the erasure of the distinction between high and low art. If this last claim is deeply questionable, science fiction criticism, *within* the academy, remains profoundly anxious for the genre to "perform" within the parameters of value ascribed to 'mainstream' texts.

I propose, then, to investigate the claims of definitional post-modernism before analysing its relation to more traditional forms of the legitimation of "popular" texts as objects worthy of study. These are in turn related to how science fiction attempts to legitimate itself. The final section will direct these questions to the work of Ballard.

I

Definitional postmodernism has as a central tenet the *erasure* of the boundary between so-called 'high' and 'low' culture, erected, for Huyssen, by a modernism "constitut[ing] itself through a conscious strategy of exclusion, an anxiety of its contamination by its other: an increasingly consuming and engulfing mass culture"³. Postmodernist texts are said to leap the bounds, and in doing so erase the meaning-effects that such boundaries produce. The 'Great Divide' no longer operates. Fiedler, of course, seminally "crossed the border", seeing the

contemporary novel [1970] as converting high art into "vaudeville and burlesque"⁴ in an intrinsically post-Modernist political act. This is contagious for each contact: it is not just the movement from above, from the high, into the realm of mass art; mass culture also finds its boundaries exposed and erased, a self-consciousness invading the generic and exploding its confines. This "[i]f anything", says Huyssen "is the postmodern condition in literature and the arts"⁵. This is placed as observable and empirically verifiable in texts and for Huyssen the critics are lagging behind, still hegemonically insisting on the divide between the high and the mass.

Despite this claim, Huyssen finds it necessary to re-inscribe a border: "my argument...will not deny the quality differences between a successful work of art and cultural trash (Kitsch)". The necessity of that line is to avoid the "mindless pluralism of anything goes", even as the reinscription of quality to some extent reinstates the divide. Aware of this problem, Huyssen places its solution in the future tense: further work "will have to explore this dimension"; right now, "it is time for the critics to catch on"⁶. Equally, Fiedler's '*Cross the Border*' begins with "the unconfessed scandal of contemporary literary criticism"⁷ and demands of it a new language. The central point, that the new novel moves into mass cultural forms as a political act, yet again

reinscribes the border at a different line: this move "can be mitigated without essential loss by parody, irony -- and even critical analysis"⁸. This is not, or never simply, the *acceptance* of mass culture.

In definitional postmodernism this borderline or divide is consistently removed only to be reinscribed somewhere else: recall how Linda Hutcheon insists on the distinction between genuinely *critical* postmodernist architecture, and the kitsch imitations of it in "popular" forms⁹. Texts, then, do not leap bounds; it is critics who will open the gates for certain approved texts, whilst excluding others.

It is tempting nevertheless to speed to the claim: J G Ballard is (a) postmodernist. The increasing amount of critical judgements to this effect might legitimate such a stance. Any analysis of such readings, however, witnesses the double movement of de- then re-inscription. Ballard can only be claimed as postmodernist, in definitional terms, at the expense of violently reinvoking the boundary. This is visible in Colin Greenland's *The Entropy Exhibition*, although, as I will show, this is a common gesture. For Greenland, the lavish praise of 'mainstream' writers like Greene and K. Amis "guaranteed [Ballard's] reputation as a novelist emerging from the dubious undergrowth of sf"¹⁰. Discussing Ballard alongside Moorcock, Greenland stakes his claim: "Each is neither wholly in nor out of the broad 'field' of sf, or even the

vague compass of the 'New Wave'. They come under that most awkward of provisional labels, 'post-modernism'"¹¹. However, and here the border is re-inscribed, their work still fails to receive "serious" attention because their names continue to adhere to science fiction, in which zone, "the tastes of readers [are] not in the least concerned with serious literary intentions and literary movements"¹². What is symptomatic is that the border *itself* is taken for granted and it is the *readers* of science fiction who are to blame¹³.

If Greenland displays a deference to the border between 'high' and 'popular' culture, displaced onto readership, it is never (solely) *readers* that constitute limits, but the work of 'tastemaking' intellectuals, who, for Andrew Ross, "define what is popular and what is legitimate, who patrol the ever-shifting borders of popular and legitimate taste, who supervise the passports, the temporary visas, the cultural identities, the threatening "alien" elements and the deportation orders, and who occasionally make their own adventurist forays across the border"¹⁴. Ross' *No Respect* indicates the apparent mutual exclusion of the popular and legitimate. There are a number of strategies to legitimate a movement into that disreputable sphere of science fiction. Ross suggests that definitional postmodernism is only the latest modality, the latest inoculation to get past this *cordon sanitaire*. If the ban has been lifted, it is only a dubious "progress"; the

mass, for Ross, has been allowed to move from infantilism to arrested adolescence¹⁵. Science fiction criticism tends to remain within these border limits and indeed the notion of adolescence is a crucial element of its *self-image*.

The assertion of Ballard as 'postmodernist' has been more rigorously pursued since Greenland, for definitional taxonomies of postmodernism have 'discovered' science fiction. For McHale "Science fiction...is to postmodernism what detective fiction was to modernism"¹⁶. Science fiction is re-fitted to conform to the historical trajectory of the emergence of postmodernism. It moves through realist (1930s), modernist (1960s) and postmodernist (1970s to the present) phases in accord with Jameson's historical periodisations. Other such gestures of definitional 'matching' also includes Anne Cranny-Francis' distinction of "hard sf" as modern and "soft sf" as postmodern¹⁷. The group associated with Moorcock's editorship of *New Worlds* in the 1960s is fortunate to be historically co-existent with the emergence of writers -- on the other side of the line -- "who seem intimately and continuously involved with science fiction, or something analogous. Many of the modes of postmodernist fiction and the so-called 'literature of exhaustion' have assimilated aspects of traditional science fiction" ¹⁸. Indeed, Theresa Ebert states: "The result...of the changes in mainstream

fiction, on the one hand, and in science fiction on the other -- is the blurring of boundaries between these modes of writing which are on the edges of literary experimentation"¹⁹.

If the above quotations are read back, however, subtle marks of distinction are being made: science fiction *or something analogous*. The titles make it clearer. McHale has two chapter subheadings 'The science-fictionalisation of postmodernism' and 'the postmodernisation of science fiction'. Theresa Ebert's essay is called 'The Convergence of postmodern innovative fiction and science fiction'. Boundaries may *blur*, but the respective sites do not intersect, co-mingle; a problematic miscegenation is avoided, it is only a case of *convergence*, of one operating over or through the other.

McHale further crystallises this. Defining postmodernism through a shift of dominant from (modernist) epistemology to ontology, science fiction is deployed because it is the *simplest* expression of this shift. Science fiction is postmodernism's "noncanonised or "low art" double, its sister-genre"²⁰. If the quotation marks around "low art" signal a warning, he nevertheless comments: "as a noncanonical, subliterary genre, science fiction has tended to lag behind canonised or mainstream literature in its adoption of new literary modes"²¹. The border is (re)announced; science fiction, even within a charitable

postmodernism, remains disreputable, except for one name: J G Ballard. Ballard leads science fiction out of the "subliterary" and into the mainstream. *The Atrocity Exhibition*, with its ontological concerns, is a "postmodernist text based on science fiction topoi"²². A quantum leap has been made here, from Ballard's early science fiction aspiring to the mainstream, to the now mainstream approach to science fiction. In one text, he has suddenly leaped zones, and begins a *backward* movement toward that problematic convergence. Given that McHale insists on science fiction and postmodernism's "parallel development, not mutual influence"²³ Ballard's feat is nothing short of extraordinary.

The same effect occurs in Ebert's piece. Her general claim about the blurring of boundaries is negated when it comes to the specific. Samuel Delany's *Dhalgren* moves out of science fiction and appears in the mainstream, or *nearly* does: "Delany's narratives in certain sections are *hardly distinguishable* from...postmodern innovative fiction" (my emphasis)²⁴. This near entry is recorded at the expense of shutting the gates behind him: Delany "transcends the restricting didactic and entertainment functions of mimetic science fiction"²⁵. This legitimation by transcendence elevates the individual by reaffirming the rest of science fiction as disreputable and illicit. Such strategies do nothing, in fact, to erase or blur the border between 'high' and 'low'; they

take their individual, smuggle him or her through the cordon and then use the traditional high culture criteria to legitimate the passage.

Fred Pfeil's essay on postmodernism and science fiction is notable because Ballard is considered *modernist*, now superseded by 'postmodernist' cyberpunk. The borrowed historical trajectory from emergent postmodernism is again evident. The 1960s New Wave (Ballard) marked the appearance of "unprecedentedly literary sf" emerging out of a genre previously concerned with "pre-pubescent technotwit satisfactions...for sexually terrified twelve and thirteen year-old boys"²⁶. This modernist explosion is *necessary* in order to stage science fiction's response to the "epochal paradigm shift" of postmodernism. Indeed, Pfeil's essay foregrounds questions of whether it is adequate or possible to transcribe these terms into a specific genre, with its own temporality. With the New Wave, science fiction becomes "briefly" modernist purely *in the terms* of postmodernism's trajectory. If science fiction finally (at last) becomes modernist, there is the inevitable sense of imposing a teleological and indeed anthropological history of popular culture. Science fiction is backward in development but it must pass through this stage, because there is *only one* narrative of development imposed from the highest stage, retrospectively. This posits a hierarchy of stages in which the shamefaced popular can only belatedly arrive.

Definitional postmodernism, therefore, belies its own announcement of the erasure or blurring of boundaries. If the definition sets limits, however, it would seem structurally impossible not to avoid any ultimate reinscription, somewhere, of borders said to be erased. It cannot evade the "traditional business" of judging, of "drawing a line between and around categories of taste"²⁷. Definitional postmodernism rather than celebrating the end of the need for legitimation is in fact another mode of what I want to term, in contrast to those produced internally by science fiction criticism, 'external legitimation'.

II

External legitimations are those processes which are performed to legalise the study of genre. Ross analyses the historical significances of terms like 'hip' and 'camp' in this process. The latter, where 'dreadful' instances of popular culture can be rescued by the subjective action of the critic as unconsciously ironic (as Sontag formulates it), is frequently invoked in relation to science fiction films of the 1950s as "unintentionally funny"²⁸. These devices of entry into the "popular" constitute "insurance for...safe conduct when [intellectuals] go slumming"²⁹. As has been displayed, slumming, the apparent acceptance and celebration of popular culture, is often a cover for smuggling, the

paradox of an 'illicit' activity with the aim to legitimate. Definitional postmodernism joins more hegemonic modes, which operate through depth.

What I mean by this are those methodologies Jameson terms 'depth hermeneutics'. Science fiction is approached as *transparent*, to reveal beneath its embarrassing surface a latent meaning. With the revelation of this meaning comes *value* and thus legitimation. Luciano, for example, insists that beneath the "ridiculous" surfaces of 1950s science fiction films a repetitive, archetypal structure is revealed to transform these texts into Jungian quest narratives of the phased ascent to individuation³⁰. The 1950s B-movie boom has proved a productive site for innumerable readings, in the sense that they are obviously "about" the Cold War, or the nuclear, or imperialism, or depersonalisation, or post-war gender realignments, often in overdetermined ways. What such readings tend to ignore, however, are the very *surfaces* of the texts, which are largely dismissed for their latency. Popular or mass entertainment is considered somehow closer to the national collective unconscious and its neuroses and can offer a simple guide to the historical epoch of its production: they are "a remarkably accurate index" of the 'political unconscious'³¹. The surface, however, particularly with regard to the science fiction of the 1950s, is absolutely crucial (see Chapter 7).

In Luciano's work, it is significantly his Jungian approach which saves the films' "meaning and value" and allows them to "transcend their presumed exploitative absurdity"⁹². He approvingly quotes Jung's statement that "literary works of highly dubious merit are often of the greatest interest to the psychologist" and insists of science fiction that: "The genre is not childish but childlike, and accordingly its meaning is sophisticated and complex behind a surface of rather simplistic design"⁹³. Science fiction is infantile: *in-fant*, literally "without speech", it cannot speak for itself, it must be spoken (up) for, it is not in control of its own bodily functions. Luciano seems utterly blind to the condescension towards science fiction *in and of itself* that this mode of analysis produces. His justifications speak not to science fiction, or in its name, but to the sodality of intellectuals who might otherwise interrogate his questionable taste.

Annette Kuhn's *Alien Zone* provides a register of registers for theoretical approaches (and containments) of science fiction⁹⁴. Kuhn's editorial introductions to each of the five methodological sections is concerned to discover science fiction's specific 'cultural instrumentality'. There is the sense, however, that given science fiction "has never received the degree of critical and theoretical attention devoted to other film genres"⁹⁵, the editorial arrangement of the essays is constructed to discover a

theoretical instrumentality for an 'undercolonised' popular genre. This is not to deny the usefulness of the arrangement of sections, which problematises methodologies, from reflectionism to crude psychoanalytic models. Marxist and Freudian readings compete without any sense of dialogue, such that the effect is one of jostling absolute truth-claims on science fiction based on *theoretical* belief rather than any substance of genre. The book ends with postmodernism where the now familiar claim can be announced: "It has been suggested that, as mass culture becomes ever more postmodern, distinctions between science fiction and other forms actually break down"³⁶.

Various strategies of legitimation of the popular can thus be discerned: the transparency of simplistic surfaces revealing latent truths; the severing of the particular case, the individual transgression of genre through transcendence; the postmodernist denial and later rephrased inscription of boundaries. The divide *itself* is either re-affirmed, evaded or re-negotiated; the divide is even necessary given the apparent mutual exclusion of Ross' terms the popular and the legitimate. The former must always be abject before the law of the latter, must always argue its "case" before the tribunal which determines the limits and conditions of what constitutes the zone of the legitimate. If it appears that this divide is always (ultimately) invoked, it could be argued

that this deference of the popular to the legitimate performs, in a technical sense, what Lyotard constitutes as a "wrong":

This is what a wrong would be: a damage accompanied by the loss of means to prove that damage...to the privation constituted by the damage there is the added impossibility of bringing it to the knowledge of others, and in particular to the knowledge of a tribunal⁹⁷

Since science fiction is *infantilised*, deprived of the right of speech in these external legitimations and forced to justify itself before a tribunal whose laws refuse the testimony of the popular, it would seem that a wrong is indeed performed. What would be required, then, would be a shift of focus to the 'inside', to science fiction, and allow it to find its own rules. However, these *internal* legitimations display that science fiction 'judges' itself in the name of the very law which wrongs it. Science fiction wrongs, wrongfoots, itself; it goes as far as demanding its own death sentence.

This is not, perhaps, surprising, given the fundamentally asymmetrical power relations between the inside and the outside. In traditional terms the *production* of the canon is effaced, its legitimacy is perceived as 'self-evident'. Science fiction, however, is anxiously self-aware of its inadequacy before the sole judge of the legitimate. It must perform its legitimation by distorting or denying itself, in terms of the range of judgments that exist *before* it even presents itself to the tribunal. The border

is once more re-affirmed at the expense of its own status. These internal legitimations must be analysed in detail as to how they mimic the external and 'legitimate'³⁰.

This vital point must be made, however; if these internal legitimations are bizarre, desperate and often amusing, it does not remove the depressing fact that their logic is distorted precisely because of the asymmetrical imposition of the border by the categories of taste, which science fiction is desperate to evade or circumnavigate.

I can speak of the 'inside' and 'outside' of science fiction since it has self-nominated its marginality as a "ghetto". Rather than following the etymology and usual usage of 'ghetto' (an enclosed area where a minority is *required* to live) it is seen, internalising guilt, as self-imposed segregation, a tragedy of its own (misguided) history. Science fiction also has a very specific term for the outside: the mainstream. The methods of legitimation invoked are devoted to finding entry (or re-entry) to this mainstream of literature. This mimics, although the polarities are reversed, the border between the popular and legitimate. Science fiction criticism is also peculiar in the sense that it is rarely 'outside' the site of where the texts are produced. Science fiction critics are either the writers themselves (splitting personalities, say, like James Blish's critical persona, William Atheling), 'fans', or academics who have a

singular relationship to the 'ghetto'. Science fiction is, more so than most popular genres, a *community*, if a disunited one³⁹. Writers are 'protected' by a phalanx of fans and the zone is policed as well as 'promoted' in alien territory by its spokespersons. Its strong anti-intellectual vein (not in its contents, but as it 'presents' itself) is simultaneously aggressive in self-promotion, but defensive and symptomatic of deference. Nevertheless those venturing from the 'outside' who reveal the slightest fallibility (a misplaced date, ignorance of certain 'central' texts &c.) are rebuked and abusively accompanied to the border where they are ejected. A badge of membership, of the right to speak, must be worn. When Kingsley Amis states at the opening of *New Maps of Hell* "I am not that peculiarly irritating kind of person, the intellectual who takes a slumming holiday in order to "place" some "phenomenon" of "popular culture""⁴⁰, he marks his distance by narrating a kind of primal scene. Amis speaks of his *seduction* by the garish covers of an American science fiction pulp magazine at twelve years old. From this, science fiction is asserted as an "addiction", "mostly contracted in adolescence or not at all"⁴¹. The desire for science fiction is initiated by (predominantly male) adolescence. Such a scene is constantly repeated; the 'graduation', so to speak, of certain writers and critics from a teenage thrall. It has been suggested that the peculiarity of Ballard's "place" in science fiction resulted from his belated discovery of

American magazines in his mid-twenties. This compulsive reiteration of the primal scene of discovery is certainly a form of legitimation but it might also be said, perhaps too crudely, to be one of the key *sources* for legitimation. There seems to be an immense personal investment to justify and legalise what is taken to be some faintly illicit activity, a kind of arrested male adolescence, a childish foible, in an otherwise outwardly respectable demeanour.

On the inside, this defensiveness should be noted in Robert Conquest who insists on a kind of purity in this adolescent addiction, since aesthetic 'choice' can be ultimately reduced to the "essentially primitive, basic nature of our views and tastes of literature"⁴². On the outside, Pfeil's virulent dismissal of pre-New Wave science fiction as written for "sexually terrified twelve and thirteen-year olds" marks his overt attempt to distance himself from belonging to the genre. The consonance of (the desire for) science fiction in adolescence and the perception of the popular as "arrested adolescence" should be remarked as one of the sources of science fiction's anxiety.

From this inside, science fiction legitimates itself before the tribunal in three ways. Firstly, through the implementation of internal borders. Secondly, through a certain narrative of its (glorious) history, and finally

through an appeal to the rigour of the scientific. The first two apply for citizenship within legitimate literature, whilst the last asserts a specialism, a specificity that either opposes the legitimate or else claims grounds of diminished responsibility. It should be said that these categories overlap in complex ways, and that the following delineation is somewhat artificial.

Science fiction critics often want to make grand (very grand) claims for the genre. For Scholes and Rabkin, it "create[s] a modern conscience for the human race"⁴³; it fits, indeed supersedes, the great humanistic claims for literature as a whole. At the same time, however, and on the same page, they are equally aware that science fiction is constituted of "trivial, ephemeral works of 'popular' fiction which is barely literate, let alone literary". Most of their subsequent work (and for much of science fiction criticism as a whole) is dedicated to *affirming* these two contradictory statements, by separating them out, divorcing them from each other as distinct and 'pure' sites within science fiction. An *internal* border is constituted whereby, on the one hand, the 'grand claim' is asserted and so entry to Literature can be gained, whilst on the other, science fiction can, in alliance with the categories of the legitimate, be condemned.

Scholes and Rabkin justify their own critical text on the basis that science fiction has ceased to be *solely* popular

now that "a sufficient number of works of genuine merit" have been written from within it⁴⁴. The logic of legitimation through the implementation of internal borders can be stated thus: science fiction is a popular genre which yet contains within it a movement of profundity; in order to secure that "serious" element, a mark, a line of division must be approved, by which the gutter of the popular is *transcended*. If, as Darko Suvin insists, "The genre has to be evaluated proceeding from the heights down, applying the standards gained by the analysis of its masterpieces"⁴⁵, and yet these very heights transcend the genre itself, such texts could be said to *no longer belong* to science fiction, because they have been elevated above their origin. Science-fiction-which-is-not is the apotheosis and judge of science fiction. This mimics precisely strategies found on the outside in, for example, Ebert's transcendent Delany.

This border can be imposed at key, significant sites. It can be superimposed on existing national borders: there is the great tradition in Europe of "serious" science fiction in the names of Huxley and Orwell against the trashy popular entertainments of America. This national border is imposed by Brian Aldiss, whose chapter on the 1930s in his history of science fiction remarkably dismisses American science fiction *tout court* as "tawdry...[and] illiterate"⁴⁶ to concentrate on the "serious" Europeans.

It is also imposed by Scholes and Rabkin whose Europe is "emotionally powerful, intellectually demanding, and socially aware" and whose America is variously termed "semi-educated", "juvenile", "overstated, self-approving and quite uncritical"⁴⁷. Christopher Priest also consistently contrasts the European (British) "individual voice" and the threat of its assimilation by the 'mass' culture of America⁴⁸. The repetition of the national border is not, of course, uncommon; Christopher Norris' recent defences of deconstruction, for example, have insisted on the opposition between an intellectually and morally rigorous Europe against an uncritical, relativist America⁴⁹. What is unusual to science fiction, however, is the very suppression of, in some senses, science fiction's country of 'origin', or certainly the site of its *naming*, which is of fundamental importance to the construction of a self-conscious genre. Huxley or Orwell can only be understood as science fiction given a detour through the site of the construction of its conventions, its limits, and mode of enunciation, i.e. America. That detour, however, would reveal how tenuous the claims on Huxley or Orwell as 'science fiction' would be.

The implementation of the internal border is usually enforced at the site of the definition. The science fiction 'community' of critics and writers is disunited on the basis of where 'real' or 'core' science fiction lies. This strategy involves isolating a central definition

through which all other cases can be rejected or shifted to the edges as impure. These marginalia are, none too surprisingly, identical with precisely the elements that might mark the genre as popular; their displacement de-contaminates it of the pulp and the illegitimate, leaving the 'core' works as the ground on which "serious" claims are made.

Darko Suvin is the exemplar of this strategy. Science fiction is defined as the literature of cognitive estrangement, the elaboration of a radically discontinuous world from the 'author's empirical environment', which yet returns to confront that environment to foreground the artificiality of its 'natural' norms "with a point of view or glance implying a new set of norms"⁵⁰. This cognitive utility of science fiction is based on the rigour of applying scientific *laws*; such worlds must be *possible*. Suvin presents a definition that appeals to the specificity of 'hard' (scientifically rigorous) science fiction, a 'core' which is also asserted by Scholes in *Structural Fabulation*, Charles Platt and many others⁵¹. The law of science, however, superimposes on the law of genre; this strict definition is the basis for a wholesale deportation of categories which surround, indeed interpenetrate inextricably, science fiction. For Suvin fantasy may estrange, but not in a cognitive way (it is the *suspension* of scientific laws). Thus "SF retrogressing into fairy tale...is committing creative

suicide"⁵²; fantasy is intrinsically anti-cognitive, "a sub-literature of mystification"⁵³. What is truly astonishing in Suvin's system is the dismissal of virtually all, if not *all*, science fiction in itself. His essay 'Narrative Logic, Ideological Domination and the Range of SF: A Hypothesis' draws a fan-shaped diagram, in which the bottom point, the convergence of the range, is marked as the 'optimum' science fiction text. Above it, within the fan, are borderlines marking the 'good' and 'most' science fiction. This 'most' is dismissed as "debilitating confectionary"⁵⁴ and, he asserts, "there is only one ideal optimum"⁵⁵. This implies that there is only one way to write a text that could 'fit' Suvin's definition, and since this is 'ideal' it would suggest that even the optimum has not yet attained the science fictional. Those falling short of this ideal are discussed under the titles 'banal', 'incoherent', 'dogmatic' and 'invalidated': "all uses of SF as prophesy, futurology, program or anything else claiming ontological factuality for the SF image-clusters, are obscurantist and reactionary at the deepest level"⁵⁶.

Suvin's final and deathly judgments could be read as the 'product' of the intimacy of science fiction, of the belief that criticism in popular genres should ideally come from the writers in the mode of *teaching* how to write better⁵⁷. It is plain, however, that these proscriptions result from the desperate desire to speak in the name of

the legitimate. Suvin's critical logic prescribes the first death of science fiction; the borderline of legitimacy constricts so far as to annihilate it. The optimum that is 'saved' has very little to do with science fiction and is more directed at external utility.

Suvin, at one point, insists on the *intrinsically* subversive nature of the popular⁵⁸, which might suggest that he would have to embrace precisely the elements of the pulp he is trying to expel. His answer, however, is that science fiction was only subversive *before* 1910. After that date, it was appropriated by bourgeois ideology⁵⁹. This bizarre marking of a date as an absolute border brings me to legitimization through narratives of science fiction's history, the second mode of internal legitimization.

The history, in these terms, serves two functions: that of embedding science fiction in the mainstream (the *historical* erasure of the boundary), and of, once again, serving to eliminate the illicit site of the *naming* of science fiction (America). This narrative, which has a certain hegemony, can be summarised in the following way: once there was an Edenic time when science fiction swam with the mainstream, was inseparable and unidentifiable from it; then came the Americans who walled it up and issued a proclamation of martial law. This is the *self-imposition* of the ghetto, the "forty years" (rather

than days) in the wilderness⁶⁰. This narrative ends prophetically: there will come a time when the walls will be demolished, when science fiction will rejoin the mainstream and cease its disreputable existence. The signs are already apparent: the New Wave is to be welcomed, by certain elements, as the death of generic science fiction. This desire, on the inside, meets that of postmodernism on the outside.

Historical legitimations can in fact begin in *prehistory*; science fiction is merely a modernised version of the 'innately' human need for 'mythology' by which to orientate experience. The *biological* need for science fiction is asserted by Scholes, who argues that the desire for narrative, once satisfied by myth, can now only be provided by popular forms, given the decadence and abandonment of narrative by the mainstream. This explains why normally respectable readers "resort secretly and guiltily to lesser forms for that narrative fix they cannot do without"⁶¹. This clearly desperate attempt at legalisation is the most extreme form of trying to dethrone the mainstream by reversing the polarity. The more properly historical mode, however, attempts to embed and entwine science fiction *into* the mainstream. Legitimation comes from appropriating, say, Swift, Thomas More, Lucian, even the Bible⁶², as science fictional forms; history saves the illegitimate child by attempting to uncover 'true' parentage. What is strange about this

is that science fiction does not have its origins established. Rather, what is offered is a fantasy of non-origin. Science fiction doesn't 'begin' anywhere as such and the disreputable generic can be displaced to become a bit-part in a larger historical unfolding.

The suppression involved is that of a name: Hugo Gernsback. I am not suggesting that the origin of science fiction lies with Gernsback, but his originating of the *site* and the *name* of generic science fiction, in publishing *Amazing* from 1926 is crucial. Gernsback is ritually vilified: for Aldiss, Gernsback was "one of the worst disasters ever to hit the science fiction field"; for Blish, he is *solely* responsible for its ghettoisation; for Clareson, he initiated the abandonment of literature "to propagandise for technology"; for Merril, the forty years in the wilderness begins in 1926⁶³. What follows is a movement either backwards to predate a baleful influence, or forward to celebrate his supersession. The attempt at erasure, however, cannot ignore Gernsback's initial elaboration of the conditions on which the genre has to be defined. His editorial policy was "to publish only such stories that have their basis in scientific laws as we know them, or the logical deduction of new laws from what we know"⁶⁴ (scientific rigour; extrapolation). His insistence that such fictions "are always instructive. They supply knowledge...in a very palatable form" (the legitimisation through the educative role) as well as the

'grand claim' for its significance ("Posterity will point to them [the science fiction story] as having blazed a new trail, not only in literature and fiction, but progress as well"⁶⁰) have also been widely used subsequently. Further, *Amazing* was instrumental in constructing a community through reader participation. Whether or not this sodality is seen as negative, science fiction as a genre can *only* be understood with reference to where its conventions and limits were inscribed: the American pulp magazines. Twenty five million readers of both science fiction and other pulp fiction in the thirties cannot be ignored.

This obviously affects what predates the generic site. The attempts to claim Swift or Thomas More as science fiction are retrospective ones, they are only 'science fiction' insofar as they intersect with generic conventions. Such histories have to arrive (and then pass over) the pulps because science fiction as a demarcation is only comprehensible in relation to them. It is a reverse writing, along the lines I interrogated with postmodernism's putative history. Even if More or Swift *historically* predate, in the internal temporality of genre, they can only arrive *subsequently* into the arms of a science fiction that has been determined after they were written.

Naming is different from origin. Gernsback did not appear

sui generis. There are more cogently argued 'histories' of (properly) *proto-science* fiction. Aldiss has set something of a minimal source limit by nominating Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*: the plot is initiated by extrapolated scientific possibilities; its text concerns the limits of scientific ethics and humanism. This choice is symptomatic, however, of the *impure* origins of science fiction, for almost every subsequent critic who has referred to this source has had to distinguish it from the horror genre. The notion that science fiction and horror could intermix is not countenanced. Yet, as Andrew Ross has argued in an essay on Gernsback, even the pulp term 'science fiction' had to fight for predominance amongst other pulp magazines publishing what were variously termed as pseudo-scientific stories, weird science, off-trail, fantascience fiction⁶⁶. *Weird Tales*, the magazine that published the fantasy and horror of H P Lovecraft, appeared in 1923. Many pulp houses also published detective fiction *alongside* science fiction, sometimes with the same editor⁶⁷. What has to be stated is the fundamental *impurity*, the multiple origins that eventually arrived at the hegemonic notion of science fiction. A crucial moment must be the late nineteenth century with mass circulation popular magazines, dime novels and penny dreadfuls alongside the demand for a 'muscular' popular romance form to counter the degenerate etiolation of "high" art⁶⁸. As to contents, these must be determined in the increasing *popularisations* of science, the many

imitations of Bellamy's revival of the utopian (including William Morris), the imperial adventure, the scientific romances of H G Wells, and the fantasies of (Western) disaster and future war that proliferated before World War One⁶⁹. None of these are 'purely' science fiction, but if science fiction's impurity, its overlapping with other genres, is asserted, this diminishes the futile attempts to exclude certain authors from its realm.

This uncomfortable impure origin does nothing, however, to calm the anxieties for legitimation, nor can it, since the demands for legitimacy appeal to an *external* authority. The fantasy of non- origin persists, and it meets its complement in the future with the fantasy of non-being. Explicit proposals, even demands, for the death of science fiction, from *within* science fiction, are commonplace. This is the ecstatic promise of transubstantiation back into the mainstream where the fantasy of non-origin had situated it before the interregnum of the generic. The most enthusiastic of these statements come from the proponents of the New Wave. Histories speak of the increasing 'sophistication' of the interregnum. The explosion of the New Wave is the detonation of science fiction itself. Aldiss senses a "rapprochement" [sic] with the mainstream, the return "from the ghetto of Retarded Boyhood" and asserts "Science fiction *per se* does not exist"⁷⁰. Scholes and Rabkin end their history with the problematic "place" of Ballard and Vonnegut: "A writer

like Vonnegut forces us to consider the impending disappearance of the category upon which a book like this depends...science fiction will not exist"⁷¹. Judith Merrill seeks legitimation for a 'valid' literature of science fiction, but, in deference to the border, realizes "that as it achieves that validity, it ceases to be 'science fiction' and becomes simply contemporary literature instead"⁷². Finally, the introductions to Harlan Ellison's *Dangerous Visions* evokes two deaths: that of the Golden Age being superceded by science itself, and that of the New Wave, which "has been found, has been turned good by the mainstream, and is now in the process of being assimilated...Science Fiction is dead"⁷³.

It seems initially bizarre that a genre so concerned in the 1950s and 1960s with invasion and supersession by alien forces should seem to will mass generic death. This fantasy of non-being, however, accords with the erasure of the border between the legitimate and the popular. It becomes evident why certain science fiction critics have embraced postmodernism's apparently borderless field⁷⁴. The ecstatic claims of death that arrived with the New Wave have themselves died, however, with the disintegration of the 1960s New Wave. The death threatening science fiction currently (1991) is of a more horrific order, truly to be feared: the re-commercialisation of science fiction by the huge publishing conglomerates that have re-discovered the

generic category of 'science fiction'. A number of articles have tolled the death-knell of non-being: not a spiritual transcendence but a (re)turn to the basest level⁷⁵.

Death also haunts the third mode of legitimation, that attempted through scientific rigour. This mode is attached to the 'core' of the genre. What is specific about this mode, however, is its adversarial relation to the legitimate. Since it claims to be at the 'cutting edge' of science, it is dismissive of the mainstream. Robert Heinlein's definition of science fiction as "realistic speculation about possible future events, based solidly on adequate knowledge of the real world, past and present, and on a thorough understanding of the nature and significance of the scientific method", allows him 'rigorous' future projection, one prediction of which is the disappearance of "the cult of the phony in art...So-called 'modern art' will be discussed only by psychiatrists"⁷⁶. Contemporary literature is "sick", written by "neurotics...sex maniacs...the degraded, the psychotic"⁷⁷. This adversarial disrespect is nevertheless a defensively aggressive response to illegitimacy. Surprisingly, especially for someone like Parrinder, who declares him anti-scientific, J G Ballard can be found to make similar statements on science fiction's centrality⁷⁸. In his 'manifesto', 'Which Way to Inner Space?' Ballard declared: "only science fiction is fully equipped to

become the literature of tomorrow, and...is the only medium with an adequate vocabulary of ideas and situations"⁷⁹. Seven years later (1969), Ballard will still be declaring "far from being an unimportant minor off-shoot, science fiction in fact represents the main literary tradition of the 20th century"⁸⁰. This combines with the view that the mainstream 'social novel' has become entirely exhausted. Already this should begin to mark Ballard off from the usual perception of the 'New Wave'; at his most extreme, he declared: "Fiction is a branch of neurology"⁸¹ -- a *kind* of re-statement of the scientific. Ballard, however, makes an absolutely crucial point in interview: "The science one's writing about is the science that comes out of the TV tube, the mass magazines, the labels on oral contraceptive wallets, whatever[.]....[T]he novelist...doesn't have to know the blood pressure of the young woman who's getting excited by her lover"⁸². This is made clearer when he insists "most of the confusions about the position of science fiction in the literary frame of things would be avoided if it were called by a more accurate title -- 'Popular science fiction'"⁸³. Ballard accedes to the crucial point that this is *popular(ised) science fiction*.

The legitimization by science continually falls by its own allegedly rigorous demands. If Heinlein places a border between science fiction and fantasy by declaring that fantasy is "any story based on violation of a scientific

fact, such as space ship stories which ignore ballistics"⁸⁴, his point that time travel stories are legitimate because "we know almost nothing about the nature of time" is exceedingly weak. The depressing litany of rejections and exclusions of certain texts because their science 'doesn't work' (as Aldiss chastises Ballard⁸⁵) insists on a purity that, by the very standards of the science it invokes to judge, fails. What has to be insisted on is the *mediation* of science, reflections on its imaginative potentialities, without the heirarchical gradation from plausible to implausible.

The 'history' of science fiction is marked, not by science at the 'cutting edge', but by mediations and meditations on the scientific. Any analyst of H G Wells' scientific romances has to admit that the 'scientific' mechanism of the time machine, for example, is merely a fictional *device*, surrounded by impressionistic technical details. What is significant is the fictional meditation on the implications of Darwinism wedded to contemporaneous political concerns. The editorial policies of Gernsback or Campbell claimed the 'cutting edge', installing scientific advisors to vet and legitimate its fiction, but its adherence to a positivistic, technological science was scientifically anachronistic even if politically current; Andrew Ross has analysed its belief in the *inherent* link of technology to progress in relation to futurism and other contemporary movements⁸⁶. In the 1920s and 1930s

science fiction was not 'up to date' with developments in quantum mechanics -- with the work of Einstein or Heisenberg -- except insofar as 'relativity' and 'uncertainty' could be translated into time travel, parallel universes or faster-than-light speeds. Science fiction remained within positivism and adopted "a populist principle that science could be explained and understood by everyone, and that its name would not be associated with exclusive rhetorical idioms or with obfuscatory accounts of the object world by overcredited experts"⁸⁷. It thus adopted the *political* belief that the (social) engineer could end socio-political crises.

There is a brief hiatus in the late 1930s and early 1940s, where science fiction and the scientific community *did* enter into a complex interrelationship, specifically around the atom bomb projects. Heinlein was a naval engineer involved in military research; he disclaims any *prophetic* edge to his work, because he was in contact with the scientists themselves, and thus knew in advance the direction of research. The apotheosis of this mode of legitimation came with Cleve Cartmill's story in *Astounding*, 'Deadline'. The descriptions of the nuclear bomb were so close to the Manhattan project that the FBI raided *Astounding's* offices. The frequent appearance of this anecdote indicates its utility for claiming the scientific accuracy and importance of science fiction. This may be so, but it also marks a death. Cartmill's

fiction was overtaken within a year, it survives only as an *anecdote*, not as a read text. There is a sense, in the insistence on scientific rigour, that science fiction is fighting a shelf-life: "one danger threatening science fiction is that the progress of science itself answers so many questions raised by science fiction, thereby removing one idea after another"⁸⁸. This is even more the case in relation to the space race. The television spectacles of the "Rocket State"⁸⁹ replaced science fiction as the site for the "popular" imagination to reflect on the new frontierless frontier. Accuracy itself contains the threat of death; to be too accurate is to risk erasure.

The scientific legitimation, nevertheless, aims to sidestep the claims of the mainstream on the ownership of the 'proper' text: "Even if every work were on the lowest literary level...the form would still retain much of its significance -- for that significance...lies more in its attitudes [the scientific method], in its intention, than in the perfection of its detail"⁹⁰. This begins to foreground the very question of legitimation itself.

I have relied so far on the 'self-evident' meanings of legitimation: of lawful, validated parentage; conformity to established standards; authorisation sanctioned in accordance with the law. Legitimation is also that which was in 'crisis' for Habermas and provoked (in part) Lyotard's response in *The Postmodern Condition*. I don't

want to follow the 'crisis' narrative here, but rather analyse how Lyotard determines the legitimation of the scientific. The scientific statement is a denotative, an assertion with a truth-claim on a real referent. Its conditions of acceptance are that it must be open to repetition by others, and that the language of the statement is judged relevant and acceptable to 'scientific' discourse by the consensual community (the tribunal) of experts. A "good", winning move in the game is the fulfillment of these conditions, the establishment, in terms of the law of the institutional frame, of proof. Science is, on first glance, a 'pure' game in that the conditions of proof can only be established through denotatives. If the legitimation of science fiction emphasises *science*, such denotative proofs are invoked. As *fiction*, however, this claim is problematic; invoking the 'agonistics' of language games, Lyotard says: "This does not necessarily mean that one plays in order to win. A move can be made for the sheer pleasure of its invention: what else is involved in that labor of language harassment undertaken by popular speech and by literature?"⁹¹. Literature 'mixes' pure games, and so must inevitably transgress, when placed in the scientific legitimation, denotative proof. Having no *real* referent is something like, for Barthes, the 'torment' of literature: that it is "*without proofs*. By which it must be understood that it cannot prove, not only *what* it says, but even *that* it is worth the trouble saying it". This,

however, becomes its very strength: "at this point, everything turns around, for out of its impotence to prove, which excludes it from the serene heaven of Logic, the Text draws a *flexibility* which is in a sense its essence, which it possesses as something all its own"⁹². Its essence is its inessence.

What this reveals is not simply that the scientific legitimation for science fiction can insist on its proof only by denying its status as fictional, but also begins to ask a legitimate question about legitimacy itself. From *where*, from what ground, does the mainstream draw its legitimacy? It has no final *proof*, nothing like the 'winning' strength of a denotative truth-game, only the consensual approval of a certain formation of what constitutes the 'literary'. If this is established by canons, by appeals to the non-commercial, serious, committed or timeless, it is clear that these are all legitimations *in themselves*, equally open to interrogation. The legitimation of the legitimate has not been addressed either by the 'outside' or the 'inside' of science fiction. William Boyd, writing in the *TLS* under the heading 'is science fiction respectable?' makes his mark, his border, in the following terms: "all that is required is a modicum of critical commonsense and the essential standards of literary analysis to separate the serious novel from the one that is solely -- and legitimately -- exploring the delights and entertaining

features of the genre"⁹³. From where do its "essential standards" derive? What if there could be no final determination of the border between the "serious" and "entertaining"? What if the line between the inside and the outside were revealed to be historically arbitrary? And what if, at a certain point, the inside and the outside folded in on each other, co-existed in a simultaneity? This begins the problematisation of the border, which, as my epigraph from Lyotard reveals, must be always be in play -- the border is the very stake, in institutional terms, of any legitimate claim. This problematisation, then, does not seek to erase the border, but to bring into close focus its operations, its logic and its institutional power.

III

These processes of legitimation are crystallised by J G Ballard, for his work plays precisely on the border and forms something like a metacommentary on his "place" in the genre even as it is written within it. This 'meta-' leads to the question, posed by Derrida: "What are we doing when, to practice a "genre", we quote a genre, represent it, stage it, expose its *generic law*, analyse it practically? Are we still practicing the genre? Does the "work" still belong to the genre it re-cites?"⁹⁴. If Ballard's texts can be read as writing the genre *and* the law of genre simultaneously, what are their status in

relation to that genre? Ballard's inside/ outside position forms, I will argue, that space of *invagination*.

Ballard's name has frequently been cited in the modes of legitimation I have examined: as the one who transcends the "popular", announcing science fiction's entry into postmodernism; as the emergent 'sophisticate' in a form that can finally claim legitimacy on the basis of his name; as the claimant of science fiction's supercession of the mainstream. These movements are not simply in one direction, however. David Pringle wants to assert that Ballard is a *writer* without that embarrassing premodifying 'science fiction' attached to it. Lists of plaudits, from Greene, Kingsley Amis, Anthony Burgess and Susan Sontag are emphasised because "What almost all of these accolades have in common is that they do not refer to Ballard primarily as a 'Sf writer'". Ballard's work has gained sufficient reputation to establish that he "transcends genre stereotyping"⁹⁵. Elsewhere, however, Pringle notes that Ballard's earliest (unpublished) attempts at fiction in the mainstream failed because "Ballard needed science fiction: the pressure of his imagination demanded a freer outlet". Pushed outside science fiction, as transcendent, he is then reeled back. Two pages on, Pringle concludes "in Ballard we do indeed have an Original, one of the few contemporary writers (in or out of the science fiction field) who has a voice authentically his own"⁹⁶. Pringle's criticism reveals an anxiety which presents itself in a

kind of *fort/da* game, whereby science fiction reveals its legitimate offspring, who, in the processes of legitimation is orphaned from its parents, and is then reeled *back* to the hands of science fiction once more. Ballard's "place" appears undecidable.

Siting Ballard is indeed difficult, for it is possible to write two narratives of J G Ballard's "place", both inside and outside science fiction. On the one hand, he can be 'fitted' into the teleological history of the genre as "The Voice"⁹⁷ of the New Wave. His short stories use the paraphernalia of science fiction iconography, grouped in definable types: the space race, the psychological horror story, the predictive story, the world catastrophe. At the same time, however, there is the Ballard that reviews in the *Guardian* and *Independent*, the art critic, the Booker nominee and *Guardian* Fiction Prize winner, *The Late Show* pundit, the 'Standard Setter'⁹⁸. In these sites, at least, Ballard is not 'from' generic science fiction. The strategy to divide these two Ballards is exactly that of the legitimation of science fiction itself; imposing an internal border where, at some point, Ballard 'left' science fiction. It is noticeable that these claims centre on 'atypical' Ballard texts: the lush fantasy of *The Unlimited Dream Company* or the "autobiographical" *The Empire of the Sun*⁹⁹. This latter text was not only 'not' science fiction, but it could also serve as a *roman à clef* for Ballard's oeuvre; his 'experience' in China and its

bizarre landscapes could explain the "aberrant" texts that were produced before its appearance.

The narrative of Ballard's 'departure' from science fiction is fraught in other ways. The mid-1970s was something of a crux for the New Wave. Michael Moorcock contemptuously dismissed science fiction as a closed order, incestuous and syphilitic. Its readers had savaged his attempt to 'elevate' it, and the only response was to leave¹⁰⁰. Malzberg, in the hilariously titled 'Rage, Pain, Alienation and Other Aspects of the Writing of S-F' also announced his retirement from a genre he had only entered because of the Jewish publishing conspiracy that had deprived him of entry to the mainstream¹⁰¹. A few months later, Harlan Ellison also savagely attacked the constraints on his writing imposed by its readers. Ballard, however, published in 1976 his most overtly thematic science fiction collection for ten years (*Low-Flying Aircraft*). In contemporaneous interviews he blamed the failure of the New Wave on the *New Worlds* magazine leaving science fiction¹⁰². Equally, though, there is the persistent sense of Ballard in the mainstream, the almost unreadable syntax of Merril's statement that: "Ballard, starting in the American market, would probably have left science fiction before he entered it"¹⁰³. But what if these two Ballards were co-terminous?

I stage this reading on two of Derrida's essays on

Blanchot and the question of genre: 'The Law of Genre' and 'Living On: Borderlines'¹⁰⁴. Derrida's concept of genre is perhaps more 'classical', in the sense of the discipline of 'aesthetics', than the one employed here (he certainly doesn't have *popular* genre in mind), but if, as Derrida says, "Each "text" is a machine with multiple reading heads for other texts" [LO, 107] then Ballard can read and extend Derrida, just as Derrida reads Ballard.

Derrida argues in 'The Law of Genre' that the conditions of the law, which lay down its purity, also contain at the same time the condition of the impossibility of the law. If the law of genre is purity, the law of the law of genre is impurity. In the history of genre, in the history of how genre has been used to classify texts, the historicity of genre *itself* has been occluded. The very indicators of genre cannot be classed, are not generic. Membership of a genre is signalled by a code or trait, "the identifiable recurrence of a common trait by which one recognises, or should recognise, a membership in a class" [LG, 210-11]. Genre, the classing of classes, is an apparently 'external' marking and adjudging of the "place" of a text in a given class, *but* this mark will always be re-marked, re-stated, in literary texts; it re-marks on its own generic class. This is not (simply or solely) a case of a moment of self-referentiality but the condition of the literary. In this sense, then, a text must always belong to a genre, and so signals itself, but the very trait that

is re-marked does not *itself* belong to the genre: the "supplementary and distinctive trait, a mark of belonging or inclusion, does not properly pertain to any genre or class" [LG, 212]. This mark and re-mark at once closes the genre (marks its purity) but since it does not itself belong keeps the genre open (impure).

This ambivalent re-mark is found in two of Blanchot's fictions: *La Folie du Jour* and *L'Arret de Mort*. In the first case, Derrida plays on the status of the 'subtitle', initially printed as 'Un Recit?' and subsequently as 'Un Recit'. Is its genre definable or precisely that which is in question? The *recit* (account) the text forms is concerned with the *impossibility* of being able to give an account of events to, significantly, the police. The police demand an account, at the end of the text, which the narrator cannot answer, but this failure to answer begins with the opening lines of *La Folie du Jour* itself. Is this an account of the failure to account or that account itself? This impossibility of knowing where the text begins or ends is a structure Derrida terms "double chiasmic invagination"; the opening top edge of the text crosses over the bottom end to form a chiasmus. The police invoke the law of genre but in applying that very law the narrator discovers the law of the law of genre -- its impurity, impossibility. Invagination thus signals, for genre, the opening of a fold or pocket *in* genre that draws the outside in and the inside out.

'Living On' extends this logic. If the 'edge' of a text, its border, cannot finally be determined, this "forces us to extend the accredited concept, the dominant notion of a "text", a "text" that is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces endlessly referring to something other than itself...". Derrida insists, however, that this is not the erasure of borders but foregrounds the need "to work out the theoretical and practical system of those margins, these borders" [LO, 84]. These re-markable border effects operate in four modes in Ballard's fiction.

The first is the 'straightforward' self-referential moment. 'The Venus Hunters' performs the 'classic' science fiction scenario of sightings of visitors from outer space (even if it teasingly refuses the climactic contact). The sceptical astrophysicist Andrew Ward is progressively seduced by the claims of Kandinski that Venusians are visiting Earth. At the opening of the story, Ward is sitting at a bar which:

was also used as a small science fiction exchange library. A couple of metal book-stands stood outside the cafe door, where a soberly dressed middle-aged man, obviously hiding behind his upturned collar, worked his way quickly through the rows of paperbacks. At another table a young man with an intent, serious face was reading a magazine. His high cerebretonic forehead was marked across the temple by a ridge of pink tissue, which Ward wryly decided was a lobotomy scar.¹⁰⁵

This marks a complex moment of self-reference, for if this

signals the text as science fiction (it belongs), its representation of science fiction 'fans' as either aware of their illegality or else lobotomised young men tries to announce, in that very moment of self-reference that it does not belong to that community. And yet, to reverse this again, the story tells of Ward's scepticism being seduced by the 'science fictional'; he comes to belong (and so is expelled from his job by the authorities). Since 'alien' contact is denied representation, is left undecided, there is no way of judging where *readers* should place their belonging. As self-reference, Ballard's story reveals how *performing* the law of genre troubles it. The question of how it is impossible to tell if Ballard belongs taxes Aldiss: "there are frequent signs in Ballard's work that he is parodying or mocking or at least remembering all the bad things of the medium in which he has chosen to write"¹⁰⁶.

"The remark of belonging need not pass through the consciousness of the author or reader, although it often does so" [LG, 211]. The second re-mark reveals why Ballard's name so often appears in the legitimization through internal borders, the narrative of transcendence above the 'merely' generic, for certain of Ballard's texts *perform this very desire*. Within science fiction, Ballard is often attacked for his pessimism, his nihilism, in that a number of narrators, especially of the catastrophe series, seem to will death. Ballard has insisted,

however, that the logic of these texts is towards fulfillment, the transcendence of death-in-life for life-in-death, which is why Kerans turns south into the sun (*The Drowned World*) and Ransom returns to the forest (*The Crystal World*). Powers, in 'The Voices of Time', with narcoma that is progressively occluding his consciousness, chooses to irradiate himself and dissolve into the entropic temporality pulsed from the distant quasars: "he felt his body gradually dissolving, its physical dimensions melting into a vast continuum of the current, which bore him out into the centre of the great channel, sweeping him onward, beyond hope but at last at rest"¹⁰⁷. The imagery is close to the fantasy of non-being, of transcendence and dissolution into the mainstream that I analysed earlier. Such texts re-mark the very desire of science fiction to assimilate itself, the dream of not belonging to genre which paradoxically anchors it into the genre.

Thirdly, it should be noted that Derrida's play with the edges of texts and their ambivalent relation to the 'main' text also have their effects in Ballard. *War Fever* ends with two stories, one constructed entirely out of footnotes to its title, the other as an index of key events and proper names to a biography that has since been lost. That text, its parameters and revelations, can only be impressionistically gleaned by the witty connections and inferences drawn by cross-referencing details in the

index; an indexical text that has no beginning or end, but is only arbitrarily organised by the alphabet. This also re-marks Ballard's relation to genre; the footnote, the index lie on the margins (running underneath and after) the 'main' text. Derrida's work has been obsessed by the problematic place of such textual edges¹⁰⁸.

Further, the title that is footnoted, 'Notes Towards a Mental Breakdown' exactly repeats the title of an earlier story in *The Atrocity Exhibition*. It can be said that it is impossible to begin to read, for there is no single, isolatable, exemplary text by Ballard that has not already been intersected by another. 'The Voices of Time', with its structure of failed doctor and rogue 'shadow' patient, is endlessly inscribed ('The Subliminal Man', *The Atrocity Exhibition*). Proper names recur, either exactly or in chains: Maitland, Marquand, Melville; Traven, Tallis, Talbot, Travis; Helen, Judith and Coma all recur. Translations of landscapes occur (literally in the case of Mount Royal and Mont Royal); the obsessional return and reiteration of Cape Kennedy and Cocoa Beach ('Cage of Sand', 'The Dead Astronaut', 'Myths of the Near Future', 'Memories of the Space Age'). In *Vermillion Sands* there is the structural repetition of the same story (itself about repetition compulsion).

Ballard's *oeuvre* re-marks, is constructed precisely like a popular genre, with intersections, overlappings,

'plagiarisms' and repetitions. Even the name 'Ballard' appears in this genre (*Crash*). This confronts the crucial 'problem' of the popular, raised by Tom Shippey, that: "Science fiction shows a strong conventional quality which makes its signs and symbols interpretable only through familiarity...[.] It is this conventional quality which makes literary criticism difficult, and foredooms to failure the search for isolated fictional pearls"¹⁰⁹. If this is the case with Ballard, solely in his own work, this overdetermination of his texts has yet to add the myriad science fictional influences (Bradbury, Matheson, Pohl, Bernard Wolfe) as well as 'mainstream' influences (Greene, Genet, Burroughs, Jarry, Conrad, &c). Ballard's oeuvre, structured as genre, within genre, thus remarks it.

Finally, I return to Moorcock's announcement of his exit from science fiction. His argument that science fiction "has little claim to be anything more than routine escapist fiction whose main attraction is in the familiarity of its tropes"¹¹⁰, insists that his work has left the genre. This 'announcement' was made in a review in the *New Statesman*, a non-science fiction site. However, his anger at the incestuous suffocation within science fiction is undermined by the fact that this was a special science fiction book review section, whose fellow reviewers (Ballard, Priest, Shaw) could all be intimately connected with Moorcock's project. Further, the very next

review, by Bob Shaw, reviews Moorcock and ends "Happily, books such as *The Condition of Muzak* make science fiction too slippery, too elusive and perhaps too muscular for the constraining nets of the categorisers"¹¹¹. Moorcock can only announce his exit from within science fiction, which then moves to re-appropriate him. Ballard has had no such difficulties with the term, and his 'later' strategy can be seen as a perverse involution, a logic of imprisonment within the genre which, as Sartre says of Genet's *Our Lady of the Flowers*, sees containment as a form of radical freedom¹¹². In *Concrete Island* Maitland eventually abandons his attempts to escape and at that moment of decision the island imperceptibly begins to expand. This paradox is also explored in 'The Enormous Room'. The narrator here impulsively declares an exile to the 'prison' of his suburban home. Surviving only on the food which remains in the house at the moment of his decision, his weight-loss begins to accelerate and the spaces of the house to exponentially expand. Eventually he is reduced to lying in the kitchen to avoid losing himself in the infinite space of the hall. That the narrator's name is Ballantyne, homonymous with Ballantine, a science fiction publishing house, seems significant; Ballard's science-fictional strategy is not to announce his exit from it (as if this intention had any effect) but to accept its logic and play within and on the rules. The same effect is to be discovered in 'Report on an Unidentified Space Station'. Re-marking the rules marks

him as so far 'in' he is 'out' by the loop or fold that is the effect of invagination.

Derrida concludes his 'reading' of Blanchot's *L'Arret de Mort* in the following way:

No law of (normal) reading can guarantee its legitimacy. By normal reading I mean every reading that insures knowledge transmittable in its own language, in a language, in a school or academy, knowledge constructed and insured in institutional constructions, in accordance with *laws* made so as to resist (precisely because they are weaker) the ambiguous threats with which the *arret de mort* troubles so many conceptual oppositions, boundaries, borders. The *arret de mort* brings about the *arret* of the law. [LO,171]

If this begins to sound like a 'grand claim' I am making for Ballard it should also be recalled of Blanchot's *La Folie du Jour* that the narrator there *engenders* the law, the representatives of the law, engenders them "in giving them insight into what regards them and what should not regard them" [LG, 224]. The law and the *necessity* of borders is precisely what is revealed.

If definitional postmodernism has attempted erasure, Derrida states precisely the question I have been trying to pose here: "I am seeking merely to establish the necessity of this whole problematic of judicial framing and of the jurisdiction of frames. This problematic, I feel, has not been explored, at least not adequately, by the institution of literary studies in the university. And there are essential reasons for that: this is an

institution built on that very system of framing" [LO, 88].

Ballard's work, I want to argue, exposes the operation of the borderline between the popular and the legitimate, opening and closing its line of demarcation. Ballard is caught in a "no-man's land", he is "a one man genre"¹¹³, both of science fiction and the mainstream, belonging to both and yet belonging to neither. The crucial, *ethical* point is made by Ballard himself: most criticism of science fiction "tries to annexe [sic] SF in to the larger body of general fiction, parading, like a troupe of over-trained recruits, all the cliches and tiresome formulas of American and British Academic criticism, which were evolved to discuss a totally different poetry and fiction"¹¹⁴. This gives Ballard "the odd feeling...of the Academy closing around me, of the plywood partitions of the Modern Literature department being erected around my desk"¹¹⁵. It is not a case of simply transposing Ballard's work into the laws which legitimate the legitimate. Nor is it a case of either celebrating or dismissing his work as simply science fiction. The apparent difficulty of "placing" his work is the difficulty of an exposed institutional law, the difficulty that Ballard must be divided between the popular and the legitimate. My argument has, I hope, revealed that it is difficult but necessary to think of these 'two' Ballards as co-terminous.

Finally to return to postmodernism. The first part of this dissertation has proposed that within definitional postmodernism there lies another, excessive and haunting one which, within the 'Modern', introduces a "state of difficulty" into its assertions and categorisations. This chapter is intended to *perform* that thesis, to introduce that difficulty and to indicate the ethical *demand* that this "postmodern thought" proposes. Ballard can certainly be 'fitted' into a definitional postmodernism, but this is at the *expense* of the very site of writing (science fiction). Ballard's "place" induces a series of highly important questions on the nature of methods of analysis of popular culture and the institution of Literature itself. But my reading has only just begun, only just stuttered to a start. If it is impossible to evade genre -- its 'catastrophe' -- it is time, then, to look at Ballard's "place" in the genre of catastrophe.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) *The Postmodern Condition*, Manchester UP, 1984, p.17
- 2) Charles Nicol, 'J G Ballard and the Limits of Mainstream SF', *Science Fiction Studies* 3:2, 1976, ps. 154, 157
- 3) Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, Macmillan, 1986, p.vii
- 4) Fiedler, 'Cross the Border -- Close the Gap', *The Collected Essays, Vol. II*, Stein and Day, 1971, p.478
- 5) Huyssen, p.ix
- 6) Huyssen, p.ix
- 7) Fiedler, p.461
- 8) Fiedler, p.465
- 9) see chapter 4 on architecture.
- 10) Greenland, *The Entropy Exhibition: Michael Moorcock and the British 'New Wave' in Science Fiction*, Routledge, 1983, p. 93
- 11) Greenland, p.194
- 12) Greenland, p.204
- 13) cf. John R R Christie's comment on Philip Dick, "one of the select few to break out of the ghetto of regular science fiction *readership* to reach a wider audience" (my emphasis). 'Science Fiction and the Postmodern: the Recent Fiction of William Gibson and John Crowley', in Tom Shippey (ed), *Fictional Space, Essays and Studies*, Vol. 43, The English Association, Basil Blackwell, 1991, p.40

- 14) Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*, Routledge, 1989, p.5
- 15) Ross, *No Respect*, p.55
- 16) Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, Methuen, 1987, p.16
- 17) see 'Feminist Futures: A Generic Study' in Annette Kuhn (ed), *Alien Zone*, Verso 1990
- 18) J A Sutherland, 'American Science Fiction since 1960' in *Science Fiction: A Critical Guide*, ed. P. Parrinder, Longman, 1979, p.162
- 19) Theresa Ebert, 'The Convergence of Postmodern Innovative Fiction and Science Fiction', *Poetics Today*, 1:4, 1980, p.94
- 20) McHale, p.59
- 21) McHale, p.69. This is slightly odd given the largely undifferentiated conception of science fiction as ontological, which, as an identifiable genre since the 1930s, could thus be said to *predate* the mainstream dominant.
- 22) McHale, p.69
- 23) McHale, p.64
- 24) Ebert, p.95
- 25) Ebert, p.99
- 26) Fred Pfeil, 'These Disintegrations I'm looking Forward To: Science Fiction from New Wave to New Age' in *Another Tale to Tell*, Verso, 1990, ps. 83, 84
- 27) Ross, *No Respect*, ps 5, 61
- 28) Sontag, 'The Imagination of the Disaster' in *Science*

- Fiction: A collection of critical essays, Prentice Hall 20th Century views, ed. Mark Rose, 1976, p.131
- 29) Ross, *No Respect*, p.5
- 30) Patrick Luciano *Them or Us: Archetypal Interpretations of Fifties Alien Invasion Films*, Indiana UP, 1987
- 31) Mark Hillegas, 'Science fiction as a Cultural Phenomenon: A Re-Evaluation' (1962), coll. in Claerson (ed.) *SF: The Other Side of Realism*, Bowling Green UP, 1971, p.274. Vivian Sobchack's lengthy analysis of 1980s SF films as exemplary of postmodernism uses Jameson's definitional terms throughout, particularly SF as the unconscious of American culture. See *Screening Space*, Ungar Publication Co., 1987, chapter 4.
- 32) Luciano, p.viii
- 33) Luciano, ps.110,114
- 34) Annette Kuhn, *Alien Zone*, Verso, 1990. I am aware I am conflating science fiction cinema and literature here, a border which *should* be marked, and could provide an example of a border implemented within science fiction. However, critics on the 'outside' tend to talk of one undifferentiated 'science fiction' object. I am analysing that logic here
- 35) Kuhn, *Alien Zone*, p.1
- 36) Kuhn, p.199
- 37) Lyotard, *The Differend*, Manchester UP, 1988, p.5
- 38) I am consciously using the verb 'mimic' to resonate

with Homi Bhabha's deployment of the term in 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse' [1983], in *October: The First Decade*, Cambridge, MIT, 1987. A parallel between the colonial 'Other' and the "popular" as Other could be followed in detail. It is discussed, briefly, in relation to science fiction, by Gayatri Spivak in 'Poststructuralism, Marginality, Post-Coloniality and Value' in Peter Collier and Helga Geyer-Ryan (eds), *Literary Theory Today*, Polity, 1990, p.222-3

- 39) The sense of community -- an active one -- is frequently taken as a positive point of identification for the uniqueness of science fiction as a genre, although communities exist around other genres. See, for example, Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance*, Verso, 1987, on romantic fiction 'discussion' groups
- 40) Kingsley Amis, *New Maps of Hell*, London, Gollancz, 1961, p.10
- 41) K. Amis, p.16.
- 42) Robert Conquest, 'SF and Literature', in Rose, ed., *20th Century Views*, p.94
- 43) Scholes and Rabkin *Science Fiction: History-Science-Vision*, Oxford UP, 1977, p.vii
- 44) Scholes/Rabkin, p.vii
- 45) Suvin, 'On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre', in Rose, ed., *20th Century views*, p. 71
- 46) Aldiss, *Billion Year Spree*, Weidenfeld, 1973, p.209

- 47) Scholes/Rabkin ps.26, 35, 40, 51
- 48) Priest, 'British Science Fiction', in Parrinder ed.
- 49) This runs through much of this work, but see especially, 'Limited Think: How Not to Read Derrida' *Diacritics* 20:1, 1990
- 50) Suvin, 20thC Views, p.60
- 51) Scholes: Sf is "a fictional exploration of human situations made perceptible by the implications of recent science" (in 20thC Views, p.55); Platt, in his vicious 'The Rape of Science Fiction', blaming feminists (amongst others) for the degradation of "science fiction's one great strength...its implicit claim that events described *could actually come true*" *Science Fiction Eye*, Vol.1:5, 1989
- 52) Suvin, 20thC views, p.62
- 53) Suvin, 20thC views, p.63
- 54) Suvin, 20thC views, p.70
- 55) Suvin, *Positions and Presuppositions in Science Fiction*, Macmillan, 1988, p.70
- 56) Suvin, *Positions*, p. 71
- 57) see, for example, Christopher Evans letter, *Foundation* 10, p.50
- 58) Suvin, *Positions*, p. 10
- 59) Suvin, *Positions*, p. 54
- 60) Merril, 'What Do You Mean Science? Fiction?', in Clareson ed., p.54
- 61) Scholes, 20thC views, p.53
- 62) I O Evans in *Science Fiction Through The Ages* does

indeed claim the bible as science fiction.

- 63) Aldiss, *Spree*, p.209; Blish *More Issues At Hand* p.118, Clareson, 'The Other Side of Realism', in Clareson ed. p.20, Merril, 'What Do You Mean Science? Fiction?'
- 64) Gernsback, quoted by Andrew Ross, 'Getting Out of the Gernsback Continuum', *Critical Inquiry*, 17:2, 1991, p.419
- 65) Gernsback, quoted in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, ed. Peter Nicholls p.159
- 66) Ross, 'Getting Out of the Gernsback Continuum', p.415
- 67) Anthony Boucher, for example, first editor of *Fantasy and Science Fiction*.
- 68) on this last point see, for example, H Rider Haggard's 'About Fiction' in *The Contemporary Review*, 51, 1887 and Andrew Lang's 'Realism and Romance' in following issue. This period of popular fiction is excellently covered by Patrick Brantlinger in *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830-1914*, Cornell UP 1988. The transition from what Brantlinger terms the 'Imperial Gothic' into science fiction is also discussed by Judith Wilt in 'The Imperial Mouth: Imperialism, the Gothic and Science Fiction', *Journal of Popular Culture* 14, Spring 1981.
- 69) The next chapter, on catastrophe narratives, will expand this rather summary listing and argument.
- 70) Aldiss, *Spree*, 257, 306, 307
- 71) Scholes/Rabkin, 98-9

- 72) Merril, 54
- 73) Harlan Ellison, *Dangerous Visions*, Gollancz, p.xxii
- 74) see Andrew Gordon's enthusiastic 'Science Fiction Film Criticism: The Postmodern Always Rings Twice' *Science Fiction Studies*, 14:3, 1987, but especially the postmodernism/science fiction special issue of *Science Fiction Studies*, 18:3, 1991. Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr.'s introduction claims that "SF has ceased to be a genre of fiction *per se*, becoming instead a mode of awareness about the world" (308). This might be compared to Jameson's argument that genres "have now spread out and colonised reality itself" (*PMCLC*, 371).
- 75) see Charles Platt and especially Christina Sedgwick's long analysis 'The Fork in the Road: Can Science Fiction survive in Postmodern, Megacorporate America?', *Science Fiction Studies* 18:1, 1991
- 76) Introduction to *The Worlds of Robert Heinlein*, NEL, 1970, ps.22, 17
- 77) Heinlein, in *The Science Fiction Novel: Imagination and Social Criticism*, ed. Davenport, Advent, 1959, p.42
- 78) Parrinder, 'Science Fiction and the Scientific World View', in Parrinder ed.. What most upsets Parrinder is that Ballard projects the end of the space race. Unfortunately, he was right!!
- 79) *New Worlds*, 118, May 1962, p.118
- 80) 'Salvador Dali: The innocent as paranoid', *New*

Worlds, 187, 1969, p.27

- 81) 'Notes From Nowhere', *New Worlds*, 167, 1966 p.149
- 82) *Penthouse* interview, Lynn Barber, 5:5 1969 p.28
- 83) *Cypher* 11, May 1974
- 84) Heinlein, in Davenport, p.19
- 85) Aldiss, in Claeson ed.: "his hostility to science and technology...is linked with his indifference to providing us with a scientific explanation", p.124
- 86) Ross, 'Getting out of the Gernsback Continuum'
- 87) Ross, 'Getting out of the Gernsback Continuum', p.420
- 88) L. Sprague de Camp, 'Imaginative Fiction and the Creative Imagination', *Modern Science Fiction: Its meaning and its future*, ed. Reginald Bretnor, Advent, 1953, 1979, p. 128-9
- 89) See Dale Carter's brilliant history of the space race, *The Final Frontier: The Rise and Fall of the American Rocket State*, Verso, 1988
- 90) Bretnor, afterword to Bretnor ed., p.287
- 91) *The Postmodern Condition*, p.10
- 92) Barthes 'Deliberations' in *Barthes: Selected Writings*, ed. Susan Sontag, Fontana, 1983, p.495
- 93) *TLS*, 12/6/81, p.659
- 94) Derrida, 'Living On: Borderlines', in *Deconstruction and Criticism* ed. Harold Bloom, et.al., Yale UP, 1979 p.86
- 95) intro to *J G Ballard: A Primary and Secondary Bibliography*, Hall and Co., 1984, p.xii
- 96) *Earth is the Alien Planet*, Milford Series: Popular

- 96) *Earth is the Alien Planet*, Milford Series: Popular Writers of Today, no.26, The Borgo Press, 1979, p.7
- 97) The title of Moorcock's editorial in *New Worlds* 167
- 98) Ballard has reviewed for *The Guardian* since the mid-60s; Booker nomination and *Guardian* Fiction Prize, 1984; Ballard appears regularly on *The Late Show*, commenting on anything from Magritte to Canary Wharf; Ballard was, incongruously, interviewed by the Rt. Rev. Edward Norman as a "moral" standard-setter in a series including Clare Short and Norman Tebbit, August 1992
- 99) on the former see Randall Stephenson, 'Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction in Britain' in *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction*, ed. Smyth, 1991
- 100) *New Statesman* 25/3/77, p.501
- 101) in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, April, 1976
- 102) This is actually taken from an interview in *Cypher* 3, 1970, p.26, but Ballard repeats the point throughout the early 70s
- 103) Merril, in Clareson ed., p.54
- 104) 'Living On' in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, ed Harold Bloom et al, 1979. 'The Law of Genre' in *Glyph* 7. All references follow in the text.
- 105) in *The Venus Hunters*, Grafton, p.86
- 106) Aldiss, in Clareson ed. p. 120
- 107) in *The Voices of Time*, J M Dent/Everyman paperback, 1984, p.39-40
- 108) see, for example, 'Hors Texte' in *Dissemination* on the

role of the preface, 'Before the Law' in *Acts of Literature* on the title, 'Parergon' in *The Truth in Painting* on frames and framing in relation to artworks. These elements will be expanded in subsequent chapters.

- 109) Shippey, 'The Cold War in Science Fiction 1940-60' in Parrinder ed., p.108
- 110) *New Statesman* 25/3/77, p.501
- 111) *New Statesman* 25/3/77, p.502
- 112) See introduction to *Our Lady of the Flowers*, Faber, 1964
- 113) Robert Nye, *Guardian* 4/6/81, Martin Amis, *The Observer* (review of *The Day of Creation*, undated cutting, 1987)
- 114) letter to *Foundation* 10, p.51
- 115) *Cypher* 11, p.7

CHAPTER SEVEN

J G BALLARD AND THE GENRE OF CATASTROPHE

Science fiction is the apocalyptic literature of the twentieth century, the authentic language of Auschwitz, Eniwetok and Aldermaston"

'Ballard'¹

"To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric"
Adorno²

If the last chapter displayed that Ballard's adherence to the generic was in some senses catastrophic for definitional postmodernism, the following two chapters will reverse the genitive and explore that paradoxical site, the genre of catastrophe.

For many, of course, postmodernism is the theory of catastrophe *par excellence*, announcing and celebrating the end of History, Meaning, the Subject, the West: "the catastrophe has already happened, we are living in a waiting period, a dead space, which will be marked by increasing and random outbursts of political violence, schizoid behaviour and the implosion of all signs of communication, as western culture runs down towards the brilliant illumination of a final burn out"³. A number of Ballard's texts have been assimilated to such celebratory apocalypticism; early criticism of his 'disaster novels' attacked the relation to the disaster: "you are under absolutely no obligation to do anything about it but sit and worship it"⁴. Death, perversity, atrocity and the dissolution of the self are transformed into things of

beauty.

That other logic of postmodernism, concentrating on the instability of the *post*, could also be said to be catastrophic, but in a different sense from that connoted by the epochalists. Lyotard's call for a postmodern aesthetic answers, in effect, Adorno's invocation of the name 'Auschwitz' as terminating predominant forms of aesthetics and representation. In *The Differend*, the name Auschwitz does not open a new epoch of history that might be termed postmodern; 'Auschwitz' throws the genre of history into question, being the sign of a remainder, a silence, that which cannot be phrased by the historical genre. Attention is then directed towards the attempt to find idioms to phrase this unphasable "sign"⁵. The response is not one of silence but of a movement away from larger historical narratives; the same movement suggested for a 'micrology' which "inscribes the occurrence of a thought as the unthought that remains to be thought"⁶. In the realm of aesthetics, this recalls the postmodern sublime as that which "puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself"⁷. The catastrophe for Adorno may be unrepresentable, or as represented can only be "barbaric", but for Lyotard the catastrophe precisely (re)opens the question of representation as such, demanding a new aesthetic.

For Lyotard this experimentation is to be performed purely

by the avant-garde, distinguished from a determined aesthetic of postmodernism, which "panders to the habits of magazine readers, to the needs of consumers of standard industrial imagery, to the sensibility of the supermarket shopper"². However, if the postmodern sublime announces the end of the aesthetics of the beautiful, is, precisely, a "disaster" for it³, a link can certainly be made to a *popular* genre of the catastrophe.

The following two chapters discuss the genre in ways that are contiguous with Adorno's questioning of the ethics of representation, and the prevalent moral qualms about the genre of catastrophe's *fictional* disasters. What is said after this point does not concern the 'literal' fact of Auschwitz, but opens the question of *fictional* representation. Both chapters in some ways repeat the compulsive production of narratives to 'explain' the genre's allure: the first follows the 'debate' on the representation of catastrophe in relation to the genre as a whole; the following chapter offers a series of readings of specific Ballard texts.

The representation of the catastrophe is subject to profound difficulties and contradictions. As that sudden and irrecoverable event, it is constituted as a failure of representation by its very nature. As an historical event it nevertheless "has no extended duration"; it irrupts *out* of history and cannot be contained there: "Catastrophic

time stands still"¹⁰. Mimesis is impossible, especially in the traditional conception of the re-presentation of experience. As Blanchot states: "The disaster [is] unexperienced. It is what escapes the very possibility of experience -- it is the limit of writing. This must be repeated: the disaster de-scribes". It leaves only "failure's intensity"¹¹.

This delineation of the catastrophe lies in tension with its more technical meaning. *Katastrophein*, the over-turning, names the tragic denouement, the final event of a dramatic action, and as such is the *culmination* of a narrative. Mary Ann Doane argues that the catastrophe as event is, in this sense, "always already contaminated by fictionality"¹², by the demand for a narrativisation to contain it. This tension, between the catastrophe as irruptive and unrepresentable and as that which *calls forth* a narrative, is crucial to understanding the genre of catastrophe.

There are two seeming contradictions here. The first is the very notion of a *generic* catastrophe, given its unrepresentable singularity. How is it that it can be subjected to recognisable limits and conventions, be so endlessly repeatable? And yet, as that which calls forth narrative, the catastrophe demands its repetitive narration and re-narration in order that it be apprehended at all.

Secondly, although the catastrophe is irruptive out of history it is nevertheless possible to historicize its narrative containments. Doane, analysing media news reports of catastrophes argues that what is most catastrophic for television is the absence of footage of the catastrophe itself, and the response is thus endless speculation, theories, experts and eye-witness accounts¹³. In much the same way the narratives of the genre of catastrophe proliferate "explanations". In science fiction texts, the predominant register is that of the scientific thesis. As a signal of Ballard's uneasy relations to the science fictional, his novels of the genre are criticised for being insufficiently "scientific": *The Wind From Nowhere* has a sketchy explanation, it is bracketed and tokenistic in *The Drought*, and is positively (even, perhaps, parodically) impenetrable in *The Crystal World*¹⁴. This is to have a very narrow conception of the 'thetic', however. As will be displayed, part of the problem of reading Ballard's disaster novels is the *super-abundance* of theories and proposals suggested by the texts themselves.

I

I begin with Susan Sontag's essay, 'The Imagination of the Disaster'¹⁵, because it opens the major difficulties I am concerned to confront. Sontag wittily constructs a flexible model of the generic plot of a

series of 1950s popular science fiction films. The sheer number of such films and their evident popularity, despite improbable plots, ragged continuity errors and feeble special effects, demands of the *critic* a narrative that would explain their presence and, more troublingly, their pleasure. The difficulty in 'reading' the catastrophe is in the gap between the unrepresentable event and the narrative it calls forth, its presentation through plot, a gap which opens the potential for allegorising the catastrophe, or indeed the *necessity* for allegory since the catastrophe can only be represented in displaced forms. The monster arising from the deeps, or arriving from space, which lumbers inevitably towards the *de rigueur* special effects sequence of destruction, cannot simply be self-sufficient, self-explanatory; it *must* be expressive of something else. Sontag's readings are then hermeneutic, an interrogation of the latent space of the films, their unconscious expressivity. What is interesting in the readings put forward by Sontag is the assumption that the films are already themselves operating this mode of displacement, will always demand to be viewed by a 'hermeneutic spectator'. This is a valid assumption given their production on the edges of a Hollywood system forced to displacement through the threat of McCarthy. Although there are some dismissive comments about such films as "primitive gratifications"[120], the 'deeper' pleasure to be derived is in the imaginary resolution of predominant cultural fears. The films' plots are

generated out of narrative containments of the catastrophe, but the narratives themselves generate critical narratives; the catastrophe, which remains 'hidden', sets off a compulsive production of explanatory narratives, each claiming to go 'deeper' than the last.

For Sontag the films hide in the first place "a mass trauma...over the use of nuclear weapons"[120]; produced largely in the 1950s they dramatise the 'monsters' of radiation, nuclear accident, and concretise the Cold War enemy. Sontag's flexible generic plot must contain both the position of science as the generator of catastrophe and science as that higher, apolitical practice which could unite the world community against a common threat; a crucial ambivalence of the 1950s with science on the brink of incorporation into the military-industrial complex¹⁶. Sontag, however, adds a further hidden subtext for the catastrophe in terms of the individual; the films are "a popular mythology for the contemporary negative imagination about the impersonal"[127] -- that other 1950s American anxiety about effeminisation or depersonalisation through bureaucracy and the 'mass': 'the Organisation Man'¹⁷. This announced the threat of the dissolution of the individual into collective identity, the robotic fall into conformity. Given these two distinct readings by Sontag it becomes notoriously difficult to decide, for example, the ground of *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*; are the robotic bodies of the invaded town communists or

conformists? The text, given this hermeneutic depth, oscillates unstably between readings; the catastrophe can still only be *posited*, and Sontag places it between "unremitting banality" and "inconceivable terror"[130].

The impetus for Sontag's essay is also central to the discussion of the representation of the catastrophe in general; the sense that the 'surface' reading of such texts must be countered, because as they stand they are morally problematic. Again and again, the catastrophe occasions moralistic statements about limits, taste and duty; for Sontag, the films are undoubtedly "in complicity with the abhorrent"[131] and yet they produce pleasure. There is no ambivalence here, no question of turning, for example, to the Burkean sublime; surface pleasure is to be condemned whilst the depth hermeneutic at least saves the films as interesting, if vulgarly popular, fantasy resolutions. On the surface, the films replace intellect with "sensuous elaboration" [119] and are simply concerned with "the aesthetics of destruction, with the peculiar beauties to be found in wreaking havoc"[120]. If, at this level, there is "absolutely no social criticism"[128], they are, intriguingly "only a sampling, stripped of sophistication, of the inadequacy of most people's response to the unassimilable terrors that infect their consciousness"[130]. The *inadequacy of response* is a crucial phrase in the condemnation of the popular representation of the catastrophe. Sontag seems to be

implying that the catastrophe, if it is to be represented at all, is better suited to the sensibility of more 'serious' forms.

The 1950s American science fiction film is an easy target, both for 'surface' dismissal (although they have, recently, been retrieved as "camp" products) and for hermeneutic reading. Science fiction critics often dismiss this genre of films, invoking either Hollywood's exploitation of the most juvenile elements of the genre, or else by displacing them as more properly horror films. Paul Carter argues that the films are concerned only with the *spectacle* of disaster, whilst the science fiction books and magazines of the period were actually more advanced than public opinion on the effects of radiation, for example, which the Eisenhower administration consistently rubbished as communist propaganda. Sontag also makes the point that the rigorous science of the books was evacuated in the transposition to film. For Carter, out of the Cold War and 'nuclear' speculation, there developed "an entire sub-field of post-Apocalypse stories, which speculate on how far human society could fall before it would reach equilibrium"¹⁸.

Carter does not specify, but it is a common (and largely accurate) gesture to isolate the catastrophe novel as a peculiarly British phenomenon. What Brian Aldiss has wittily christened as "the cosy catastrophe" is defined by

him thus: "The essence of the cosy catastrophe is that the hero should have a pretty good time (a girl, free suites at the Savoy, automobiles for the taking) while everyone else is dying off"¹⁹. The Australian critic Peter Nicholls reaffirms this definition, but adds the question: "Who knows what masochistic streak in the British character has brought out this obsessively repeated theme?"²⁰ This question once again opens the necessity of a hermeneutic reading, and given the specific cultural nationality of the "cosy catastrophe", new grounds will be uncovered.

The genre of catastrophe is principally associated with a group of texts written in the 1950s, most famously represented in John Wyndham's *The Day of The Triffids* (1951) and *The Kraken Wakes* (1953). Others include Charles Eric Maine's *Thirst!* (1958, revised 1977) and John Christopher's *The Death of Grass* (1956). J G Ballard's four disaster novels, *The Wind From Nowhere* (1962), *The Drowned World* (1962), *The Drought* (1965) and *The Crystal World* (1966) were written in this mode, and the generic plot has subsequently been re-invoked and re-worked by M John Harrison's *The Committed Men* (1971), Christopher Priest's *Fugue for a Darkening Island* (1972) and Doris Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974). Although the concentration of these texts is the 1950s and 1960s, the genre reverts back to the 1890s, with Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898) often taken as the paradigmatic text.

This is by no means an exhaustive list.

My conception of genre has hitherto been institutional, to elaborate how, both inside and outside of science fiction, genre elides with the negatively valued site of the "ghetto". J. G. Ballard's adherence to science fiction is "catastrophic", because the generic mark connotes the degraded popular, mechanical repetition and the consequent erasure of the 'individual voice'. The device used in relation to the genre of catastrophe has been to assert Ballard's departure from, indeed "inversion" of, the generic plot. Disjunction with formalistic genre is thus translated into disjunction with the generic site of science fiction, even though these two notions of genre have distinct functions and do not relate in a simple, causal way. An inversion of the generic plot is still dependent on, and incomprehensible without, inscription *within* genre. Genre, in the narrowly formalistic sense, cannot be fruitfully conceived as a rigid structure to which texts conform or which a series of texts produce, but is rather a continual process of structuration with each additional text re-writing the rules and limits and re-shuffling available generic elements. Whilst Adena Rosmarin is correct to insist on the *constitution* of generic limits by criticism, work normally effaced by claiming objective status for the constituted genre, I am not denying that my conception of the genre of catastrophe has a basis in empirical reading, with all the problems

that entails²¹.

An artificial construct of the generic plot elements of the catastrophe might look like this: the initial indicators or warnings of the catastrophe; the disaster (whatever it is -- poison cloud, ecological damage, cosmic realignment, invasion, nuclear war) quickly assumes global proportions; the narrative is assumed by the hero, who, by his very election, will already have survived, in a protected enclave or pocket, often as a minor official of a disintegrating crisis government. There follows, inevitably, the spectacular scenes of a city in panic, decay, and fast descent into barbarism, which provokes discussion of the 'veneer' of civilisation and the fragility of social order and mores. The narrative moves inexorably towards the threat of remainderless destruction, the possibility that even narrative may not survive, but a solution is found, either inexplicably or through the victory of science.

It is interesting that the 'readings' offered by science fiction critics *from the beginning* dismiss the 'literal' catastrophe in itself; the 'scientific' explanations are noted only if they outrageously contravene 'plausibility'. It is read merely as staging a liberated space for the survivors, free from moral constraints. The catastrophe effects a de-sublimation and this is the simple pleasure of the genre. It is amusing, "cosy" and, for Aldiss,

definitively of the pre-1960s, "for the catastrophe novel presupposes that one starts from some kind of established order, and the feeling grew that even established orders were of the past"²². The pleasure here is that of a nostalgia for the simple, 'transparent' catastrophe and the "cosy" response to it.

It is striking that a moralising tone emerges when it comes to Ballard. In Peter Nicholls' view the entire New Wave abandons any moral viewpoint and *celebrates* the catastrophe²³. Suddenly the genre is no longer "cosy". For Greenland, Ballard's disaster novels constitute "a development against the trend of the catastrophe story, which has usually been concerned with the continuation of human identity despite inhuman conditions"²⁴. It is not solely the lack of 'scientific' motivation for the catastrophe; the conception of science as a rational system to contain and possibly disperse the irruptive irrationality of the disaster carries with it essential notions of human behaviour which are seen to be under attack. The displacement of scientific endeavour as the motor of narrative therefore elides with the condemnation of the "almost pathological helplessness"²⁵ of Ballard's characters. They are passive; worse, they embrace and collude with catastrophe. Ballard's inversion of the genre is seen in these terms: "Contrary to most treatments of the theme, the four books are not centred on the frightful destructiveness of the cataclysm but on its awesome

beauty...on the perverse desires, mad ambitions, and suicidal manias of aberrant personalities now free to fulfill fatal aspirations devoid of any rational motivation"²⁶. If the traditional catastrophe initiates some musings about British masochism, Ballard's work goes beyond this into all manner of death-driven perversity; Peter Nicholls, condemning all Ballard's work, says of *Crash* that "Ballard is advocating a life style quite likely to involve the sudden death of yourself or those you love"²⁷.

Ballard's catastrophe is different, although it is significant that many, including Ballard himself, suppress his first novel, *The Wind From Nowhere*, written in ten days to finance his shift to professional writing. This may be because it appears entirely conventional and generic, and thus diminishes the contrast. The inexplicable wind, however, only dies once every human "stand" has been annihilated; although there is action and even survival, it is never triumphal or triumphalist. The three subsequent novels, each entering the catastrophic site at different points, seem paralysed in that limpid state between catastrophes -- the global and the personal. They are set in transformed geographies, and the only action is towards the psychological acceptance of a "new logic", embracing catastrophe and, seemingly, death. Just as the death-into-transcendence in 'The Voices of Time' was read, in the previous chapter, as exposing the

"generic law" of science fiction, so the disaster novels attempt a literal sub-version of the genre, reversing the perceived surface/depth structure to manifest its latent desires. If this reading is accepted, one can see a certain consonance between the novels' sub-version and Baudrillard's claim that the psychoanalytic 'private scene' of the modern has been rendered transparent, *ob-scene*, in the postmodern.

Ballard's texts in this proposal strip away the props that would constitute a reading of the genre simply in terms of its scientific logic and efficacy, or as "cosy" liberations. They do not leave the genre for that reason, however; rather, they positively impel renewed hermeneutic attempts to delineate the nature of the catastrophe. I turn to the first 'reading' by recalling Nicholls' question, addressed, after reading Ballard, to the genre: "Who knows what masochistic streak in the British character has brought out this obsessively repeated theme?". His immediate, although unexplored answer, is: end of empire.

II

THE IMPERIAL SUB-TEXT

"I'm expecting the end of the world today, Austin."
 "Yes, sir. What time, sir?"
 "I can't say. Before evening."
 "Very good, sir."²⁰

Conan Doyle's surely parodic exchange between Challenger

and his butler, as if the catastrophe were an unreliable guest with no sense of punctuality, encapsulates the peculiarly "English" response to the disaster, the bizarre discrepancy between the consequences of global destruction and the inadequacy of response. This recalls the scene of Phyllis and Watson in *The Kraken Wakes*, surrounded by rising waters and proposing a toast to honour Mr. T S Eliot, a poet who *could* have found adequate response in extremity²⁹. These moments of self-parody co-exist, however, with random violence, mass death and rape deployed strategically as the signifier of ultimate barbarism. For Jameson it is Ballard who opens the meaning of the genre:

Let the Wagnerian and Spenglerian world-dissolutions of J G Ballard stand as exemplary illustrations of the ways in which a dying class -- in this case the cancelled future of a vanished colonial and imperial destiny -- seeks to intoxicate itself with images of death that range from the destruction of the world by fire, water and ice to lengthening sleep or the beserk orgies of high-rise buildings or superhighways reverting to barbarism³⁰

Ballard is "exemplary", his sub-versive writing presents to hermeneutic reading the affirmation it requires. The unrepresentable catastrophe can be situated, grounded, in the allegory of the destruction of empire. Is such a hermeneutic reading of the genre plausible?

The historical coincidence of decolonisation and the production of science fiction catastrophe texts in the 1950s is marked. If the period 1945-51 saw the reduction

of imperial 'subjects' from 475 million to 70 million, the 1950s continued with a series of violent and uncereemonious colonial withdrawals, from Palestine in 1948 to the repression, and systematic killing in Kenya. The 1956 Suez crisis is usually presented in historiographic narratives as Britain's "last imperial venture", with both Eden and Gaitskell still affirming the anachronistic belief in "the moral aim of preserving civilised standards wherever Britain had once exercised responsibility"³¹. Britain's belief in its status as an independent power was humiliatingly curtailed by the unlikely alliance of American and Russian condemnation, and the immediate result was the 1957 defence review which effectively surrendered control to America. Decolonisation, although presented by Kenneth Morgan in largely humanitarian terms³², merely reflected the progressive shift of power to America: "one of the external stimulants towards decolonisation was the impatience of US and multi-national corporations with the restrictive trade practices imposed by colonial power"³³. This process was coupled with reverse migrations of African and Afro-Caribbeans to the colonial centre, the liberal narrative of tolerance shattered by the 1958 Notting Hill riots and subsequent progressively restrictive immigration laws.

From this rudimentary historical data is it possible to propose it as the allegorical ground of the catastrophe? There are, of course, overt deployments of this context:

Margot Bennett's *The Long Way Back* (1954) has African explorers visiting a post-Holocaust Britain, now collapsed into barbarism. The 'waves' of destruction, the first signs of the catastrophe in the genre, always seem to begin obscurely in the Far East and move inexorably towards England. This is not containable to texts produced in the 1950s, however. And yet that second concentration of the genre around the turn of the century could be said to re-inforce the imperial subtext. The 1880s and 1890s, Hobsbawm argues, indicated the first structural crises of imperialist over-extension, and the contemporaneous transformation of the signifiers of Empire into domestic public spectacles which worked to solidify a concept of the nation within a state threatened by internal struggles⁹⁴. Rider Haggard's fantasy of the African terrain as that space where the decline of England into effeminacy could be reversed and re-masculinised was translated directly into generic terms. Henry James' "unnatural" knowledge of women was to be replaced by the rigorous and muscular adventure. Gail Ching-Liang Low's analysis of Haggard's texts notes that their settings in the indeterminate (though still imperial) past and their elegiac tone for lost innocence effectively disowns culpability and displaces the catastrophe from imperialism⁹⁵. Haggard was also producing elegies for the destruction of rural England as the source of ideal nation and manhood⁹⁶. This clear relation between the fragility of the rural and the very frontiers of the Empire can

effect a reading of Wells' *The War of the Worlds* as a reverse fantasy-nightmare of colonisation by the colonised³⁷.

It is M P Shiel's *The Purple Cloud* that is the most overt of these fin-de-siècle catastrophes³⁸. Shiel (author also of *The Yellow Peril*) produces endless descriptions of bodies frozen in panic as they move West before the advancing cloud; when Adam arrives at Dover "I...could not believe that I was in England, for all were dark-skinned people"[86], and he finally realizes "the empires of civilisation have crumbled like sand-castles to an encumbrance of anarchies"[92]. The visit to his home town in Yorkshire to find his family home invaded by foreigners finally de-rails his identity: "I am hardly any longer a Western, "modern" mind, but a primitive, Eastern one"[139-40]. Cross-dressed in a riotous confusion of different national clothes he proceeds across the world annihilating cities; it is only when he discovers his 'Eve' that a certain civilising "Westernness" returns.

The arts, Hobsbawm proposes, most clearly represented the crisis of imperialism, and although he sees the fin-de-siècle decadence partly as a response to new mass cultural forms, his following sentence could be transposed into Fredric Jameson's description of Ballard's texts: "As bourgeois Europe moved in growing material comfort towards its catastrophe [in this case the First World War], we

observe the curious phenomenon of a bourgeoisie...which plunged willingly, even enthusiastically, into the abyss"³⁹.

There is a specificity, or at least Sinfield argues, to the 1950s imperial crisis. The duplicitous liberal narratives that could serve to legitimate colonialism as humanitarian were destroyed by the advent of violent anti-imperial nationalist struggles. This had such an effect that "[i]mperialist ideology was readjusted to produce a myth of 'human nature': it is savage"⁴⁰. Sinfield's primary exemplars of this in the cultural sphere are Golding and Greene: Golding's *The Lord of the Flies* is read as the paradigmatic case of the civilised 'veneer' hiding an essential savagery; Greene exploits exotic landscape as the objective correlative of moral crisis and innate sin. This readjustment, to universal savagery, is "the final, desperate throw of a humiliated and exhausted European humanism"⁴¹.

Sinfield's narrative is painfully simplified but it does begin to elaborate more of a 'ground' for those uncomfortable elements ignored in the delineation of the "cosy" catastrophe. Aldiss' dismissal of John Wyndham's work as being "totally devoid of ideas"⁴² misses, as Rowland Wymer has shown, the strain of vicious social Darwinism which challenges their otherwise cosy liberalism, with Bocker (in *The Kraken Wakes*) and Zellaby

(in *The Midwich Cuckoos*) insisting on the necessary violent defence of the *genus* from invaders⁴³. Ethical concerns are replaced by the biological imperative. The uncomfortable dissection of the incapacity of liberalism and parliamentary democracy, made by one of the children in *The Midwich Cuckoos* (see ps.197-201), echoes the proposals of the dissolution of impotent democracy for the autocratic rule of the scientific elite enacted in J J Connington's *Nordernholt's Million* or desired in Fred Hoyle's *The Black Cloud*⁴⁴. The sudden regression of human nature constitutes the main subject of Maine's *Thirst!* and Christopher's *The Death of Grass*⁴⁵. Wade, the central figure of *Thirst!* is constantly portrayed as irresolute and convention-bound; he must learn the "general adaptation syndrome": "In a crisis people behave differently -- they revert to some fundamental level. It has to do with survival...The intellect tends to become paralysed. Their behaviour is dominated by the survival drive"[27]. *The Death of Grass* is more elegiac, with its nostalgia for an England of "broad avenues celestially lit" and its "policemen -- custodians, without anger or malice, of a law that stretched to the end of the earth" [112]. The dream of England as nation is inextricably linked to the exercise of imperial rule, a dream which gradually fails as the characters move, ironically towards rural retreat, through rape, murder and eventual affectless fratricide.

Given the imperial subtext, how do these texts *function* for it, why is the catastrophe obsessively reproduced? Is it a masochistic pleasure, a condensation of slow decline into a beatific sudden destruction? Or is it an encoded call to arms, Zellaby and Bocker's biological imperative? Wade is told: "What you need is a real crisis. You're drifting. Living from day to day, hanging on to the routine, afraid to break away. Come a crisis and you'll find yourself"[43]. For Sinfield, however, the texts, if motored by this subtext, are premised on a narrative of the catastrophe that must be repudiated, since the 'literature of the savage depths' "revel[s] in the appalling events of our century" and "obscures the political determinants and distracts from positive tasks of analysis and action".⁴⁶

This 'sub-textual' reading has a certain plausibility, and elements of Ballard's texts 'fit': the Cameroon setting of *The Crystal World* is a text which recalls explicitly at points Greene's *A Burnt-Out Case*, although this 'heart of darkness' is sub-verted into a forest emitting sharp crystalline light; *The Drowned World* concentrates on devolution and biological adaptation, and the transposition of enervating tropical heat to London could be read as a reverse fantasy of colonised colonisers, the characters that remain subject to a "primitivisation". Further, the title of *The Wind From Nowhere* could, at a stretch, be tenuously linked to Macmillan's phrase "the

wind of change" from Africa. There is also a difficulty, to "police" these texts for a moment, with the representation of blacks, especially the lepers in *The Crystal World*⁴⁷.

The security of the sub-textual reading is that, once established from a number of overt signposts in isolated texts, it can abandon detailed analysis and claim to have 'solved' the enigma of the genre as a whole. There is a problem, I think, with Jameson's "exemplary" Ballard, however, and since he refers to "dying class" it may be legitimate, momentarily, to turn to biography.

Ballard's "exceptional" childhood in Shanghai is, of course, one of the key facts critics seize to "except" him from the generic. This is not my intention here. Up to the age of eleven, Ballard lived in the enclave of the International Settlement, cushioned both by Chinese servants and governess and by what Ballard has referred to as the "pane of glass" of his father's Buick, which separated, with a fragile potency, privilege from poverty⁴⁸. The Japanese seizure of the International Settlement was perceived as a catastrophic end to privilege, and internment stripped away all signs of difference. What is crucial, and Ballard states this in response to an explicit question about an 'imperial sub-text', is that the zone of his childhood was an overwhelmingly American one; his conception of England was

as much a fantasy, subject to deflation, as any other migrant to the old colonial centre. If the catastrophe novels are about the dissolution of empire, he states, then it is an *American* one, and its ideology as bearers of the Future -- it is "the end of technology"⁴⁹. English influence is already effectively over, figured in *Empire of the Sun* as the endless round of fancy-dress parties in which the English colonials masquerade in the empty signifiers of their own culture. The enclave of the Settlement existed as a disjunct temporal zone projecting, as it were, a *future* dissolution not simply of a colonial but also, potentially, a *neo-colonial* economy. In this narrative it is possible to propose a strange loop of time where memories of the past, as already future, maroon the present in a state of paralysis *between* catastrophes.

It is significant too that Ballard's largely dismissive comments on earlier texts in the genre relate to *landscape*, which, if the imperial subtext is to be read, is crucially connected to the constitution of nation: "The rural landscape of the meadow didn't mean anything to me...That's why the sf of John Wyndham, Christopher and so forth I can't take. Too many rolling meadows"⁵⁰

This may sound a like an apologia, and it cannot solely negate the imperial subtext since its very latency argues for a larger structural influence which exceeds intending or meaning-to-say. The *context* of imperialism is no doubt

a crucial element, but one of many which overdetermine the catastrophe. The *singular* sub-textual explanatory frame is to be objected to on two grounds: its finality and its functionalism. The genre is expressive of an indistinct, larger ground of which it is the *function* of the texts to expose in a *final* determination of meaning. The catastrophe, especially in Ballard's texts, is far more elusive than that.

Sontag's reading and the 'imperial sub-text' adopt a method which aims to uncover the hidden 'object' that motors the compulsive narrations of the genre of catastrophe. As suggested in the last chapter, this renders the surface of the text as purely symptomatic. However, since the catastrophe is that which precisely disrupts representation, a *critical* narrative can only repeat the compulsion to narrate called forth by the catastrophe. The catastrophe "exists", representationally, only in the narrations it calls forth; in this way *all* catastrophe narratives are *nachträglich*, in Freud's sense of deferment where primacy is only given meaning by resultant events. It is vital, therefore, to attend to the very surface of these texts. *Nachträglichkeit*, deferred action, the sense that secondary events set in place the power and allure of a catastrophic primary moment, is part of the 'trick' of representation that Lyotard sees questioned in the art of Adami. It is a trick that "demands a commentary, a cause,

but it is mistaken, for the beginning is part of the plot, and so is the wish for a beginning and the wish to have done with the beginning"⁵¹. Sub-textual readings cannot close down the productivity of the catastrophe, move 'behind' its representation. If the sublime for Lyotard is the attempt to signal the fact of the unrepresentable in presentation, then I want to insist, *contra* Lyotard, that a form of this problematic can be discovered in reading popular forms. For the remainder of this chapter I intend to follow the broader implications of an insistence on reading the surface by turning to the 'nuclear'.

III

THE TEXT OF THE NUCLEAR

It might appear, on first sight, that shifting attention to the nuclear context merely re-directs a reading to a competing ground of sub-textual explanation. For a complex of historical reasons, popular fictions of nuclear catastrophe in the 1950s are attributable to a largely American concern. As Paul Boyer notes, the immediate response to Hiroshima and Nagasaki was the unleashing of fantasies of retaliation, the destruction of American cities that had never previously been threatened by the possibility of external violence, unlike European states who had 'models' for such destruction⁵². America also witnessed a series of powerful pressure groups, particularly *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* (from 1946)

and the World Government movement, as well as massive media campaigns, which took the strategy of producing "worst case" scenarios in the attempt to alarm public opinion into action. The American media was therefore continuously involved in the production of images of nuclear catastrophe virtually from the moment 'peace' was declared in 1945.

The contrast with Britain is striking. If the 1946 Bikini Atoll tests were a spectacle for the media (who coined from this the metaphorising of atomic as sexual power in christening a swimming costume "the bikini"), later British tests were conducted in secrecy⁵³. The first successful organised opposition only arrived in 1958, with the foundation of CND, the immediate context being the sense of surrendering control to an overarching American policy symbolised by the arrival of nuclear weapons at US bases in East Anglia. CND, in its first phase, had effectively splintered and collapsed by 1963 through internal dissension, the Test Ban treaty and the apparent success of deterrence theory during the Cuban missile crisis. Thus, although one of Ballard's 'signs' of history is 'Aldermaston', the saturation of nuclear imagery in America was not present in Britain.

My concern, however, is not with sub-text, with reading the ecological and other disasters of the genre of catastrophe as displaced representations of the nuclear.

Rather, the issues concerning the 'morality' of representation, furiously debated amongst critics writing on the fictions of nuclear disaster, can be opened onto more general questions of the genericised catastrophe (I leave Ballard's one 'direct' nuclear story, 'The Terminal Beach', until the next chapter for reasons that will become clear later).

The generic is perhaps most forcefully condemned, in terms of science fiction, when it comes to fictions of nuclear war. As if to mark its immaturity and its likely addressees, there is a whole set of critical essays concerning the inadequacy of such texts for educating children about the effects of nuclear weapons. Daniel Zins is prepared to attribute most of America's "youth" problems -- drugs, religious cults, nihilistic attitudes and disrespect for authority -- to the pointlessness induced by the threat of nuclear war's negation of the future⁵⁴. The concern with science fiction representations, recalling Sontag, is that "[i]n spite of occasionally gruesome details, these narratives entertain"⁵⁵. Paul Brians is perhaps the most consistently condemnatory: "Fiction which depicts the death of a vast majority of humankind as anything other than an unmitigated disaster is anti-human. By encouraging young readers to think of themselves as survivors possibly benefitting from a holocaust we are actually encouraging them to accept their own

annihilation"²⁶. If this were to be translated to the genre of catastrophe Ballard's particular contribution would probably result in an apoplectic outburst of moral denunciation. This translation cannot be effected, however, for the emphasis of these essays is the necessity of absolute literalism in representation in order to fulfill an educative role. "Entertainment" is to be erased as much as the fictionality of such fictions is to be negated.

Paul Brians' bibliography, *Nuclear Holocausts: Atomic War in Fiction*²⁷, has a long introductory essay in which this position is elaborated. The criteria for inclusion is *explicit* representation of nuclear war; these are the texts that will have an "admonitory effect"[ix]. Brians notes a quick lapse into "disheartening cliché"[3]. However, he deploys the same device that was analysed in the last chapter: the genre has produced "a few works of high literary merit"[3].

Apart from these exemplary texts, condemnation takes the form of attacking the evasion of 'confrontation' with the nuclear 'event' and its subsequent effects. Echoing precisely the genre of catastrophe, Brians notes "[a]lmost every writer depicting the immediate postholocaust world imagines the swift collapse of civilisation and a more or less definitive reversion to barbarism"[50]. The 'fact' of nuclear war is avoided, offering merely the fantasy

space for repressed desires to be fulfilled: unleashing the Bomb unleashes sexuality. These scenarios appeal to those who "prefer the excitement of barbarism to the tedium of civilisation"[75]. This, for Brians, is an immoral metaphorisation of nuclear war. The pleasures and dangers of the "apocalyptic metaphor"[58] is his main objection: "Metaphor often becomes a tool for evading realism, moderating the horror by transforming it into artifice"[40]. Such is the demand for 'literal' representation that Brians attacks technical inaccuracies written in texts before effects like nuclear winter and electro-magnetic pulse were even theorised, and criticises Neville Shute's *On the Beach* not for its passivity but because it "contains no melted eyeballs, no hanging flaps of skin, no suppurating sores, no cancerous lesions, no mounds of rubble, no deformed babies"[83]. Any text which fails to reach this measure is guilty of a failure of moral duty.

It would be interesting to consider how far Brians extends this refusal of metaphor. At times he seems merely to oppose the deployment of nuclear war as opening fantasy space ("A nuclear holocaust is not a rite of passage, nor is it an apocalyptic cleansing of the Earth to prepare the way for a new and better life...It is simply the end"[69]), at others metaphoricity appears to elide with the notion of literature itself. Praising Strieber and Kunetka's *Warday* as an exemplary text, he adds: "Its

literary importance is negligible. But as a piece of carefully researched documentary style educational material, it stands head and shoulders above other similar novels"[45]. The immorality of metaphor extends to literariness, literary language; like the elaborate jargon of professionalised "nukespeak", it must be neutralised to attain a literal level where fiction serves only a pedagogical function, without 'surface' disruption by language. However, if nuclear war is "simply the end", is that also not the end of any representation of it and of representation itself? If this is the case, is it not unsurprising that nearly all the texts in the bibliography fail to arrive at his measure and 'avoid the holocaust'? How is the end of representation to be represented?

I will come to this shortly, but it is worth noting that other critics, notably Schwenger and Dowling, argue the opposite: that *only* metaphor can present the unrepresentable of the nuclear catastrophe⁵⁸. Brians himself states that, of nuclear war fictions, "[t]he genre it has most in common with is not in fact the war story at all, but the narrative of a great catastrophe: fire, flood, plague"[3]; this opens, then closes, the possibility of an *allegorical* ground. Schwenger's exemplary texts are metafictional, concentrating on the impossible demands made of language by the unrepresentable, the failure of representation. Schwenger's 'aesthetics of atrocity' must "proceed by implication...The true subject of such an art is not the

bomb itself but its psychological penumbra"[46]. Dowling concurs with this aesthetic, arguing that self-reflexivity, exposing the limits of language, "locate[s] the experience of nuclear disaster by surrounding the inexpressible with verbal strategies, hemming it in so that our reading experience includes the sense of an ominous black chasm"[13-14].

These directly opposed positions in fact unite on one issue: repetition. Schwenger evidently has similar qualms to Sontag: "the subject of nuclear war has, up till now, mainly served the purposes of science fiction; only rarely...have science fiction authors risen above the lowest common denominator of that genre"[34]. The concern evident here is that a popular genre constantly recycles representations of the nuclear. Brians, although jealously guarding science fiction's 'invention' of nuclear war²⁹, is equally concerned about the generic and the lapse into cliché. The moralism of both positions is entrenched: too little direct representation constitutes an avoidance of moral duty; too much results in a psychic numbing and a domestication, perhaps even a contribution to the notion of the "inevitable" nuclear war. It is a choice between 'good' and 'bad' representations, based on a measure of 'literal truth'.

Both positions seem premised on precarious and moralistic foundations, a 'literalism' that is comparable to the

initial condemnation of Ballard's disaster novels. Rather, given this 'debate' I want to turn to the arguments of Nuclear Criticism, which suggests a different orientation of the whole issue of the representation of the catastrophe.

Nuclear criticism was proposed as a collective programme of reading in 1984 in the *Diacritics* journal. Although the initial statement did suggest some element of sub-textual reading and the familiar tinges of moralism (concentrating once more on repetition; the endless repetition of images of destruction which serve only to eradicate the reality they are said to designate), Derrida's contribution, 'No Apocalypse, Not Now', suggested a different conception⁶⁰.

Derrida's premise is this: since nuclear war is as yet unrealized, since it is a global catastrophe without any precedent or model in which to frame it, the 'reality' of the nuclear is "fabulously textual"[23]. There is, as yet, no object which it could designate, no *real* referent that could stand as a measure to legitimate or test (scientific or other) 'proofs' of it. The contradiction, of course, is that *if* the real referent arrived, it would annihilate all witness, all frames of 'proof' with it. Derrida does not deny the 'reality' of nuclear weapons, but argues that their potential use, their potential effects, can only be projected in "fables". The nuclear

is productive of fantasy; if the first protest campaigns used the propagandist strategy of the "worst case", this has no less claim on the 'truth' of effects than deterrence theory -- operating with a dangerously self-contradictory logic that escalating threat equals decrease of likely use, a strategy that, to avoid annihilation, can only be a purely diplomatico-rhetorical one⁶¹. Such rhetorics and projections nevertheless have very real effects: "'Reality', let's say the encompassing institution of the nuclear age, is constituted by the fable, on the basis of an event that has never happened"[23].

The implications for the 'debate' on representation are clear: the demand for, or denial of, 'realistic', non-metaphorical representation becomes impossible, since there is no definitive ground, no real referent against which 'good' or 'bad' representations can be measured. There can be no simple notions of representation as re-presentation, and no moralistic condemnation of evasion or avoidance; demanding a literalism of the literally non-literalisable is a contradiction in terms. In this sense, texts can *only* present "metaphorical" apprehensions of the catastrophe. More than this, popular texts are not to be understood as "mirrors" of prevalent cultural anxieties, a kind of secondary, degraded "reflection"; the nuclear catastrophe is without precedent or model, can only be projected in fables, and as such these texts

contribute to the elaboration of the nuclear fable rather than reflect it. A sub-textual reading would *miss* its object; the 'event' of the catastrophe is without ground, and is 'real' only insofar as it leaves its narrative trace *on the surface*.

'No Apocalypse, Not Now' has a *specific* hypothesis about Literature, however. The concept of a Literature, Derrida argues, is possible only once it has been constituted as an archive, that is as a discursively ruled body of texts made possible by "the development of a positive law implying authors' rights, the identification of the signatory, of the corpus, names titles, the distinction between original and copy..."[26]. This archive has a unique (or at least so the hypothesis states) condition; it is without a real referent external to itself. As such, in the face of even a limited destruction, it has no means of reconstituting itself as archive, since nothing can reformulate it outside its own reference; it is "the body of texts...most radically threatened, for the first and last time, by the nuclear catastrophe"[27]. It is to be noted that the condition of Literature and the elaboration of the nuclear as "fable" are structurally equivalent: both have no real referent, both have only a performative relation to that referent. Derrida thus extends his hypothesis to state that Literature, as an archive identifiable from the Eighteenth century "is contemporaneous through and through, or rather

structurally indissociable, from something like a nuclear epoch"[27]. He continues:

literature comes to life and can only experience its own precariousness, its death menace and its essential finitude. The movement of its inscription is the very possibility of its effacement. Thus one cannot be satisfied with saying that, in order to become serious and interesting today, a literature and literary criticism must refer to the nuclear issue, must even be obsessed by it. This has to be said, and it is true. But I believe also that, at least indirectly, they have always done this. Literature has always belonged to the nuclear epoch, even if it does not talk "seriously" about it"[27]^{e2}

The 'nuclear' is to be understood not as one of a shifting and competing set of explanations for the genre, but the very condition of it. If the genre of catastrophe is marked as 'nuclear', therefore, it is not finally determining the 'hidden' truth, the final ground or context of the genre, for the catastrophe as such remains un-named, indeterminable; the nuclear refers to a structure and mode of inscription.

Arguing that all literature is 'nuclear', is written with the precariousness of its effacement always at hand, may seem far too generalised a statement to assist in a delineation of the genre of catastrophe. And yet these fictions, to follow Derrida elsewhere, might be considered "exemplary" moments in which Literature confronts its own catastrophe^{e3}.

It must be emphasised that nuclear criticism does not offer the final *content* of the catastrophe, but is a mode

of inscription. Many of these texts -- Wyndham's *The Kraken Wakes*, *The Day of the Triffids* -- contain more than gestures of determining the catastrophe (even if science fiction critics themselves dismiss the scientific "explanation" as central to the texts), narratives called forth from its irruption. There are other texts, however, in which the catastrophe remains undetermined and undeterminable. These texts play, to some extent, on the codes of recognisability of the genre, the paradox of the irruptive once-and-for-all catastrophe in a repetitive series of presentations. The effect is to induce in the process of reading the question of the genre itself: what is It?

Doris Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor* is fascinating in this regard. The narrator remains (im)passively at the centre of urban collapse, and refers, ever tantalisingly, to the catastrophe as "It". When the divided, textual space that will delineate the "It" finally arrives, the response to the call is this:

But is it possible to write an account of anything at all without 'it' -- in some shape or other -- being the main theme? Perhaps, indeed, 'it' is the secret theme of all literature and history, like writing in invisible ink between the lines, which springs up, sharply black, dimming the old print we knew so well, as life, personal or public, unfolds unexpectedly and we see something we never thought we could -- we see 'it' as the ground-swell of events, experience ...[.] For it is a force, a power, taking the form of earthquake, a visiting comet whose balefulness hangs closer night by night distorting all thought by fear -- 'it' can be, has been, pestilence, a war, the alteration of climate, a tyranny that twists men's minds, the savagery of religion.

'It', in short, is the word for helpless ignorance, or of helpless awareness. It is a word for man's inadequacy?⁶⁴

The determination of the catastrophe, in response to the demand to contain it, cannot find a shape or singular event, but helplessly spins into generalised all-encompassing statements; it can repeat, in fact, only the narratives of its own genre, in a moment of desperate self-repetition that reveals only indeterminacy. There is no revelation of 'it'.

Ballard's novels have a different device. It has been noted that Brian Aldiss and others become irritated by Ballard's evident lack of scientific rigour or interest in providing the "explanation"; worse, in fact, was the dense and incomprehensible letter in which Sanders "explains" the vitrifying forest in *The Crystal World*, for this suggested an intent to parody. With this mechanism of coherence undercut, and a manifest disinterest (except for *The Wind From Nowhere*) in detailing the progress of the catastrophe, the narratives simply appear as perverse sub-versions of the generic mode, placed in that paralysed space *after* the catastrophe -- at least, on the 'literal' level.

There is a final element that should be drawn, in conclusion, from Derrida's essay, and that refers to its title, 'No Apocalypse, Not Now'. Derrida exploits the

double meaning of apocalypse, initially in the sense of global catastrophe, but also apocalypse as *revelation*, *disclosure*, the un-veiling of a hidden truth, lifting the veil to whisper the 'secret' in encoded language, accessible only to the Chosen^{es}. In this latter sense, if the "It" cannot be determined, there can be no apocalypse. What both Lessing and Ballard achieve, is a movement away from the catastrophe itself, looping back towards it through the revelation of an intensely personalised apocalypse. Sontag, it will be remembered, was caught between the 'global' and 'personal' levels of interpretation. For Brians, for the moralists of the catastrophe, the "use" of the literal, global disaster as "metaphor" for the personal is unsustainable, but I have tried to display how the representation of the catastrophe can *only* be so, bridging the gap between unrepresentable event and the narrative it calls forth. I am now in a position, finally, to read Ballard's texts in detail.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Penguin cover blurb, ascribed to Ballard, quoted by Patrick Parrinder, *Science Fiction: A Critical Guide*, Longman, 1979, p83
- 2) Adorno, 'Cultural Criticism and Society', *Prisms*, Neville Spearman, 1967, p.34
- 3) Kroker and Cook, *The Postmodern Scene*, p.xvii, quoted by Patricia Waugh, 'Reassessing Subjectivity: Modernity, Postmodernity and Feminism in Theory and Aesthetic Practice', *Bete Noire* 8/9, Spring 1990, p.75
- 4) Algis Budrys, *Galaxy*, 25:2, 1966, p.128
- 5) see *The Differend*, Manchester UP, 1990
- 6) 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde', *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin, Blackwell, 1989, p.208. 'Paralogy' is, of course, the equivalent mode suggested for science in *The Postmodern Condition*
- 7) 'Answering the Question: What is postmodernism?', *The Postmodern Condition*, Manchester UP, 1984, p.81
- 8) 'Presenting the Unpresentable: The Sublime', *Artforum*, April, 1982, p.67. Compare the description in 'Answering the Question': "one listens to reggae, watches a Western, eats McDonald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and "retro" clothes in Hong Kong; knowledge is a matter for TV games", p.76. Lyotard is delineating an 'eclectic' aesthetic, but its signifiers seem inescapably "popular".

- 9) 'After the Sublime: The State of Aesthetics', in Carrol (ed), *The States of Theory*, Columbia UP, 1990, p.299
- 10) Mary Ann Doane, 'Information, Crisis, Catastrophe', *Logics of Television*, ed. Patricia Mellencamp, BFI/Indiana UP, 1990, ps. 223, 231
- 11) Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, University of Nebraska Press, 1986, ps. 7, 11
- 12) Doane, 'Information, Crisis, Catastrophe', p. 228
- 13) see Doane, 'Information, Crisis, Catastrophe'
- 14) Aldiss, 'The Wounded Land', in *SF: The Other Side of Realism*, ed. T. Clareson, Bowling Green University Press, 1971
- 15) in *Science Fiction*, Prentice-Hall Twentieth Century Views series, ed. Mark Rose, 1976. All references in the text
- 16) see Tom Shippey, 'The Cold War in Science Fiction 1940-60', in *Science Fiction: A Critical Guide* ed. Farrinder, Longman 1979, for an excellent discussion on this point.
- 17) *The Organisation Man* by William Whyte (1956) was a crucial text, crystallising many anxieties about the direction of American post-war society.
- 18) Paul Carter, *Another Part of the Fifties*, Columbia UP, 1983, p.248
- 19) Aldiss *Billion Year Spree*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1973, p.294
- 20) Peter Nicholls, 'Jerry Cornelius at the Atrocity

- Exhibition: Anarchy and Entropy in *New Worlds* science fiction', *Foundation* 9, 1975, p.26
- 21) see Adena Rosmarin *The Power of Genre*, University of Minnesota Press, 1985, particularly the introduction.
- 22) Brian Aldiss, *Billion Year Spree*, p.296
- 23) Nicholls, *Foundation* 9, 1975, p.28
- 24) Greenland, *The Entropy Exhibition*, p.94
- 25) James Blish, *More Issues at Hand*, Advent, 1970, p.127. Algis Budrys' *Galaxy* piece characterises Ballard's work as 'inertial science fiction' dangerously contaminating an entire generation of science fiction writers.
- 26) 'Ballard' entry in *Twentieth Century Science Fiction Writers*, 2nd edition, ed. Curtis Smith, St. James Press, 1986, p.32
- 27) Nicholls, *Foundation* 9, p.31 -- a case of Nicholls becoming a victim of Ballard's "terminal irony" it would seem.
- 28) Conan Doyle *The Poison Belt* (1913), published with *The Lost World*, Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1989, p.205
- 29) John Wyndham, *The Kraken Wakes* (1953), Penguin Books, 1955, p.222
- 30) Fredric Jameson, 'Progress Vs. Utopia; or, Can we imagine the future?', *Science Fiction Studies* 27, 9:2, July 1982, p.152
- 31) R. Skidelsky, 'Lessons of Suez' in *The Age of Affluence* ed. Bogdanor and Skidelsky, Macmillan, 1970,

p.181

- 32) see *Labour in Power 1945-51*, Clarendon, 1984, especially the chapter 'The New Commonwealth'
- 33) Alan Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain*, Blackwell, 1989, p.125
- 34) see *The Age of Empire 1875-1914*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1987
- 35) see 'His Stories? Narratives and Images of Imperialism', *New Formations* 12, Winter 1990
- 36) see Dennis Butts' introduction to *King Solomon's Mines*, Oxford World's Classics series, 1989
- 37) Hobsbawm offers precisely this reading in *The Age of Empire*, ps. 82-4. See also Brantlinger's *Rule of Darkness*, Cornell UP, 1988
- 38) M P Shiel, *The Purple Cloud* (1901), page numbers in text from Allison and Busby paperback edition (no date)
- 39) Hobsbawm, *Age of Empire*, p.190
- 40) Sinfield, *Postwar Britain*, p.140
- 41) Sinfield, *Postwar Britain*, p.141
- 42) Aldiss, *Billion Year Spree*, p.289
- 43) Rowland Wymer, 'How "Safe" is John Wyndham?', *Foundation* 55, 1992
- 44) John Wyndham, *The Midwich Cuckoos* (1957), Penguin 1960; J J Connington, *Nordenholt's Million* (1923), Penguin 1946; Fred Hoyle, *The Black Cloud* (1957), Penguin 1960
- 45) *Thirst!*, revised edition of *The Tide Went Out* (1957),

Sphere Books, 1977; *The Death of Grass* (1956), Sphere books, 1978. All page references in the text.

- 46) Sinfield, *Postwar Britain*, p.148
- 47) On "policing", I am thinking of David Pringle's *Earth is the Only Alien Planet* monograph on Ballard, which is distinctively of its time in making 'apologias' for Ballard for his "incorrect" representations of race, gender and class (Millford Series, Popular Writers of Today no.26, The Borgo Press, 1979). Gail Ching-Liang Low's comments at the opening of her piece on Haggard indicate a more constructive move: "the easy negation of such writing does not address the power and hold...nor the trajectories of its desire", p.97
- 48) these details are taken from various interviews, especially Pringle's 'synthesis' into an autobiographical narrative, 'From Shanghai to Shepperton', re-printed in *Re/Search J G Ballard* special issue, ed V. Vale and Andrea Juno, Re/Search Publications, San Francisco, 1984. The quote is taken from Ballard's autobiographical piece for the 'Grand Tour' series on Radio 4, 1990.
- 49) Ballard interview with Pringle and Godard, *Vector* 73, March 1976, p. 32
- 50) Pringle and Godard, p.29. I discuss *Empire of the Sun* in Chapter 10, but it is perhaps worth noting here that its publication in 1984 provoked a response from a fellow internee, who objected to the portrait of the dour and incompetent British prisoners against the

glamorous and resourceful Americans. He objects to this "fashionable national self-denigration". As Dennis Walder suggests, Ballard is failing to write the correct *ideological* imperial history. Walder, Ballard section of *Literature and History*, Open University Course Book, 1991. Letter cited p.83

- 51) Lyotard, 'Anamnesis of the Visible, or Candour', *The Lyotard Reader*, p.229
- 52) Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*, Pantheon, 1985
- 53) successive British governments have refused to accept any evidence of links between deaths of Servicemen and 'Operation Grapple' in 1958, an atmospheric test which rained fallout on national servicemen in the Pacific.
- 54) Daniel Zins, 'Teaching English in a Nuclear Age', *College English* 47:4, April 1985. This position, of the concerned, liberal teacher terrified by his nihilistic students, is lightly satirised in Graham Swift's novel *Waterland*, narrated by a history teacher who is irrelevant both to his students and the authorities who have decided to remove history from the curriculum for something more useful. How much of this moral concern is *generational*? Another reading of the catastrophe: Greenland argues that the New Wave of science fiction had intimate links to the counter-cultural rejection of parental authority, and Wymer reads Zellaby's anxieties over the Midwich

children as reflecting the contemporaneous constitution of 'the teenager' as rebellious 'fifth column' within Western societies.

- 55) Hamida Bosmajian, 'Conventions of Image and Form in nuclear war narratives for young readers', *Papers on Language and Literature*, special 'nuclear fiction' issue, 26:1, Winter 1990, p.74
- 56) Paul Brians, 'Nuclear War fiction for Young Readers', *Science Fiction, Social Conflict and War*, ed. Philip John Davies, Manchester UP, 1990, p.143-4
- 57) Paul Brians, *Nuclear Holocausts: Atomic War in Fiction 1895-1984*, Kent State UP, 1987. All references in the text.
- 58) Paul Schwenger, 'Writing the Unthinkable', *Critical Inquiry* 13, Autumn 1986; David Dowling, *Fictions of Nuclear Disaster*, Macmillan, 1987. All page references in the text.
- 59) Brians displays an anxiety on this point. There is a concern that its admonitory texts should be extended beyond the "ghetto", but successful mainstream texts of nuclear war are distrusted. Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*, for example, signals that nuclear war was no longer the "property" of science fiction [31]. Reassurance returns, however: "Science fiction writers may have temporarily lost their ascendancy in the nuclear war novel in the late 1950s, but they reclaimed it in the 1960s and have retained it ever since" [21]. This might be compared to H. Bruce

Franklin's statement: "The dubious credit for inventing nuclear weapons and projecting nuclear war belongs indisputably to SF" (*Science Fiction Studies*, Nuclear War issue, 13:2, July 1986, p.115). It is to be recalled that the anecdotes which proclaim science fiction's importance are inextricably linked to the nuclear: Cleve Cartmill's nuclear bomb story and the FBI raid; the well-known fact that Szilard, the Manhattan Project leader, was heavily influenced by H G Wells' *The World Set Free* (1913), which "named" the atomic bomb, and even predicted to the year the discovery of artificial radioactivity. A complex set of desires, then: the credit for its invention; the credit as being the site of activism against it; the desire to "retain" the bomb as a privileged locus for science fiction in tension with the desire to proselytise, which may lose that privilege.

- 60) Derrida, 'No Apocalypse, Not Now (full speed ahead, seven missiles, seven missives)', *Diacritics*, Summer 1984. All page references in the text
- 61) on the 'logic' of deterrence theory in relation to Derrida, see Christopher Norris, *Derrida*, Fontana Modern Masters Series, 1987, especially the chapter on 'Nuclear Criticism'. Norris' position has since completely changed, with Derrida's nuclear piece now revealing a dangerous relativism. See *Uncritical Theory: Postmodernism, Intellectuals and the Gulf War*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1992.

- 62) Derrida's next sentence causes some problems. He continues that the nuclear, as inscription/effacement, is dealt with more "seriously" in texts by Mallarme, Kafka, or Joyce "than in present day novels that would offer direct and realistic descriptions of a "real" nuclear catastrophe" [28]. Elsewhere, Derrida argues "about the *doxa*, newspapers have to be considered as the best corpus of study" [25]; a central place for the constitution of the nuclear "fable". This must also be extended to popular fictional texts as crucial elements in the very understanding of the nuclear, its production of "representations" of the nuclear. They cannot be so simply dismissed.
- 63) This argument on 'apocalyptic' texts in 'Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy', *Oxford Literary Review*, 6:2, 1984, p.27. How can this exemplarity be evidenced? In the last chapter, I analysed the desire moving through science fiction criticism for its own death, the end of generic status, the destruction of the "ghetto" walls and a merging with the "mainstream". This may be contrasted with a similar anxiety in certain texts I have inscribed within the genre of catastrophe. Here the fragility of writing, the threat of effacement becomes explicit, but this anxiety may be read as precisely attempting to *establish* science fiction's account against a now over-determined catastrophe: the threat to the 'literary' *per se*, but also as moments of

anxious self-consciousness at its degraded status as generic fictions, and the attempt to legitimate themselves.

Two examples: the reporter Malone, who narrates both of Conan Doyle's novels *The Lost World* and *The Poison Belt* has moments in which the whole purpose of narrative is thrown into doubt. *The Lost World* is written as a series of letters sent out of the wilderness without any security of destination. There is a constant anxiety about the absence of readership but, peculiarly, at the point at which non-arrival seems inevitable, Malone states: "I can see what I am writing is destined to immortality as a classic of true adventure"[89]. This statement is preceded, however, by a succession of qualifying clauses which would seem to deny it any addressees: "Whether Zambo can at last take these letters to the river, or whether I shall myself in some miraculous way carry them back with me, or finally, whether some daring explorer, coming upon our tracks with the advantage, perhaps, of a perfected monoplane, should find this bundle of manuscript, in any case I can see that what I am writing is destined to immortality as a classic of true adventure"[89]. The "in any case" wishes to establish the text as self-sufficient of addressee, to generate, from within its own space, the legitimation as "masterpiece". This is a conceit, of course, since we are reading the text as that which has always

already arrived. The explicit discussion of the status of its writing, however, is a defensive mark of generic anxiety, as well as attempting to 'save' the text from the possibility of its own effacement.

In *The Purple Cloud* Adam legitimates his account by narrating the discovery of a poet dead at his desk, failing in his attempt to finish a poem before the poison cloud overtook him: "it is clear now that the better kind of those poet men who did not write to please the dim inferior tribes who might read them, but to deliver themselves of the divine warmth that swarmed within their breast, and, if all the readers had been dead, still they'd have written"[131]. Once again, writing is saved and legitimation is achieved self-generatively. Nevertheless, the text must somehow account for this communication to readers of the death of 'the reader', and this is achieved by an extraordinary set of framing devices for the narrative: the text as presented is the (incomplete) notebook, sent by a dying man to a publisher -- notebooks which must be translated from shorthand which is itself a translation of a 'spirit language' communication from the future Adam to the medium Mary Wilson. This necessarily complex set of frames attempts to protect inscription from the effacement of the catastrophe.

64) Doris Lessing, *Memoirs of a Survivor*, Picador 1976, p.136

65) see 'Of an Apocalyptic Tone', opening pages.
Dowling's *Fictions of Nuclear Disaster* also has a
useful discussion of the disclosive meaning of
"apocalypse".

CHAPTER EIGHT

CATASTROPHE AFTER CATASTROPHE: THE BALLARDIAN
APOCALYPSE

The last chapter suspended the fact that there is a substantial body of criticism, a new orthodoxy, that dismisses the reading of Ballard's catastrophe novels on a 'literal' level. The revised reading takes its cue from Ballard's statements in various interviews and profuse textual evidence of an 'allegorising intent', at least in the three later novels of the series: *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, *The Crystal World*. This reading is to be followed, not least because it is substantially right; Ballard's texts are not to be seen as perverse movements towards death, but as a symbolically encoded journey towards a kind of transcendence. The catastrophe opens the space of a progress towards the catastrophe after the catastrophe: the disclosive unveiling of apocalyptic consciousness.

This reading doubles, in effect, the textual traces of explanatory frames within the novels, their 'thetic' proposals. The principal frames are Jungian psychology, Freudian psychoanalysis and a certain conception of existentialism, each specifically inflected by the emergent counter-cultural thought of the 1960s. This is perhaps the peculiarity of Ballard's work: it could be said to be constantly offering a kind of metanarrative of

itself, offering its own commentary. To repeat this in the work of criticism obviously need not be redundant or banal: it is what Derrida terms the "doubling commentary"¹. Such is the *super-abundance* of the mechanisms of self-explanation in Ballard's work, however, that specificities are often ignored through the desire of critics to synthesize these into a single, overarching reading. This chapter is engaged in analysing those differences, the competing frames of catastrophe.

I

It was in a 1975 interview that Ballard offered his correction of the "false reading" of the novels: "I don't see my fiction as disaster-oriented...they're...stories of psychic fulfillment. The geophysical changes which take place in *The Drought*, *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World* are all positive and good changes...[that] lead us to our real psychological goals, so they are not disaster stories at all...Really, I'm trying to show a new kind of logic emerging, and this is to be embraced, or at least held in regard"². The 'perverse' argument, then, is for a subversion of the generic narrative in which the movement is not away from the catastrophe, with heroic accounts of survival and triumph, but *towards* it: in *The Drowned World*, Kerans abandons the research team heading North from the tropical heat, and turns South to his death; in *The Drought*, Ransom refuses to continue the dreary routine

of surviving on the receding shores, and returns to the heart of the desert; in *The Crystal World*, Sanders returns to the crystallising forest to be transfigured in death.

Adopting the dominant "commentary" on these texts, these 'deaths' are not to be understood on a literal level; the landscapes in which they are enacted are to be comprehended as psychological correlatives of "states of mind", what Ballard terms "inner space". In his first editorial for *New Worlds*, 'Which Way to Inner Space?', Ballard explicitly opposed this terrain to that occupied by (traditional) science fiction: outer space. Given this immediate understanding of the term, this may offer an explanation for the novels' initial unacceptability to science fiction critics; in Norman Spinrad's words, the place of the explanation, so crucial to the genre, was "mumbo-jumbo in hard science terms and made sense only on a metaphysical and metaphorical level"³.

The elements of the revised reading can be quickly assembled. For Gregory Stephenson⁴, the entire oeuvre of Ballard's work is concerned with "transcendence", in terms of "exceeding, escaping the limits of the material world, time and space, the body, the senses and the ordinary ego-consciousness"; the texts are "an affirmation of the highest humanistic and metaphysical ideal: the repossession for man of authentic and absolute being"[38]. This would seem to place Stephenson's reading in an

existential register, but in fact his argument is distinctively Jungian: the narratives, 'psychic journeys', are a process of healing self-divided protagonists, each of whom "comes to recognise the apocalyptic potential of the particular disaster he is faced with, who perceives it as a metaphor for his own and the general human psychic state, as an interior landscape exteriorised, as the fulfillment of an unconscious human desire, and so accepts it, co-operates with it, assists it"[41]. This explanation encompasses Ballard's entire oeuvre.

Warren Wagar² largely concurs with this reading: Ballard effects a "transvaluation", a reversal of poles, from the negative 'literal' catastrophe, to the positive 'metaphorical' utopias of the disaster sequence. Again, there is a synthesis of theoretical terms, with Ballard as both existentially transcendent ("self-overcoming in perilous confrontation with the world"[56]), and as offering a kind of mythico-psychological transcendence, interpreted in an overtly Christian framework, the crystallised forest being "a vision of the City of God"[55]. This schema is also extended over all of Ballard's work.

Peter Brigg³ also posits that Ballard's texts are to be understood on a psychological level proposing "an acceptance of the path to psychic wholeness"[46]. Brigg, however, introduces another 'thetic' level in discussing

The Drought. He states: "The desert wastes and the detritus of civilisation do not cohere in an important statement on, say, ecological stupidity, but are simply *there*, outside of the characters' emotional fields...Ransom, and...the other characters, are left with their private selves against a blank and meaningless landscape"[51]. This alters, even negates, the notion of "inner landscape" in a statement which is virtually identical with Camus' conception of 'the absurd'.

There are, in these commentaries, at least four competing frames of reference for reading the catastrophe: the Jungian process of annealing a self-divided subjectivity; a specifically religious meaning of Apocalypse as redemption; an existential process of moving from alienated being toward a transcendent apprehension of Being; and a Camusian conception of an absurd universe. Apparent in all these readings is also the perhaps most 'self-evident' frame: the Freudian topography of subjectivity. The landscapes of the novels are those of the unconscious, a scenography of the 'secret' desires of - and for the catastrophe.

It may seem pedantic to question the coherence of the all-encompassing readings of Ballard's oeuvre that Stephenson, Wagar, Brigg and others propose, but I think it is crucial to do so. These novels may be structured on a repetitive generic plot, but rigorous reading reveals

significant differences of emphasis in the explanatory frames. The desire for a condensed single reading of the work merely repeats, on the "metaphorical" level, precisely what the more "literal" reading desired to achieve: the pinning down, to a final ground, of the catastrophe itself. In fact, more so in this reading, the catastrophe remains an enigma, a *cipher*.

Perhaps the best place to begin to elaborate these overdetermined frames is by analysing the term "inner space". *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* gives the coinage of the term to Ballard in 1962, but the term's history is more complex than this simple ascription suggests. The minimal consensus on "inner space" is that Ballard's landscapes "externalise a crisis in the consciousness of the main character in terms of a disaster in his environment"⁷; Ballard attempts "to identify things...as external representations of the inner map of the contemporary psyche"⁸. The landscapes of disaster, then, are *projections*⁹. It is a short leap to suggest that if the landscape is the *space* of the unconscious, the figures that occupy it are emblems of the 'psychic journey' the hero undertakes. Hence -- with a confusion of Freudian and Jungian topographies -- Pringle reads off characters as representatives of the superego, ego and id, with women as anima figures and other 'doubles' representing the Self. Kerans/Ransom/Sanders must negotiate through these figures to achieve "a state of

grace, or integration with the universe; they wish to find themselves and create a whole"¹⁰. The fiction of inner space, in this formulation, is an intensely solipsistic one, the enactment of a solitary journey through the unconscious. This reading may also, incidentally, ascribe to the "conservatism of the unconscious" the problematic issue of the representation of race and gender in the novels¹¹.

In the more emphatically Jungian sense "inner space" is found in J B Priestley's 1953 article 'They Come From Inner Space'¹². Priestley sees science fiction as a set of contemporary myths, deploying the familiar equation of the popular and the unconscious. These myths are to be read as the "characteristic dreams of our age, and are psychologically far more important than our own rational accounts of ourselves. They take the lid off. They allow us to glimpse what is boiling down below...The Unconscious is protesting against the cheap conceit and false optimism of the conscious mind"[712]. Priestley concludes his article by stating: "We are in fact warning ourselves that society, like a rocket ship bound for some distant nightmare planet, is hurrying at full speed in the wrong direction; and that dangerously over-extraverted, we are refusing to deal justly with the unconscious side of our minds"[714].

This might be compared with the following: "We are far

more out of touch with even the nearest approaches of inner space than we now are with the reaches of outer space. We respect the voyager, the explorer, the climber, the space man. It makes more sense to me as a valid project -- indeed, as a desperately urgently required project for our time, to explore the inner space and time of our consciousness". Ballard's 'Which Way to Inner Space?' argues that contemporary space flights only confirm what the 'space operas' unintentionally proved: outer space is banal. And yet the above quotation does not come from Ballard's editorial, but from R D Laing's *The Politics of Experience*¹³; the consonance of the two is remarkable. Here, inner space is inaccessible to the existents of alienated everyday being, and can only be uncovered by the schizophrenic inner journey which Laing, despite occasional disclaimers, celebrates as a revelatory state, more 'true' than "our collusive madness...we call sanity"¹⁴. Ballard's insane characters -- perhaps more explicitly so in early stories like 'The Overloaded Man' (in which a progressive bracketing of external reality leads to suicide as the ultimate act of freedom)¹⁵ or 'The Gioconda of the Twilight Noon' (where Maitland deliberately blinds himself to protect his rich internal visions from dispersal)¹⁶ -- are more difficult to contain within the holistic Jungian version of "inner space" than the more disclosive state of schizophrenic as shaman, celebrated by Laing.

The frames of reference begin to proliferate: Jane Dunlop's *Exploring Inner Space*, published in 1961, was a discussion of experience under the influence of LSD; Colin Greenland notes William Burroughs' use of the term at the 1962 Writers Conference in Edinburgh, although he was in fact quoting Alexander Trocchi's phrase "astronauts of inner space" as designating that dispersed Elect who would induce his programme of cultural revolution¹⁷. The resonances of "inner space" move across a highly diverse set of contexts; Robert Hewison, in his history of the 1960s, in fact uses the term as the (ultimately debilitating) orientation of the whole counter-culture in general¹⁸.

Hence, simply accepting the "solipsistic" version of "inner space" -- as the externalisation of the unconscious -- is oversimplified. Ballard's polemics and manifestos in *New Worlds* called for a science fiction of the *present* and in many ways his texts are echo boxes of contemporaneous thought, less of hard 'science' than of anthropology, philosophy, psychology, media theory and so on. Ballard's catastrophe novels are inextricably intertwined with the intensification of eschatological thought contained in that much contested denotation of epoch: the Sixties.

In 'Which Way to Inner Space?'¹⁹ the impetus is to pursue an experimentation equal to that of cinema and painting,

the "creation of new states of mind, new levels of awareness, constructing fresh symbols and languages where the old cease to be valid"[117]. It is only in the final paragraph that Ballard refers explicitly to the unconscious, through a discussion of Dali. This manifesto was written at the same time as *The Drowned World*. In 1966, his 'Notes From Nowhere'²⁰ also repeats Dali's imperative: "After Freud's explorations within the psyche it is now the outer world of reality which will have to be quantified and eroticised"[149], but this comes after this elaboration of an imaginative space where public events, immediate environment and "the inner world of the psyche" combine: "Where those planes intersect, images are born"[149]. With this notion of "intersection", the solipsistic projection of the unconscious is denied as the sole motor for the constitution of landscape. Rather it is the angles between, in the shifting conjunctions of the public, somatic and psychic, where Ballard places the landscape of his fiction.

It might reasonably be said that 'Notes From Nowhere' is directed towards the elaboration of the aesthetic for the 'condensed novels' of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, and indeed the essay explicitly bids "farewell" to "jewelled alligators, white hotels, hallucinatory forests"[150] -- the landscape of *The Crystal World* just completed. My point is that "inner space" cannot finally be determined under a single definition, and extended across the work.

Landscape as "unconscious" is a reading that is most supported by *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World* and I will deal with these first.

II

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE "JUNGIAN" CATASTROPHE:

THE DROWNED WORLD, THE CRYSTAL WORLD

If Ballard is "unacceptable" to science fiction, then Jung has always been "unacceptable" to more dominantly Freudian conception of the unconscious. Samuel Weber and others have analysed how Freud's attempts to assert his authority over the interpretation and institution of psychoanalysis involved a constant need to negate "deviations", especially that of Jung who, before the 1913 split, had been marked by Freud as the figure on which to transfer authority²¹. When Edward Glover published *Freud or Jung* in 1950 it was in response ^{to} a perceived shift of popularity away from Freud to Jung. The public, he felt, "regard Jung as a great mystic who is also a great liberator and Freud as the purveyor of a diseased psychology"²². Indeed, Jung's contrast of Freud's *imposition* of interpretation with his own emphasis on analysand as self-analyst seemed superficially more appealing in its holistic agential approach, for "the healing processes to grow out of the patient's own personality"²³.

On the Jungian element of Ballard's conception of inner

space, Greenland states: "That Jungian ideas could still be a new influence on it in 1965 suggests that sf had become isolated not only from the rest of literature but also from developments in science -- an ironic fate for a fiction that prided itself on its scientific acumen and alertness to present and future"²⁴. Aside from the unacceptability of psychology to the traditional 'hard sciences' of science fiction, Jung's *Man and His Symbols* was collected and published in 1964 precisely to popularise Jungian ideas that had, unlike Freud's, not found their way into the everyday. With Ballard's emphasis on *popularised* science, *Man and His Symbols* coincides with Greenland's 'belated' date. In fact Ballard's overtly Jungian elements were evident slightly earlier than this, probably through his extensive knowledge of surrealism. Equally, Jung's 'Orientalism' was increasingly popular in the nascent counter-culture, with its importation of holistic Eastern 'mysticism'.

Perhaps the most unacceptable element is Jung's concentration on the phylogenetic (the 'racial' or 'universal' mind) as opposed to the ontogenetic (the 'individual' mental apparatus), his freewheeling use of anthropological insights through analysis of "primitive cultures". *The Drowned World* is overtly phylogenetic. For Jung the division of the conscious and unconscious is one of the "curses" of modern man, accidental rather than structural; there is a fantasy of holistic origin, the

undivided Self. The "modern" division of the conscious and unconscious is explicitly seen in terms of catastrophe, for a suppression of the unconscious means its return in distorted forms: "Our times have demonstrated what it means for the gates of the underworld to be opened. Things whose enormity nobody would have imagined...have appeared and turned our world upside down". "Slowly, but inevitably" Jung says "we are courting disaster"²⁵.

Ballard's 'The Reptile Enclosure'²⁶ narrates something like this catastrophe. It belongs to a sequence of stories in which the launching of satellites is seen to be a transgression of the "proper" space of humanity, resulting in catastrophic effects on the consciousness. Pelham sits above a densely crowded beach disdaining those awaiting the launch of the *Echo XXII*, which will complete the media canopy of communications satellites. Pelham attempts to explain to his wife Sherrington's theory that the launch will activate "innate releasing mechanisms...inherited reflexes"[109] in unforeseen ways. Although Sherrington is a physiologist, Pelham provides a more 'psychoanalytical' version, that "If you accept the sea as an image of the unconscious, then this beachward urge might be seen as an attempt to escape from the existential role of ordinary life and return to the universal time-sea --" [111]. In a witty moment, Mildred shuts him up and "looked away wearily", tired perhaps of

this awkwardly unassimilated 'thetic' speech. However, the launch indeed sets off a kind of compulsive repetition of the trauma that caused the extinction of Cro-Magnon man, and the entire beach populace advance, lemming-like, into the sea. The story is an example of the over-laying of a "commentary" on a fairly familiar science fiction 'plot'²⁷, the text providing a reading of its own genre, one obsessed with theorising the psyche beyond ontogeny, with "the biological, prehistoric, and unconscious development of the mind in archaic man, whose psyche was still close to that of the animal"²⁸.

Ballard has been explicit about the Jungian frame for *The Drowned World*: "I wanted to look at our racial memory, our whole biological inheritance, the fact that we're all several hundred million years old, as old as the biological kingdoms in our spines, in our brains, in our cellular structure; our very identities reflect untold numbers of decisions made to adapt us to changes in our environment, decisions lying behind us in the past like some enormous largely forgotten journey"²⁹.

It is Kerans' fellow researcher Bodkin who repeats this "metabiological fantasy" in his new science of Neuronics. The moment of 'hard' scientific explanation is brief and perfunctory [21-22] and the catastrophe is displaced to the return to Triassic landscape. This "triggers" a regression, figured as a literal descent down "spinal"

consciousness. The lagoons that transfigure London are marked as a "zone of transit" between states of consciousness, between, as Bodkin terms it, the final movement from the thoracic to lumbar vertebrae[43]. The crisis is whether to continue the military project of mapping the landscape before moving North, or whether to accept the "new logic" and head South.

Ballard's disaster novels all contain 'heroes' teetering on the brink of acceptance; this is the central motor of plot. There is an obsessive concern with ambiguous "motive" as if aware that the transformation of landscape marks the termination of rationally motivated meaning and act, against the advancing control of "collective unconscious". The central figures are "zones of transit" between an often overly signalled oppositional set of characters. In *The Drowned World*, Hardman (whose rapid devolution and escape to the South prefigures Kerans'), Beatrice and Bodkin are seen to possess the 'key' to the ultimate significance of the catastrophe, whilst Riggs and Strangman are figures, in different ways, of a now superseded "rational" defiance of the inevitable transfiguration. As "archeopsychic time" runs backwards, Riggs obsessively re-sets municipal clocks to protect the ordered advance of 'clock time'; the sympathies are evidently with a return to an almost Bergsonian conception of *durée*. At one point, Kerans dreams Riggs "dressed as William Tell, striding about in a huge Dalinian landscape,

planting immense dripping sundials like daggers in the fused sand"[61]; the explicit surrealist reference recalls Dali's use of the figure of William Tell as the Oedipal father threatening castration²⁰.

The transposition of Dali's iconography indicates Ballard's peculiarly effective device of further undermining 'intentionality' through what could be called 'intertextual landscape'. The actions of characters are not only increasingly directed by the psychological significance of landscape, but through the haunting echoes of other geographies, other plots. Like *The Drought*, where the text is framed by Tanguy, *The Drowned World* has the frame of Delvaux and Ernst's "phantasmagoric forests"[29]. When Strangman arrives he directs the action according to an allegorical painting, and the action fades in and out of its frame in uncertain ways. These frames are left undeterminable, haunting, as if Ballard's texts are generated as "commentaries" or re-narrations, of other, only half-discerned texts. The echoes of Conradian 'exotic' locales of subtle corruption are strong, but cannot be pinpointed; *The Crystal World's* adoption of the multi-symbolic site of the leperosie from Greene's *A Burnt-Out Case* has the same effect. It is *The Drought* that most effectively exploits these echoes and half-echoes; within the painting's frame, Lomax is at once Prospero and Lear, Quilter Caliban and Miranda Lomax a hideous deformation of Shakespeare's Miranda. *The Waste*

Land is also a constant source. Ransom has explicit parallels to the Ancient Mariner, while Jonas, the leader of the fishermen, rants his apocalyptic vision like a latter-day Captain Ahab. It is as though a 'neutral' landscape were a container of an over-determined concatenation of significances of a singular Catastrophe that yet remains inaccessible, only to be glimpsed through narratives of other narratives, without finality or ground; for these echoes are all precisely of texts which *themselves* confront a catastrophe that cannot be contained. Landscape erodes intention; the response of the characters is to play other characters who may provide the key, the revelation.

In Jungian terms, these ghostly texts behind the text would be "archetypes", and indeed Kerans explicitly refers to this: "His unconscious was rapidly becoming a well-stocked pantheon of tutelary phobias and obsessions, homing onto his already over-burdened psyche like lost telepaths. Sooner or later the archetypes themselves would become restive and start fighting each other, anima against persona, ego against id"[90]. This intimation of larger psychic roles comes immediately before Kerans' first experience of the apocalyptic dream of a huge engulfing sun. He has now accessed the "corporate nightmare" which generates Bodkin's thesis and 'explains' Beatrice's languorous distraction. The thin strip of 'intentional' consciousness crumbles between the

progressive collusion of internal and external landscape. This is the landscape of those catastrophic 'signs' of history: "Hiroshima and Auschwitz, Golgotha and Gomorrah" [72]. With this revelation the decision is made: to escape Riggs' 'military' temporality and accept the catastrophe. At this point, however, Strangman arrives.

How "acceptable" is this thesis of devolution beyond individual pre/history, ordered and directed by the Collective Unconscious? How "acceptable" is this access to Jung's dangerous anthropology? Sinfield, in analysing the post-colonial re-narration of 'human nature' as "savage", cites the work of Jung as a key influence.

When I discussed the legitimation of science fiction through the appeal to scientific "rigour" in chapter six, I argued that this failed to account for the wholly incommensurate nature of literature to science. Opposed to the language game of science, Lyotard notes: "A move can be made for the sheer pleasure of its invention: what else is involved in that labour of language harassment undertaken by popular speech and literature?"³¹. When the overtly thetic does appear within the literary it produces a strange disjunctive effect, a disconcerting moment of self-consciousness in the reader, of being jarred out of the fragility of the fictive, of exposing the conditions, the rules and limits of its regime. This disjunctive clash unsettles both registers; if it produces an

awkwardness for the fictive (and Ballard's prose is no doubt "awkward"), the thetic also loses its logical certainty, its frame of rigorous argument. When asked in interview explicitly about his "use" of the Collective Unconscious, Ballard replied: "I accept the collective unconscious -- I don't think it's a *mystic* entity, I think it's simply that whenever an individual is conceived, a whole set of operating instructions, a set of guidebooks are meshed together like cards being shuffled"³². There is a sense that the super-abundance of 'thetic' registers in the texts have significance in the sense of their *aesthetic* conjuncture at *that moment*, the pleasing symmetry of a dealt hand. If Jung is "acceptable" as a form of structuration at this moment, and I do not deny it holds truth-effects in *The Drowned World*, this is replaced by the almost complete constitution of the self through media networks in *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Indeed, Ballard compared Desmond Morris' "anthropology" to Hitler in their dangerous "biological interpretations of history"³³.

However, part of Strangman's role in *The Drowned World* seems to be to register the awkwardness of the thesis proposed by the text: "Strangman seemed unable to take the explanation seriously, swinging abruptly from amusement at their naivety to sharp suspicion" [90]. He determines to call Bodkin's thesis "the total beach syndrome" [89]; a moment of dry wit at portentousness. The passage of

Kerans' dive into the Planetarium is undermined by Strangman's ironic commentary on its corny 'return to the womb' symbolism. Citing Dali, in fact, Strangman warns Kerans: "don't try to reach the unconscious... remember it doesn't go down that far"[102].

The Strangman episode is also structurally crucial in relation to the genre of catastrophe as a whole. The landscape of *The Drowned World* is remorselessly horizontal, emphasising the languorous heat and glaring reflections from the flat surfaces of the lagoons. When Strangman drains the lagoon, however, the explosive violence returns to 'generic' scenes of urban destruction. The term used for the draining is "evagination" [124]. This recalls, inevitably, Derrida's "invagination", the fold or pocket that is inside/outside the generic set simultaneously. If the skeletally white Strangman (echoing a figure within the frame of Delvaux's painting) leads a marauding group of black looters, this is a "negative" of the 'London scenes' in J J Connington's *Nordenholt's Million* where aristocratic white women follow the "nigger leader" Herne, through bizarre orgiastic rites³⁴. The figure of Strangman is thus complexly overdetermined: a Jungian 'Shadow' to Kerans; a deranged version of Riggs' rationalistic refusal to accept the "new logic"; the harbinger of a momentary return, an invaginated pocket of the genre of catastrophe; and, finally, the figure that may ironise the entire 'thetic'

proposal of devolution and regression, upsetting that very 'return' to the genre's central concerns.

Kerans' escape from Strangman begins the journey South. The final revelation lies beyond the last pages of the book, his "emergence into the brighter day of the interior, archeopsychic sun" [144], but the *physicality* of that death is beyond doubt when he discovers the blinded Hardman, eyes destroyed by cancerous growths.

There is one figure I have not yet dealt with, who is crucial, not least for the audacious name she is given: Beatrice. David Pringle argues that Ballard's women characters can be seen either as the desirous yet threatening 'lamia'³⁵, or else in the anima role as merely symbols of a psychic journey, important only as figures in the movement of individuation. The figure of 'Woman', however, is crucial to the revelatory apocalypse. In 'Of An Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy'³⁶, Derrida sets in motion the etymological resonances of 'apocalypse': to disclose, uncover, unveil, to lift the veil to uncover the secret, or the pudenda, the sex. Derrida's analysis of eschatology, intertwines with Kant's pamphlet of 1793 attacking the "mystagogues", those perverters of the philosophy of reason, who believe they have bypassed reason for an intuitive revelation of 'the truth'. The "mystagogues" say philosophy can only designate a dawn, but *they* have had a presentiment of the

sun. Derrida cites Kant's sarcastic remarks to Schlosser: "since he cannot raise the veil of Isis, at least it can be made so thin that one can have a presentiment of the goddess under it" [15]. The 'debate', then, is between he who has had an apocalyptic revelation, lifted the veil of the goddess to uncover the 'secret', and Kant, who sees this "derangement" of reason as castrating philosophy, a dangerous personification of the unthinkable otherness that commands obligation. Kant is prepared to make a treaty with the "mystagogues" provided they give up this personification, a treaty based on the *exclusion* of the feminine, Isis, "murderess of Osiris all of whose pieces she later recovers, except for the phallus" [19]. The apocalypse, therefore, is indissociable from a (metaphorical) castration of reason by the feminine element, holding the secret 'behind the veil'. This may recall Joan Riviere's 'Womanliness as a Masquerade', where the veil, the mask, tantalisingly suggesting a 'truth' beyond it, in fact reveals nothing but the truth that there is no truth beyond the veil²⁷.

Beatrice hovers on the edges of *The Drowned World*; it is she who owns the frame, the paintings of the "phantasmagoric forest". Kerans' early indecisiveness only becomes solidified in her presence. Beatrice is, of course, Dante's guide through Paradise, the symbol of *divine revelation*. Kerans, though, also sees Beatrice as Pandora, "with her killing mouth and witch's box of

desires and frustrations, unpredictably opening and shutting the lid" [30]. It is Beatrice's enigmatic speeches and langour that mark her as one of the first to have access to the Collective Dream. The only relation between her and Kerans is in the intersections of the collective unconscious. If she *guides* the way only Kerans leaves for the South, abandoning her at the lagoon. The question, then, is whether Beatrice figures as a symbolic access to the Jungian meaning of the apocalypse, or whether this relation can be reversed; the resolute, irresolvable enigma of Beatrice, of the feminine as catastrophe and apocalypse, *calls forth* narratives of containment -- both on the thetic level and in terms of Kerans' actions. The catastrophe retains its 'secret'. This can be followed by turning to *The Crystal World*, where the 'secret' of the forest multiplies, not least in *two* feminine figures, Serena and Suzanne.

Ballard's central figures are criticised for their "pathological helplessness". This can be compared to the conditions that inaugurate the process of individuation, "when the ego gets rid of all purposive and wishful claims and tries to get to a deeper, more basic form of existence"³⁰. *The Drowned World* concentrates on the phylogenetic elements, but *The Crystal World* follows that *personal* journey towards a repossession of the Self. Indeed, the chapter on individuation in *Man and His Symbols* explicitly calls for a turning towards the

darkness, to embrace it.

The Crystal World also contains and constitutes its own "commentary". Here, the catastrophe, rather than residing in the distant past in *The Drowned World*, is entered at its beginning, marking in landscape the psychological entry to the process of individuation. Hence the choice of crystal, a key Jungian symbol of the completed Self, holding as much importance in Jung's iconography as the *mandala*; hence the ruling opposition of dark/light.

The Crystal World is perhaps the most effective of the disaster novels in maintaining the enigma of the meaning(s) of the catastrophe. It is suspended through elliptical and at times non-sensical dialogue; through the elusiveness of officials at Port Matarre; through the misreading of documents (crucially Sanders cannot decide whether Suzanne's letter about the "jewelled forests" is literal, or just a surfeit of metaphor); through the redundancy and incomprehensibility of the 'scientific' explanation. The explanation 'leaks' across several sections, until it is finally 'determined' in a letter to Paul Derain halfway through the book. The scientific thesis, supposedly rigorous is in fact precarious and "aesthetic". Presumably Derain will have as much difficulty discovering the dividing line between the literal and metaphorical. Sanders' immediate response to his first view of the crystallising forest makes the locus

plain:

For some reason he felt less concerned to find a so-called scientific explanation for the phenomenon he had just seen. The beauty of the spectacle had turned the keys of memory, and a thousand memories of childhood, forgotten for nearly forty years, filled his mind, recalling the paradisaal world when everything was illuminated by that prismatic light described so exactly by Wordsworth in his recollections of childhood. [69]

The forest marks, like the lagoons of *The Drowned World*, the erasure of a determinable line between literal landscape and its "metaphorical" resonances. The crystallising virus in the forest seems to attack reference itself. Again, Louise Peret misunderstands the now missing Anderson's reference about a 'forest of jewels': " "...it was meant as a joke you know". She gestured in the air. "A figure of speech?" "Exactly""[31].

Sanders is ostensibly on a mission to resolve his affair with Suzanne Clair (the French, of course, for 'light'; Suzanne will "shed light" on the catastrophe, as with Beatrice), but is distracted by a series of successive enigmas. Arriving at Port Matarre, "motives" unresolved, Sanders is drawn into a brief liaison with Louise Peret, Suzanne's uncanny opposite, eyes veiled by huge sunglasses. Both need access to the restricted area of the forest, seemingly bleeding light from Matarre. The light/dark oppositions are encoded from the opening paragraph's description of the landscape, and have their

counterparts in the white-suited Ventress and the cassocked priest Balthus, each with rival claims on the forest. As Louise notes, they have also arrived at the Equinox, the exact splitting of light and dark, again a moment of crisis and decision: "At least you can choose...Nothing is blurred or grey now" [37]. Sanders concurs: "At these moments of balance any act was possible" [38]. These significant oppositions and doublings proliferate with Sanders, Max and Suzanne repeating the Ventress, Thorensen and Serena triangle.

Sanders interprets these structural oppositions for Louise [135]. The Jungian frame could be implemented here, given the complementarity of opposites. Since the forest is a zone effectively 'out of time' (exiting the zone Sanders sees the crystallised face of his watch dissolve and the hands begin to move again [119]), Sanders argues it is the only place where a union of these opposites can be affected.

Sanders is initially tied to a more literal understanding; he is horrified at the discovery of Radek's death-in-crystal. He takes Ventress' cryptic comments as jokes, figures of speech. The 'meaning' offered by the catastrophe, as in *The Drowned World*, is tied to the figure of Woman, but here it is uncertain as to which possesses the key. Louise is soon abandoned outside the affected zone. Sanders finds himself caught in an

incomprehensible and violent vendetta between Ventress and Thorensen, until the central 'secret' of the forest, Serena, Ventress' dying wife, is discovered. This passage appears to be the culmination of much of the bizarre action, the source of Ventress' drive to penetrate the forest, and yet it is peculiarly flat and anti-climactic; there is no revelation.

It is Suzanne who begins to effect a resolution. Suzanne's entry has something of the stylized *femme fatale*; she will 'shed light' but "Suzanne's face still remained hidden in the shadows...The faintly quizzical smile that had hovered about her mouth since his arrival was still there, almost beckoning him" [126]. The smile is transformed in the light into a rictus of leprosy, the beginnings of a "leonine mask". The unveiling (Suzanne is last seen escaping, trailing "her dark gown like an immense veil"[143]) is, paradoxically, the *addition* of a mask. The psychological investment Sanders has suspected in his work with lepers is related in complex ways to the proliferating virus at work in the forest. This is the point at which Sanders begins to operate a "metaphorical" understanding with a logic that might, on a literal level, be unsustainable. The hosts of lepers drawn to Mont Royal stand in for the psychic disfigurements that the forest will anneal. In Balthus' translation: "here everything is transfigured and illuminated, joined together in the last marriage of space and time"[162]. Sanders returns to the

forest to that state beyond life and death.

There have been suggestions that the bizarre images of the crystallising forest derive from hallucinogenic drugs used, indeed, by R D Laing as a strategy of annealing 'the divided self'. Laing in fact writes more sympathetically of Jung's therapeutic technique and Jung's conception of the psychic apparatus is indeed more "affirmative" than Freud's. Without any apparent theorisation of a bar of repression between conscious and individual unconscious, and without any sense of the foundational necessity of the unconscious for the constitution of subjectivity, the process of individuation is simply a union which arrives at the (re)possession of the Self, the completely self-knowing, self-intending apocalyptic consciousness. This can be connected, in inadequate shorthand, to the process of 'tuning in', establishing a relation to the alienated inner self as that 'true self' suppressed by Western culture, that so dominated the Sixties 'regime of truth'. *The Crystal World* can thus be inserted into the matrix of a historical productivity. The passage of death is simply re-birth; this may be a phrase which 'explains' the catastrophe of *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World*, although I have emphasized unsettling elements, particularly the sense that this may merely be a narrative, a frame, which does not "touch" the catastrophe, does not lift its veil, merely contains it. There are other readings, other discrepancies, and I turn

now to the existential frame.

III

THE "EXISTENTIAL" CATASTROPHE: *THE DROUGHT*

It is important to separate "existential" philosophy from a certain *style*, which became recognisable in the 1950s³⁹. Its popularised conception concentrated on a number of freely interpreted and evocative key words: choice, freedom, angst, death, absurdity. David E. Cooper summarises this version as a philosophy for a post-War Europe, the 'signs' of 'Auschwitz' and 'Hiroshima' rendering impossible belief in political ideology. This results in the individual's "return to his "inner self"...to live in whatever ways he feels are true to that self". The 'hero' of this narrative lives "totally free from the constraints of discredited traditions and commits himself unreservedly to the demands of his inner, authentic being"⁴⁰. Cooper sets out to correct this misconception, but cannot deny that this misreading generated powerful meaning effects in the 1960s. Ballard's texts have been read within this misconception, but there are more startling consonances, especially with the work of Jaspers.

The frames for Ballard's disaster novels are overdetermined. R D Laing proposed an *existential*

psychiatry. Laing turns to existentialism because, for him, it offers a 'science of persons' rather than separating disease from person. 'Disease' was to be seen not as an external invader, but as an expression of a Self from a phenomenological 'take' on reality which must be condemned by the hegemonic version of reality as "insane"⁴¹. Laing's holistic Self uses existential terms: "...we cannot give an adequate account of the existential splits unless we can begin from the concept of a unitary whole, and no such concept exists, nor can any such concept be expressed within the current language system of psychiatry or psychoanalysis"⁴². This self is seen as the final ground of the subject, even though existential philosophy is more concerned with the 'unthinkable' relation between existence and its inaccessible ground: Being. If this relation is unthinkable, beings can never fully elaborate the conditions of their existence, the "gift" from Being in terms of self-knowledge. The Self is *exceeded* by an unknowable Being. Laing's Self is thus a simplification, but his influence in the 1960s must mark his work as one element of existentialism's popularisation.

The second element is the importation of Camus into English intellectual network in the 1950s and 1960s, and his elevation to counter-cultural hero. Sinfield sees a significant reason for this, for Camus' debate over intellectual 'commitment' with Sartre was transposed into

a depoliticised form as promoting the artist as 'above' the political⁴³. Camus' *The Rebel* was thus interpreted as an honourable withdrawal from politics to protect the integrity of the artist; a reading still evident today⁴⁴.

The most obvious connection to Ballard's work is Camus' theorisation of absurdity. Ballard, it is said, is the exemplar of 'absurdist' science fiction, a term often applied to the New Wave. This was probably communicated via the brief ascendancy^{of} 'Absurdist drama' in the late 1950s. The terms of existentialism and Camus are evident in the commentaries quoted at the opening of this chapter, and this reading is extended over Ballard's oeuvre. It is more fruitful, however, to limit this reading to *The Drought*.

Like Ballard, Camus' texts offer searing portraits of landscape and seem largely concerned with the relation of the central figure to that landscape rather than the affectless relations between characters. Mersault's achievement of 'a happy death' (in the posthumous text of the same name) is crucially related to the "proper" setting. *The Outsider* effectively evokes the heavy heat and blinding light of the beach where morality and logic seem suspended. *The Myth of Sisyphus* concentrates on suicide, but also "a lucid invitation to live and to create, in the very midst of the desert". The purpose of absurd reasoning, he argues later, is to take logic to its

very limits and "to stay there...insofar as that is possible, and to examine closely the odd vegetation of those distant regions"⁴⁵.

It is not simply the 'desert' setting of *The Drought* that insists on this consonance. The relation to the landscape has a significant difference of emphasis from the other two novels analysed. Brigg's description is worth repeating: "The desert wastes and the detritus of civilisation...are simply *there*, outside the characters' emotional fields...[they] are left with their private selves against a blank and meaningless landscape"⁴⁶. This is evidently not the case with *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World*. Further, the landscape cannot easily be accorded to the "inner space" of Ransom. The opening paragraph of the novel offers an audacious description of Quilter, the "idiot son" with hydrocephalic head, staring down at the draining river, suggesting a clear relation. Everyone, to survive, has 'water on the brain', but is this landscape *Quilter's* rather than Ransom's fantasy? Each character struggles to impose their own psychic investment that would open the landscape to a specific apocalyptic understanding. Johnstone states: "There are too many people now living out their own failures, that's the secret appeal of this drought" [29]. This suggests *competing* "inner spaces".

Further, there is no 'literal' death at the conclusion of

The Drought, only the coming of rain. This would seem to dissolve the notion of the absurd itself. The 'absurd', as Camus defines it, is a tension: it appears out of the incommensurability of the human desire for rational explanation and unity and the "unreasonable silence of the world"⁴⁷. The 'solution' of suicide to this impossibility of meaning and knowledge is rejected as dissolving this essential tension. The fact that Ransom does not enter a state of 'death' would seem to concur with this, but the coming of rain offers a marriage of Ransom's imposition of meaning and the landscape, a final moment of revelation. Curiously, this marks Ballard as more "properly" existential than Camus; Cooper remarks that in no way can Camus be considered as central to existentialism, because his relation of being to the world is one that insists on the maintenance of alienation, not its overcoming⁴⁸.

The landscape of *The Drought* is one of a phenomenological reduction. With the evacuation of Mount Royal effected, Ransom stays behind in an arid landscape with which he profoundly identifies. There is a complex description of the river [13] as losing its "forward flow", like the procession of linear time; what matters now, in the movement of temporality, are the "random and discontinuous" eddies. The perverse decision to remain in a landscape that liberates from inauthenticity is, in existential terms, a "logical" and indeed necessary choice.

However, this 'choice' to act in 'freedom' is contested. Being-in-the-world seems threatened by rival actions of Other(s) in the competition for the meaning of the desert -- Johnstone's religious Apocalypse, Jonas' cult of fishermen, Lomax's hidden motives and sources of survival. All this may be contained by Quilter's head or else by the frame of Tanguy's painting, 'Jours de Lenteur', which is a constant reference. The first section of the text is a neutral landscape, a "terminal zone"; the second section, at the shoreline, is even more overtly existential. The journey to the South is necessitated by the impending facticity of death; unlike the voluntary journeys undertaken by Kerans and Sanders, this is "pointlessly following a vestigial instinct that no longer had any real meaning for him"[92]. The initial arrival at the beach, obliterated by the endless ranks of cars and people, is the descent into the 'they' of inauthentic life lived according to compromised being-for-others. Here, the beach is a "zone of nothingness that waited for them to dissolve and deliquesce like the crystals dried by the sun" [119]. The relation to landscape is now reversed, an imposition of a singular meaning, the drudgery of survival, and "the erosion of all time and space beyond the flaccid sand and draining beaches, numbed Ransom's mind" [126-7].

With the apparently 'suicidal' return to Mount Royal Ransom looks forward to being "merged and resolved in the

soft dust of the drained bed" [112]; is this desire any different from the immolation of the beach? For Ransom, the distinction is between the inauthenticity of redundant structures and the apocalyptic 'death' at Mount Royal, moving "forward into zones of time future where the unresolved residues of the past world appear smooth and rounded, muffled by the detritus of time, like images in a clouded mirror" [152]. In Camusian terms, equally, the decision to return to Mount Royal is away from the false 'solution' to absurd existence offered by the narrow parameters of survival; it would seem to accord with that imperative to live "in the very midst of the desert".

The resolution comes, however: the "gift" of rain. The apocalypse comes; but what is It? Ransom "had at last completed his journey across the margins of the inner landscape he had carried in his mind for so many years" [188] -- but what is the meaning of this circular journey, this return to zero? The figures of Woman, here, are not as significant or central: Catherine Austen remains, in every sense, impenetrable; Miranda's sources of survival are obscure; and Ransom's wife Judith is at one point seen trying to *disguise* a presentiment of catastrophe in her face with a fold of hair, the veil *drawn back over*⁴⁹.

There are other intimations. I note the repetition of this phrase: "the shadows of the dead trees formed brittle ciphers on the slopes"[17]; "the wind had turned, and

carried the plumes toward the north, the collapsing ciphers leaning against the sky" [75]; "the brittle trees along the banks, ciphers suspended in the warm air"[81]; "a metal windmill, its rusty vanes held like a cipher above the empty wasters"[143]. It is a question, then, of reading the ciphers.

'The Reading of Ciphers' is the final part of Karl Jaspers *Metaphysics*⁵⁰. It concerns the meaning of transcendence and its "catastrophic" inaccessibility. Transcendence can only be "read", without producing any cognitive knowledge of it, through "ciphers", in which the Transcendent appears in "veiled but palpable form"⁵¹. So far, in offering these proliferating readings of the catastrophe, I have taken signals from the surface of the text, its own 'thetic' register. There is no sign of intentional traces of Jaspers but I note this: the word appears in both *The Drought* and 'The Terminal Beach', Ballard's most overtly "existential" texts; it does not appear in either *The Drowned World* or *The Crystal World*. This is the exploitation of coincidence but it is highly productive.

Jaspers concentrates on the relation between Being and existence; Being is the 'gift' to existence, and existence can only come about through the Being which existence is not. The concern with existence thus extends beyond the empirical or intentional consciousness, since it depends on the 'gift' of an absolutely unknowable other. Nothing

can be known of the Transcendent but Jaspers offers three orders of 'language' which can translate intimations of Being. Firstly, there are sudden, brief flashes, in which a greater totality is grasped -- glimpses of Being. These are accessed through "ciphers", any object suddenly endowed with the "glow" of Being. In the second phase these glimpses are translated into communicable forms -- objectifications of what has been 'heard'. Jaspers' main example is myth. In the third phase, such myths are themselves translated into speculative language -- philosophy -- which reads back to attempt to recover the original impetus, pin down and name the Transcendent in its essence; the movement of ontology. The process is circular, beginning with the glimpse of Being, its translation and re-translation to speculative thought which goes 'beyond' the "cipher" to achieve the determination of Being.

Jaspers, however, absolutely refuses any moment of 'deeper' knowledge in this process; the "cipher" simply *is*, and nothing can be added or subtracted from it. There can only be an endless process of translation and re-translation which gets no nearer determining the Transcendent. The philosopher simply *"reads the original cipher-script by writing a new one: he conceives Transcendence in analogy to his palpably and logically present and mundane existence"* [117]. As such, then, metaphysics and ontology have no claim to any knowledge of

the Transcendent, even as they try to introduce an arbitrary stopping point, or ground, for these translations. There can be no end to translation, the "cipher" shifts "from language to language"[120].

The cipher is at once impenetrable and fragile. Unlike metaphor or symbol, it stands in for nothing but itself, there is no separation of sign or signified. It remains uninterpretable. Any attempts to penetrate and designate its meaning destroys the "cipher". Any object can become a "cipher", express Transcendence (Jaspers gives the example of *landscapes* [126]), but it is only a momentary glimpse; ciphers are "personal and unstable, and only meaningful or "transparent" to those who have learned how to read them"⁵²). The 'meaning' of this is difficult, for Jaspers makes this understanding circular and tautologous: "When I am reading ciphers, I am responsible, because I read them only through my self-being whose possibility and veracity appears to me in the way I read ciphers"[132]. Indeed, the perfect exemplar, Jaspers suggests, is the circle [129].

The landscape of *The Drought* is full of ciphers, incomprehensible languages. Not only the "dead trees"[17] or "brittle trees"[81] (compare Roquentin's apocalyptic awakening by staring at the tree root in Sartre's *Nausea*⁵³), but other codes: the smoke rising from torched cities is variously described as "like the calligraphic

signals of a primitive desert folk"[25], as "drifting away like the fragments of an enormous collapsing message"[38], or again, as "calligraphic patterns"[150]. Jonas' fishermen draw strange symbols in the sand; the haunting catastrophe texts that indeterminately structure the novel turn characters into "ciphers" of a larger plot.

What can be taken from Jaspers' delineation of the "cipher", however, is the non-determinability of such signs, the inaccessible meaning of the Transcendent. The Catastrophe, and the apocalypse that follows it, is only a translation and re-translation; the catastrophe *itself* remains hidden. Even though Ransom moves through this landscape, it is uncertain whether he is witness to these ciphers. The coming of rain, that moment of apparent redemption, may still only be a new cipher-script, coming no nearer to the 'truth' of the catastrophe.

This incidence of 'unreadable' codes also occurs in 'The Terminal Beach'⁵⁴. I have left this crucial story to this point, both for its 'cipher-script', and because it contains many of the narratives of the catastrophe analysed here. The immediate context is the nuclear. Paul Brians' literalism sees this as more "thoughtful" than Ballard's other work, "an attempt to reconcile his [Traven's] personal guilt with that of the culture of which he is a product, expiating in advance the guilt of destroying the human race in a thermonuclear war"⁵⁵.

Traven is at one point compared to Eatherley, the "mad" pilot of the Enola Gay, emblem of national guilt⁵⁶. For the reading of Ballard's landscapes as projections of a solipsistic consciousness, the island of Eniwetok is the primary example; Traven refers to it as a "state of mind" [136], devoid of all non-human elements, a purely 'constructed' zone that constitutes a catastrophic 'sign' of history. It is likened to "an Auschwitz of the soul" [136], and public guilt constantly crosses and re-crosses with private meanings: the phantasms of the dead wife and child and the 'philosophical' discussion with the dead Japanese pilot Yasuda. Finally, in the existentialist frame, Traven's quest is directed by the being-towards-death that the Bomb imposes: he explains to Osborne that "[f]or me the hydrogen bomb was the symbol of absolute *freedom*. I feel it's given me the right -- the obligation, even -- to do anything I want" [147]. Traven's discussion with Yasuda also centres on the search for the "ontological Garden of Eden" [153], a place of the absolute reduction to simple essence, complete certainty. This may recall R D Laing's assertion that schizophrenia (for Traven is plainly "insane" by Osborne's standards) is an increasingly 'epochal' condition due to "ontological insecurity"⁵⁷.

'The Terminal Beach' offers in condensed form all the potential narratives of catastrophe, but it also effectively isolates the very problem of reading Ballard

for the final determination. 'The Terminal Beach' was the first of Ballard's "condensed novels", the stripping down of narrative into sharply defined units of imagistic prose. The text appears in brief, titled 'blocks' of prose. In order to construct a 'logical sequence', the blocks have to be rearranged into some kind of linear temporal sequence. Traven, of course, is trapped within the hundreds of testing blocks on Eniwetok, himself trying to uncover their meaning. The reading process doubles Traven's reading.

The landscape is "covered by strange ciphers"[134]: "the tall palm trees leaned into the dim air like the symbols of a cryptic alphabet"[134]; the light pouring through the slits of a bunker "studded the west wall like runic ideograms. Variations on these ciphers decorated the walls of the other bunkers, the unique signature of the island"[139]; the apertures are again described as "the tutelary symbols of a futuristic myth"[140], and the blocks "like the cutting faces of a gigantic die-plate"[141]. Abandoned medical charts of chromosome mutation offer another unreadable language [144]. There seems only one impenetrable advance between the opening and closing blocks of prose; if the palm trees are "symbols" and "ciphers" of an alphabet, the ending repeats this with a minor difference: "The line of palms hung in the sunlight, only his own motion varying the shifting ciphers of their criss-crossing trunks" [154]. The secret

of this motion on the ciphers, however, is again unwitnessed, the glimpse of the Transcendent offered, but denied. Any final meaning offered is merely a translation or re-translation of the impenetrable ciphers.

CONCLUSION: *BEYOND...*

I wish now to return to the very first formulation of the catastrophe I proposed in the previous chapter. The catastrophe is irruptive out of temporality, and yet demands, calls forth, a narrative. Sontag's work on the disaster was shown to be a narrative which was *itself* called by the narratives of catastrophe, a desire to pin down and name the sub-textual movements of the disaster. I have, in this chapter, analysed the many potential narratives which seek to render the peculiar Ballardian apocalypse in explicable terms. This begins to resemble Jaspers on the Transcendent, the endless translation and re-translation, tracking the cipher from language to language which cannot contain it.

Is this the final statement that can be made of the genre of catastrophe? Would it be impudent to propose another, final frame that might return to the question of genre and repetition?

If the genre of catastrophe retains its "unacceptable" status, and if Ballard's texts themselves are unacceptable

to it, what better than to propose a relation to Freud's most "unacceptable" text, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*⁵⁸, with its aberrant, speculative foray into myth, philosophy and "telling stories", its "shocking lack of logic"⁵⁹. *Beyond* is that text, catastrophic for the institution of psychoanalysis, which must be managed and contained, isolated; like the action of the death drive the text famously introduces, its tension must be reduced to zero⁶⁰.

Ballard's work resonates with *Beyond*. A term hitherto loosely used, repetition compulsion, marks Ballard's obsessive repetition of plots, characters, place-names and geographies with a *drivenness*⁶¹. Further these plots tend towards death or mutilation, the apparent pleasure at unpleasurable. In the most "speculative" chapter of *Beyond*, Freud elaborates the function of the death drive. If the pleasure principle is concerned to reduce tensions in the psychic apparatus, to bind up excess or "unbound" energy, this is in opposition to the death drive which aims for absolute discharge of energy, the reduction of energy in the system to zero. It is a desire to "restore an earlier state of things" [305], to return the organism to the state of the inorganic, the 'dead'. This must be the system's own, "proper" death; it cannot invite an external imposition of non-being. If "the aim of all life is death"[311], it cannot ignore or evade external stimuli and must constantly adjust to it. What "life" constitutes

is a detour, a constant series of adjustments, a passage between two deaths, two zeros.

Jaspers' choice of "cipher" is evident; according to the OED it means "A secret or disguised manner of writing, whether by characters arbitrarily invented...or by an arbitrary use of letters or characters in other than their ordinary sense... intelligible only to those possessing a key". The root of cipher, however, is given as "the arithmetical symbol of zero or nought", from the Sanskrit meaning "empty". Could the ciphers of Ballard's landscapes merely draw a zero? Could the Jungian mandala, symbol of wholeness and completeness, which Powers builds in concrete in 'The Voices of Time', actually mark an emptiness? Traven journeys to Eniwetok because, as a zone between wars, between deaths, it effects the "psychic zero" [137]. Yasuda interprets Traven's quest as the search for "the white leviathan, zero" [153]. The crystallising process in *The Crystal World* is projected as eventually encompassing the entire universe, reducing it to the "ultimate macrocosmic zero" [85]. This could be multiplied further: to get over his breakdown, Larsen, in 'Zone of Terror', is sent to the desert for its "hypotensive virtues, its equivalence to the psychic zero"⁶². And what of 'Time of Passage', which details a personal history in reverse, beginning with death and ending with the return to the womb, to zero, to non-existence, "an earlier state of things"? Could it be

that all these signs in Ballard's texts mean "nothing", that he writes an aesthetics of zero?

Beyond is intriguing because it contains and refutes those narratives, like Sontag's, that would seek to expose the final ground of the catastrophe. The first evidence for the death drive is the compulsion to repeat in the psychoanalytic session and in the repetitive rituals of certain forms of neurosis. "Traumatic neurosis" provides the problem, for this evidently repeats unpleasure, the active seeking of unpleasure which transgresses the pleasure principle's operation to maintain a level of minimum excitation by repeated discharge.

Freud offers a number of explanations for this process which would remain under the dominance of the pleasure principle. Trauma is occasioned by *fright*, an unexpected breach of external stimuli through the protective filters and screens. One explanation of the compulsion to repeat the trauma is a *retrospective* action of developing a preparedness, the construction of an anxiety that would have contained the stimuli that had breached the screen. Another, that relates to Freud's famous example of the child's *fort/da* game, is that this is a response to the passivity of abandonment which the game transforms into an active attempt at mastery.

The genre of catastrophe, in the traditional reading of

"popular" culture, is the expression of a national unconsciousness, the site of collective anxieties. The *repetitiveness* of the genre is a token of the importance of that anxiety. In Freudian terms the bizarre temporality of the catastrophe genre projects the disaster as having already happened, but it returns it to the present, retroactively, to construct an anxiety that would have "dealt" with the catastrophe. Again: the passivity, the insignificance of the individual in relation to the global disaster, is turned into active narratives of survival. This could account for the "anomaly" of disaster fiction's popularity. But there is pleasure here, manifest pleasure; could this be explained by Freud's suggestion that unpleasure for one element may be pleasure for another or that there is pleasure in "revenge", destructiveness? This, presumably, would be where the "morally questionable" complicity derives from.

However, Freud rejects these explanations, and posits "the operation of tendencies *beyond* the pleasure principle...more primitive than it and independent of it" [287]. For Laplanche this transgresses the designated 'zone' of psychoanalysis, leaving the psychic order, and entering the biological "vital order"⁶³. Freud confesses that in positing these primary instincts he falls back on "figurative language" [334]. *Beyond* attempts to gain the final ground, but all that is discovered are metaphors. As for his reflections on the origin of life and sexuality,

forces escaping the original state of death, Freud turns to myth, the story from *The Symposium* of the double humans split in two by Zeus, seeking solace of their former unity in the sexual act. As Weber shows, this 'story' has no authority in *The Symposium*; Aristophanes is concerned he will be ridiculed and tries to retract what he has said⁶⁴. Further, the text of *The Symposium* is itself a report, second-hand, an attempted reconstruction of a previous conversation. The origin of repetition is itself a repetition.

The repetition of repetition: this is the structure I accord to the operation of Ballard's texts and *their* repetition of the genre of catastrophe. It is a repetition without conclusion or transcendence. This is not to deny the pull of a narrative that would expose, contain and finally explain the catastrophe -- witness these frames -- the imperial, the nuclear, the Jungian, the existential, the Freudian. And yet the catastrophe can remain only a figure, and these frames only an endless chain called forth by the catastrophe itself. The apocalyptic "commentaries" that operate within his texts may be of precise historical determination -- the paradox of the historicisable ahistorical catastrophe -- and yet even that action cannot finally determine their "meaning", their final ground. Narratives call forth narratives, of varying plausibility, certainly, but without the assurance of "proof".

FOOTNOTES

- 1) The "doubling commentary" is formulated by Derrida in opposition to his own 'reading' in a famous passage in *Of Grammatology* (translated Gayatri Spivak, John Hopkins UP, 1976): "To produce this signifying structure [of a critical reading] cannot obviously consist of reproducing, by the effaced and respectful doubling of commentary, the conscious, voluntary, intentional relationship that the writer institutes in his exchanges with the history to which he belongs...[.] This moment of doubling commentary should no doubt have its place in a critical reading...Without this recognition and this respect, critical production would risk developing in any direction at all and authorise itself to say almost anything. But this indispensable guardrail has always only *protected*, it has never *opened*, a reading" p.158
- 2) interview with Pringle and Godard *Vector* 73, 1976, p.40. It should be noted that two articles by Nick Perry and Ray Wilkie in 1969 and 1970 were already reading the catastrophe in terms of "apocalypse": 'Homo Hydrogenesis: Notes on the Work of J G Ballard', *Riverside Quarterly*, 4:2 and 'The Undivided Self: J G Ballard's *The Crystal World*', *Riverside Quarterly*, 5:4
- 3) 'The Strange Case of J G Ballard', *Science Fiction in the Real World*, Southern Illinois UP, 1990, p.184
- 4) Gregory Stepenson, 'J G Ballard: The Quest for an

Ontological Eden', *Foundation* 35, Winter 1985-6. Page references in text. Stephenson's book, *Out of the Night and Into the Dream: A Thematic Study of the Fiction of J G Ballard*, Greenwood Press 1991, extends this highly schematic Jungian reading of Ballard's work in a rather portentously religious manner.

- 5) Warren W. Wagar 'J G Ballard and the Transvaluation of Utopia', *Science Fiction Studies* 18:1, March 1991. Page references in text
- 6) Peter Brigg, *J G Ballard*, Starport Reader's Guide, no.26, Starport House, WA, USA 1985. All references in text
- 7) Anthony Ryan, 'The Mind of Mr. J G Ballard', *Foundation* 3, March 1973, p.45
- 8) Brigg, *J G Ballard*, p.12
- 9) this is not a strictly correct *psychoanalytic* meaning of the term 'projection'. Laplanche and Pontalis note that Freud used it in a specific sense as part of paranoid defence mechanisms. It is used in the more general sense, external reality taken as 'expression' of the mental apparatus, in Gestalt psychology. See *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, Karnac Books, 1988, ps.349-56
- 10) see Pringle, *Earth is the only alien planet*, p.49
- 11) the phrase is Ross', from his discussion of pornography, in *No Respect*, Routledge, 1989
- 12) in *New Statesman* 5/12/53, Vol.16, p.712-4. References in the text. This is one of the texts in Colin

Greenland's 'etiology' of "inner space" in *The Entropy Exhibition*

- 13) Penguin, 1967, made up of lectures from 1964 onwards
- 14) *The Politics of Experience*, p.62
- 15) 'The Overloaded Man', in *The Voices of Time* 1963, Everyman Fiction, 1984
- 16) 'The Gioconda of the Twilight Noon', in *The Terminal Beach*, Gollancz, 1985
- 17) see *The Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds: A Trocchi Reader*, ed. Andrew Murray Scott, Polygon, 1991
- 18) Robert Hewison, *Too Much: Art and Society in the Sixties, 1960-75*, Methuen, 1986
- 19) Guest editorial, *New Worlds* 40, 118, May 1962.
References in text
- 20) 'Notes From Nowhere: Comments on a Work in Progress', *New Worlds* 50, 167, 1966
- 21) see Samuel Weber, *The Legend of Freud*, The University of Minnesota Press, 1982, especially opening chapter
- 22) Edward Glover, *Freud or Jung*, Allen and Unwin, 1950, p.18
- 23) Jung et al, *Man and His Symbols*, Aldus Books, 1964, p.58
- 24) *The Entropy Exhibition*, p.54
- 25) *Man and His Symbols*, p.193
- 26) in *The Terminal Beach*, 1964
- 27) The 1958 television series 'Quatermass and the Pit', for example proposed a genetic implantation into "primitive man" re-triggered by the discovery of an

entombed spaceship in contemporary London.

- 28) *Man and His Symbols*, p.64
- 29) interview with Henessy, *Transatlantic Review* 39, Spring 1971, p. 62
- 30) see Dawn Ades, *Dali*, Thames and Hudson, 1982, for details.
- 31) Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.10
- 32) interview with Graeme Revell, *Re/Search*, p.45
- 33) Ballard, 'Alphabets of Unreason', *New Worlds* 196, 1969, p.26
- 34) see *Nordenholt's Million* (1923), 'Nuit Blanche' chapter.
- 35) see chapter 'The Lamia, The Jester and the King' in *Earth is the only alien planet*
- 36) *Oxford Literary Review*, 6:2, 1984, all references in the text
- 37) in *Formations of Fantasy*, edited Burgin, Donald and Kaplan, Methuen, 1986
- 38) *Man and His Symbols*, p.163
- 39) see Sinfield, *Postwar Britain*, esp. Chapter 'Blacks, existentialists and Beats'
- 40) David E. Cooper, *Existentialism: A Reconstruction*, Blackwell, 1990, p.12
- 41) this might be compared to Greenland's statement about the repressive response to escalating drug use in the 1960s: "the governments of America and Europe were not only outlawing drugs that encouraged disaffection among the young but making a stand on the crucial

- problem of phenomenology. They were re-affirming a faith in Western materialism and a single objective reality", *The Entropy Exhibition*, p.5
- 42) *The Divided Self*, p.19. This "unitary whole", however, is still only a postulate. Later, Laing says: "The task in therapy...comes to be to make contact with the original 'self' of the individual, which, or who, we must believe is still a *possibility*, if not an actuality", p.49
- 43) see Sinfield, *Postwar Britain*, ps. 89-93
- 44) for example: "Like a number of contemporary writers, Camus did not admire the wealth-creating capacity of capitalist society. The question of where the people who bought his books found the money to do so did not interest him. Neither does he seem to have wondered what a society would be like in which there was no police force to guard its citizens while they slept". Philip Thody, *Camus*, Methuen, 1989, p.101
- 45) Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), Penguin 1975 ps.7,17
- 46) Brigg, *J G Ballard*, p.51
- 47) Camus, *Sisyphus*, p.31-2
- 48) Cooper, chapter on Absurdity, *Existentialism*
- 49) *The Drought*, p.37
- 50) Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy 3, 'Metaphysics'* (1932), trans. E B Ashton, University of Chicago Press, 1971.
All references in the text
- 51) My understanding of Jaspers is indebted to two

commentaries: Charles F. Wallraff, *Karl Jaspers: An Introduction to His Philosophy*, Princeton UP, 1970 and Sebastian Samay, *Reason Revisited: the Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, Gill and Macmillan, 1971. This quote from Jaspers is from Samay p.172

52) This Jaspers quote from Wallraff, p.186

53) Sartre, *Nausea* (1938), Penguin 1965

54) in *The Terminal Beach*, references in text

55) Brians, *Nuclear Holocausts*, p.2

56) Ballard would no doubt be delighted to discover, subsequent to publication of this story, that Eatherley was in fact an imposter

57) see this titled section in *The Divided Self*; cf also the comment in *The Politics of Experience*: "Long before a thermonuclear war can come about, we have had to lay waste to our sanity", p.49

58) in *On Metapsychology*, The Pelican Freud Library Vol. 11, Pelican 1962. All references in the text

59) on 'speculation' in *Beyond* see 'To Speculate -- On Freud', Derrida *The Post Card* 1980, translated by Alan Bass, University of Chicago Press, 1987. Jaspers statement should be remembered: "speculation is a thinking that drives us to think the unthinkable" [119]. On "telling stories" see the last part of Weber's *The Legend of Freud*; on its lack of logic, see Jean Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* 1970, translated by Jeffrey Mehlman, John Hopkins UP, 1976, p.122

- 60) There is another link: the catastrophe of the "popular". Freud wrote to Eitingon, March 1921: "For the *Beyond* I have been punished enough; it is very popular, brings me masses of letters and encomiums. I must have made something very stupid there". Quoted by Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life For Our Time*, Macmillan, 1988, p.403
- 61) this is not, it should be clear, a statement on 'Ballard', the author, and his psychopathology; it refers to a generic compulsion, and the ways in which the repetitive elements of Ballard's work "open" this up to consideration.
- 62) in *The Disaster Area*, p.123
- 63) see *Life and Death*, chapter 'Why the Death Drive?'
- 64) see Weber, 'Speculation: The Way to Utter Difference', in *The Legend of Freud*

CHAPTER NINE

WHERE THE GARMENT GAPES: *THE ATROCITY EXHIBITION*
AND THE PROBLEMATIC OF THE AVANT-GARDE

The avant-garde flooded our culture and our society with its dirty water, churning up foundations, overturning standards, confusing thought and leaving in its wake an all too obvious trail of insecurity and misery. -- Mary Whitehouse¹

I loathe the word "literature" -- J G Ballard²

horrible...pointless...boring -- Paul Theroux³

How is one to approach this object, this text or texts? The fifteen sections that make up *The Atrocity Exhibition* appeared singly, across a wide range of journals, both science fiction and non-science fiction; are these short stories, then, separable as such? James Blish sensed a design: "pieces of a mosaic, the central subject of which is not yet visible...these fragments...are going somewhere, by the most unusual method of trying to surround it, or work into it from the edges of a frame". The assumption here is that the sequence will coalesce. Blish's statement, that "[t]he plain, blunt fact is that we do not yet know what it is Ballard is talking about"⁴ has echoed ever since. Ballard and subsequent commentators, have used the term "condensed novels" for *Atrocity*. The compacted space of these micro-novels performs a self-consciously 'experimental' stripping-down of the 'social novel'. Is *Atrocity* something like a vicious, if distant, parody of Anthony Powell's novel sequence?

Questions of its determinability go much further than this, however. Contemporaneous statements by Ballard propose "[w]e're living inside an enormous novel" and that "the function of the writer is no longer the addition of fiction to the world, but rather to seek its abstraction, to direct enquiry aimed at recovering elements of reality from this debauch of fiction"⁵. This breaches entirely the frame of the 'literary'. Even if this is rhetorical excess, there is still a sense in which *Atrocity's* literary status is problematic: for Greenland, this text is "a minimal overlay of narrative gestures on a mass of theory"⁶. This invokes again the paradox of "thetic" literature. Is it possible to divide the literary and the thetic, defend *Atrocity* as a novel centering on T----, with an appendix of scientific reports, those "psychoanalytic" papers that conclude it? Or is it entirely a scientific report, written^{by} Doctor Nathan? Many have noted that the form of the text (or texts), with its brief paragraphs titled in bold type, parodies the structure of scientific papers. How to frame *Atrocity*?

This persistent recourse to the notion of a frame opens yet another approach. The densely allusive text frequently involves citations of artworks. Paragraph titles refer to 'The Persistence of Memory' (Dali, p.22), 'The Robing of the Bride' (Ernst, p.39), 'The Bride Stripped Bare of Her Bachelors, Even' (Duchamp, p.35⁷). "Chapter" titles also cite artworks, like 'The Great

American Nude' (a series of works by Wesselman), or else allude to them, like 'The Summer Cannibals' (a shift of season from Dali's 'The Autumn Cannibals'). With Ballard's exhibition of crashed cars at the New Arts Laboratory in 1969, does *Atrocity* become something like a bizarre exhibition catalogue, paragraphs as statements or evocations on their "titles", a kind of narrativised set of 'commentary notes', where action takes place within a sequence of framed paintings?

Titles do not solely refer to artworks, however; 'Concentration City' [112], 'Venus Smiles' [35], 'The Sixty Minute Zoom' [24] refer to titles of *other* Ballard stories, and "chapter" titles are elsewhere paragraph titles within other "chapters". With the 'hierarchy' of titles constantly shifting, this echoes those questions central to Derrida's interrogation of genre, literature and painting: "What happens when one entitles a 'work of art'? What is the *topos* of the title? Does it take place (and where?) in relation to the work? On the edge? Over the edge? On the internal border? In an over-board that is re-marked and re-applied, by invagination, within, between the presumed centre and the circumference?"⁶ These questions arise when reading *Atrocity*, as titles reveal a fundamental instability, a troubling lack of authority, making the edges of the text difficult to discern.

If these concerns are opened by the *form* of *Atrocity* it

also becomes difficult to offer a "commentary" on it. As Noel King has remarked of Don DeLillo's *White Noise*, "any act of criticism would seem *misplaced*...for seeming to be everywhere anticipated, pre-empted, forced into an unsettling critical sphere between the welcome and the redundant"⁹. *Atrocity* is similar: the "thetic" voice of Nathan dominates the "chapters", and props of character later disappear in the "scientific" reports. Further, in the recent American (re-)publication of *Atrocity* by the *Re/Search* group, each page has a wide margin down which Ballard, some twenty years later, has provided a commentary and elucidation of obscure references. The space of the text was difficult enough to determine, but the critic now also finds the margins occupied. Another frame is breached; the scribbled explanatory notes of the reader have already been written.

This indetermination may mark *Atrocity's* success; it is, it may be said, the quality of the avant-garde to de-stabilise, burst the frame of "object" or "artwork". Parallels abound: of being on "the edges of a frame", of breaching the autonomy of the literary by "recovering elements of reality". To say this invokes a huge armature of theory dedicated to the determination of the indeterminable: the problematic of the avant-garde. This in turn leads back to a crucial aspect of postmodernist theory: the existence or non-existence of avant-gardism. In definitional postmodernism the avant-garde is

frequently pronounced redundant. This chapter is partly concerned with questioning this opposition through Ballard's place, once again, "between two walls".

The "manifesto" for *Atrocity* is 'Notes From Nowhere', published in *New Worlds*. Its crucial premise is:

Planes intersect: on one level, the world of public events, Cape Kennedy and Viet Nam mimetised on billboards. On another level, the immediate personal environment, the volumes of space enclosed by my opposed hands, the geometry of my own postures, the time-values contained in this room, the motion-space of highways, staircases, the angle between these walls. On a third level, the inner world of the psyche. Where these planes intersect, images are born. With these co-ordinates, some kind of valid reality begins to assert itself¹⁰

This is a step-by-step statement of the central device of *Atrocity*. Practice, however, erases this progressive layering, and its density makes it difficult and lengthy to loosen the process of narrative. The effect is of a compacted simultaneity, a dense, "unreadable" space, recalling the Cubist canvas ('Notes From Nowhere' comments: "Cubism...had a greater destructive power than all the explosives discharged during World War I"¹¹).

This chapter is in five parts. In the first I consider the avant-garde in relation to modernism and postmodernism. In the second I move to discuss *Atrocity* in relation to the classically defined modernist avant-garde "work", particularly Surrealism. In the third and fourth section I try to historicise avant-gardism in relation to

certain shifts perceived in the 1950s and 1960s, reading *Atrocity* in the frame of Pop Art. Finally, I will consider the "meat" of *Atrocity*, the violent representation of women.

The title of the chapter is a phrase from Barthes' *The Pleasure of the Text*, where he states: "Is not the most erotic portion of a body *where the garment gapes?* In perversion (which is the realm of textual pleasure) there are no "erogenous zones"...; it is intermittence, as psychoanalysis has so rightly stated, which is erotic: the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing...between two edges"¹². It is, perhaps, provocative to suggest a link between *jouissance* and Ballard's texts. The violent re-contextualisation of the quote is within the logic of *Atrocity*; further, the sense of "intermittence", or oscillation, will become vital.

I

Kingsley Amis, demurring that "I cannot duck all responsibility for having helped to encourage sf writers to take themselves seriously", feels his control slipping: *Atrocity* indicates that "Sf is dying, disappearing, changing into something else"¹³. Martin Amis concludes that Ballard's experimental phase failed: "In sf Ballard had a tight framework for his unnerving ideas; out on the lunatic fringe, he can only flail and shout"¹⁴. What is

this "something else" and where is this "lunatic fringe"? The answer in the anonymous review in *The Times Literary Supplement*, is that with *Atrocity* and *Crash* Ballard "earned the disparaging reputation of being the intellectual of avant-garde science fiction"¹⁵.

There is a bizarre seigniorage here, and an inversion of expected values; within science fiction Ballard could excel, be its "highest" exemplar, but to step beyond it is occupy the lunatic fringe. In the linked couplings high/low and celebrated/ denigrated, values are transposed: celebrated low, denigrated high. This is unusual in that the avant-garde^{has} always been theorised as the "highest" form of art and one which defines itself against the low, the mass. With this opposition, if there is any transmission between the two, this is not mere border crossing, but the potential annihilation of the very existence of the avant-garde. There is this paradox: even to entertain *Atrocity* as avant-garde is to liquidate the avant-garde itself.

The theory of the avant-garde is a fraught discourse; to develop a theory is virtually to admit its failure, its reduction to an object. If definitional postmodernism is almost synonymous with 'post-avant-garde', there is a further difficulty, because the avant-garde's two main theorists -- Burger and Adorno -- completely contradict each other on its definition, the one stressing

'sublation' of art and life, the other insisting on the absolute autonomy of art. I will try to indicate these differences as they are related to postmodernism.

Peter Burger's *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* has been very influential¹⁶. Burger wishes to move beyond the implacable opposition of Adorno versus Lukács, (avant-garde as resolutely political and anti-bourgeois; avant-garde as a sign of bourgeois decadence). For Burger, the avant-garde is not a left or right politics *within* art, but a politics opposed to the very notion of "Art". In this debate Kant is the key figure and Burger unfolds a retroactive history of his influence. Kant is the first to determine aesthetics as an autonomous non-purposive sphere. For Burger, this is co-terminous with the rise of the bourgeois state, and is double edged. Firstly, art is removed from the 'means-end rationality' of the productive economy (tied 'ideally' to use, but ultimately exchange); art stalls this process not in being its own end but by proceeding with an end in view that cannot be realized¹⁷. Secondly, however, autonomy is gained with the very loss of integration into everyday praxis. If Art is measured by social function, it gains the ability to evade re-functioning by external factors (this, for Adorno, constitutes the power of its critique), but loses any effective social function.

It is Burger's thesis that such autonomy did not become

"visible" as art's condition until autonomy became the very subject of art in aestheticism. Further, the conditions of aestheticism only become clear once the avant-garde launches its attack. The central elements of Burger's avant-garde can thus be established: at the apex of autonomy Art's institutional foundations are revealed and displayed as socially ineffective. The avant-garde is to be defined as seeking to destroy institutional inefficacy, by three routes: problematising the non-purposive by dissolving the distinction of art and life; by a "radical negation" of institutional artistic production (determined by the signature, and the "framable" work); and by attacking the passive bourgeois reception of artworks by insisting on strategies that provoke a participatory response, either by meanings that need to be 'completed' (collage, say) or by emphasizing 'democratic' methods (the ready-made, automatism). These three elements circulate through the majority of discussions of the avant-garde.

Adorno's conception of the avant-garde is very different. Art's negation can only be operable by evading instrumental rationality (re-functioning for use) and so autonomy must be maintained. Any breach into instrumentality erases the avant-garde partition, and risks being swept into the exchange economy. In Burger's terms, this remains internal to the institutional parameters of Art's field, but also mistakes intent. The

avant-garde's explosion of the institutional frame does not re-absorb art into the everyday *as it stands*, since it aims to sublate *both* art *and* the means-end rationality that dominates the everyday into an entirely new, utopian relation.

Both agree, however, on the result of this project. Burger initially indicates his position in a footnote, which names the avant-garde he adopts as models: Dada, Surrealism, the Russian and Italian Futurists¹⁸. The very ability to "name" them marks their reintegration into art history. Dada and Surrealism used "shock", but these punctual effects were quickly repaired. Hence these attempts are termed the *historical* avant-garde, indicating their irrecuperable pastness. Burger contends that subsequent attempts to revive avant-gardism can only mimic already pacified strategies: "the demand that art be reintegrated in the praxis of life within the existing society can no longer be seriously made" for "the culture industry has brought about the false elimination of the distance between art and life"¹⁹.

For Adorno, the culture industry is the "spreading ooze" (in Dwight MacDonald's phrase) that erodes the autonomy of the avant-gardes. The very "uselessness" of art has become appropriated within a vastly and uniformly expanding market, as a specific form of use -- "tolerated negativity" as cachet, symbolic value. Shock tactics and

anti-institutional stances are resumed elsewhere: "Advertising has absorbed surrealism and the champions of this movement have given their blessing to this commercialisation of their own murderous attacks on culture"²⁰. Negation becomes affirmative. If the high is brought low, the low, the mass, becomes the normalising and neutralising programme of affirmative culture.

These baldly stated positions lead directly into the polarised positions within postmodernism. For those who would equate autonomy and negativity as the sole avant-garde position, the postmodern turn is fatal: "The culture industry in its postmodernist phase has achieved what the avant-garde always wanted: the sublation of the difference between art and life"²¹. On the other side, the 'celebrants' of postmodernism tend to emphasize in their criticism of modernism not Burger but Adorno, arguing that the maintenance of autonomy was a regressive withdrawal, a mis-fired "shoring up", that *constituted* the divide between high and low. Others use Burger's conclusion, but contend that the modernist conception of negativity must not be a fixed set of strategies; the avant-garde may be specifically modernist, but its "death" does not negate negation. John Tagg warns of romanticising the position of marginality and joins with Rosalind Krauss in attacking the "mobilising myth" of the avant-garde: the marginal critique of the unique, "original" artist. "In deconstructing the sister notions of origin and

originality, postmodernism establishes a schism between itself and the domain of the avant-garde, looking back at it across a gulf that in turn establishes a historical divide"²².

These points intensify the paradox in relation to *Atrocity*. If citing *Atrocity* as "rising" from a "low" genre threatens to dissolve the category, then placing it within the frame of postmodernism -- which is in opposition, positively or negatively, to the avant-garde -- doubly denies any linkage.

The terms of the above debate are crudely stated; they now need to be problematised. As I indicated in Chapter 4, Adorno's position has been collapsed into the more monumentally fixed opposition of Clement Greenberg's 'Avant-garde and Kitsch', such that Adorno's autonomy is read as pure formal immanence²³. In fact, autonomy is a space given by bourgeois socio-economic organisation. Autonomy is a goal of "purity" that is never attained; "it becomes impossible to criticise the culture industry without criticising art at the same time"²⁴. Adorno's famous statement on the "torn halves" of high and low culture, suggests that the divide is not an immanent difference of form or evaluation, but is an artificial erection of "wire fences", because without this segmentation "the inhabitants could all too easily come to an understanding" of the whole²⁵. The avant-garde and

autonomy are never coincident, and the high and low are never "purely" opposed.

Burger has "served" definitional postmodernism by failing to emphasize how far Adorno puts the avant-garde "in play" rather than as an isolatable position. If Burger attempts to shift the definition of the avant-garde away from "pure" negation to emphasizing the breach of art as institution, he nevertheless concludes that the project of the sublation of art and life can never succeed within bourgeois society, and so the only strategy left is precisely that initially criticised in Adorno: negation by the autonomous work. For postmodernism, a double death is announced: the first two routes of avant-garde strategy are blocked, for if sublation fails, the retreat to autonomy is *already* blocked by Adorno himself: "There are no longer any places to hide"²⁶.

Burger criticises the neo-avant-garde for the very strategy earlier posited as the third route, reception. Warhol, as exemplar of neo-avant-gardism, is dangerous because his work "contains resistance to the commodity society only for the person who wants to see it there"; it is a "manifestation that is void of sense and that permits the positing of any meaning whatsoever"²⁷. Disturbing passive reception is deemed *not enough*; Warhol is fatally complicit with commodification. Warhol, of course, is a crucial postmodernist icon and I will deal

with Pop Art in detail below. However, it is precisely *ambivalence*, the indeterminability of affirmation or negation, that is central to positive or negative evaluations of postmodernist art. Despite "pure" negation being questioned by the collapse of modernism's "self-constituted" divide from the "mass", it is negation that remains the measure of critical art. This has been seen in the shift of Linda Hutcheon from the defining element of postmodernism as "ambivalence" to the insistence of a divide between "critical" and "imitative" postmodernism²⁸. Ambivalence, from the view of negation, cannot register a politics.

I have proposed that Ballard's work constitutes an intolerable oscillation. *Atrocity* intensifies this in its uncertain status, even for Ballard. His view that "I consider I left the [science fiction] genre completely with *The Atrocity Exhibition*, but I don't have any substitute terminology for what I write"²⁹ is flatly contradicted elsewhere. Ballard criticised *New Worlds* for moving "outside" science fiction in specific terms. He praised the "conventional" editor of *New Worlds*, Ted Carnell, as far more radical than Moorcock: "Moorcock in fact was following what were wholly traditional and conventional lines -- the avant-garde in short; experimental and exploratory writing of a kind long since established in the early years of the 20th Century"³⁰. Testing boundaries *within* science fiction is more radical

than avant-gardism. This, however, needs further qualification. Ballard has recently viewed his career as departing from science fiction in 1966: "But labels stick...one must break down these damned categories"³¹.

The publishing history of *Atrocity* is also confusing. Doubleday, Ballard's the American pulp fiction house *almost* published it. It was pulped before its first print run had been distributed, as it was considered obscene and libellous. *Atrocity* was then picked up, re-titled as *Love and Napalm: Export USA*, and given the avant-garde cachet of a William Burroughs introduction in a Grove Press edition. Pulp pulped becomes "high art".

The specific case of the "chapter", 'Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan' further indicates this. 'Plan for the Assassination of Jacqueline Kennedy' had provoked questions in the Houses of Parliament (and a re-assertion of British respect for the Kennedys by Randolph Churchill³²), but the Reagan piece, in pamphlet form, resulted in the Unicorn Bookshop in Brighton being prosecuted for obscenity. This was only one piece of evidence alongside works by Bataille and Burroughs. Despite the defence of Selby's *Last Exit to Brooklyn* through "high art" grounds, one suspects that 'Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan', as a "chapter" of a book entitled *The Atrocity Exhibition*, was not in itself prosecuted was because, in Britain, it was published within the confines

of science fiction. Obscene pamphlet and non-obscene "chapter", the piece also re-appeared in non-art guise at the 1980 Republican Convention as an official 'Survey' document, distributed to delegates as an analysis of Reagan's potential. Juno and Vale report that "some ex-Situationists were responsible for this black humour critique"³³. This text displays a remarkable mobility, and this intrusion, however briefly disruptive, is consonant with both surrealist and situationist strategies of subversion.

Atrocity still effectuated "shock" therefore. This is not enough to term it avant-garde even though Burger tends to reduce avant-gardism to this one effect, and the non-repeatability of shock to its failure. Burger's intention is to set in motion *historicised* aesthetic categories. If all *theories* of aesthetics are to be historicised, then Burger's 'Post-script' to the Second Edition is revealing: "it reflects a historical constellation of problems that emerged after the events of May 1968 and the failure of the student movement in the early seventies"³⁴. It is as if, just as the avant-garde retroactively revealed the institution of art, so "May 1968" revealed the failure of the avant-garde. Narratives of failure only begin to appear decades after their initial disruptive effects; it is as much these narratives as the events they narrate that are historically significant. Burger's *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*

appeared in Germany in 1974, which places it two years after Peter Wollen's suggestion that the dissolution of the Situationist International in 1972 constitutes the terminal point of the Twentieth century avant-garde³⁵. "May 1968" and in its failure reveal, for Burger, the end of avant-gardism, which is then displaced back in time.

Evidence for this comes from contemporaneous documents. The *perception* of the time was that the counterculture was an avant-garde sublation of art and life. The aim of the milieu was "to ignore all boundaries and conventions, and as far as possible to escape the imposed definitions of material reality by exploring inner space"³⁶. It is notable that Marcuse shifts from the increasingly dominant mechanism of 'One-dimensional society' in 1964 to the celebratory *Essay on Liberation* in 1969. I am interested only in the *self-perception* of avant-gardism here, not with "celebrating" the Sixties.

The counter-culture was premised on post-scarcity economics. The problems of production were deemed solved. This is the premise both of *One Dimensional Man* and *An Essay on Liberation*, as well as other influential texts (McLuhan's *Understanding Media*, for example). Marcuse, in the *Essay*, signals "the space, both physical and mental, for building a realm of freedom, which is not that of the present: liberation also from the liberties of the exploitative order"³⁷. In post-scarcity, vital needs, the

basis for non-alienated Man, have to be revised. Marcuse sees this *imaginative* reconfiguration of vital needs in 'The New Sensibility' of the new historical subjects: blacks in the American ghettos and students. Since the the proletariat have been integrated into advanced industrialism, revolutionary consciousness shifts to these new subjects. This avant-garde cadre cannot proceed through any organised party, however, but through "surrealistic forms of protest" [30]. Surrealism, in fact, is the constant measure of the counter-culture. Breaking the Kantian boundaries of Art to re-situate the "sensual power" of the imagination as a productive force is a shared goal.

Echoing Lyotard's demand for an art "without the solace of good forms"⁹⁹, Marcuse argues that the first anti-art fell *within* form, and thus remained within recuperable categories of Art. The new avant-garde desublimates form: "The new object of art is not yet "given", but the familiar object has become impossible, false" [38]. "Today's rebels" step entirely beyond Kantian, the "orderly, harmonizing forms"[46] that re-captured the first anti-art attempts.

However, the *perception* here is of a shift in the site and an *intensification* of negation, powered by "groups which have thus far remained outside the entire realm of higher culture" [46]. Although Marcuse cites, problematically,

black music as exemplary of this (natural rhythm as subversive), he begins to indicate that Sixties avant-gardism is no longer to be located in the extremities of 'high culture'. Rather it is a set of mobile strategies that move through the high and low as well as between groups³⁹. *Atrocity* as "avant-garde" here becomes less the flat contradiction that it first appeared.

At the time of the composition of *Atrocity*, state "liberalisation" co-existed with a counter-reaction: homosexuality was legalised, but convictions increased; the "servants" could now read *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, but controls intensified on "obscene" publications. Stuart Hall (et.al), in a 1975 analysis gives less "transgressiveness" to the counter-culture. Hall terms it "*profoundly adaptive to the system's productive base*"⁴⁰, largely necessitated by shifts in production away from a 'conserving' work ethic towards a "repetitive cycle of consumption"⁴¹. A "caesura" within formations, Hall thus accounts for oscillating forms of the counter-culture: incorporable elements are the "planned permissiveness" of alternative 'life-styles' ; oppositional elements remain never wholly recuperable. The 'reverse discourses' of gay and feminist politics, radical intellectuals, and certain forms of terrorism were "birthed" in the 1960s.

Forming a diffuse milieu, the strategy "push[ed]

contradictory tendencies in the culture to extremes...subvert[ing] them, but from the inside, and by a negation"⁴². Negation still operates here, but across and between an *oscillation* of incorporation/ opposition. Combining both Marcuse's contemporaneous account with Hall's narrative, an extension of avant-gardism is being posited here. The accounts of both the modernist avant-garde and postmodernism are united by an intolerance of ambivalence. Oscillation, however, in Hall's account marks the very milieu of the counter-culture. What if indeterminability, lack of fixity, *could* form a "politics"? If "pure" states of affirmation and negation are rendered inoperable through the capitalist penetration of the "cultural" sphere, the strategy of playing on the edge between affirmation and negation troubles simple accounts of the "political" spaces of art.

Atrocity is a "punctual" text, of its moment. If it has been seen as both modernist (Pfeil) and postmodernist (McHale)⁴³, it is not a question of deciding one or the other, but of marking its oscillation. This can be discerned very exactly. In what follows I unpick the density of *Atrocity* by analysing its extension -- in strategy, reference and device -- of Surrealism and Pop Art, two distinct moments in the problematic of the avant-garde.

II

Traven/Talbot/Tallis/Trabert/Travis/Talbert/Travers -- the figure I shall call "the T-cell"⁴⁴ -- appears in disjunctive guises: as both lecturer and patient at a psychiatric institution, a former H-bomb pilot, as well as signifier of "Christ's return". In the opening sections of *Atrocity* the T-cell is searching for a "modulus", a mode of explanation, that would re-fix his identity and serve to de-code the densely overdetermined landscapes in which he appears. The landscapes of the text are synaesthetic, as it were, capable of *absolute translation* from one level to another, different meanings collapsing into nodal points of simultaneity. This is the primary content of Nathan's didactic theorising, that "for him [the T-cell] all junctions, whether of our own soft biologies or the hard geometries of these walls and ceilings, are equivalent to one another"[56].

If Nathan is analysing his fellow doctor or patient ("Mrs. Travis, I'm not sure if the question is valid any longer. These matters involve a relativity of a different kind.") [12] -- admirably Laingian), he is also offering a commentary on the central device of the text itself. This overdetermined synaesthetic collapse of levels is signalled by two methods: the list and the associative chain.

In 'You and Me and the Continuum', where the T-cell is so dispersed that even a relativised proper name cannot 'fix' him, evidence of his identity is collected in a set of photographs:

Kodachrome. Captain Kirby, MI5, studied the prints. They showed: (1) a thick set man in an Air Force jacket, unshaven face half-hidden by the dented hat-peak; (2) a transverse section through the spinal level T-12; (3) a crayon self-portrait by David Feary, seven year-old schizophrenic at the Belmont Asylum, Sutton; (4) radio-spectra from the quasar CTA 102; (5) an antero-posterior radiograph of a skull, estimated capacity 1500cc; (6) spectroheliogram of the sun taken with the K line of calcium; (7) left and right hand-prints showing massive scarring between second and third metacarpal bones. To Doctor Nathan, he said, "And all these make up one picture?" [83]

Apparently heterogeneous images are forced into a conjunction, playing on the tension between a chaotic range of reference and a strict logic of regimented order by numbered 'exhibits'. The condensed "fusions" operate to elide different discursive regimes, as if co-habiting the same space were enough to spring connections. Even the logic of the 'levels' chosen, however, is elusive, as the T-cell, for example, charts the transitions of the "(1) Spinal...(2) Media...(3) Contour...(4) Astral" which form a "renascent geometry assembling in the musculature of the young woman, in their postures during intercourse, in the angles between the walls of the apartment" [24].

Alongside listing is the process of an associative linkage of 'levels'. 'You: Coma: Marilyn Monroe' offers a complex drift between the undulating dunes, the "damaged dome of

the planetarium", the geometry of the apartment as "a cubicular extrapolation of...the cheekbones of Marilyn Monroe"[42], and Karen Novotny as the "modulus", the obscure switching centre for these translations. It is difficult to transcribe the peculiar effect of this drift, which operates on a macro-level, cumulatively, as well as at the micro-level:

The 'Soft' Death of Marilyn Monroe. Standing in front of him as she dressed, Karen Novotny's body seemed as smooth and annealed as these frozen planes [of the walls]. Yet a displacement of time would drain away the soft interstices, leaving walls like scraped clinkers. He remembered Ernst's 'Robing': Marilyn's pitted skin, breasts of carved pumice, volcanic thighs, a face of ash. The widowed bride of Vesuvius. [39]

This density indicates how difficult it is to "unpick" *Atrocity*. Initially, there is an analogy between Novotny's body and the walls of the apartment. The second sentence ("Yet a displacement...") is incomprehensible without jumping to the first phrase of the third; 'The Robing of the Bride', the title of the opening paragraph of the "chapter", is a disturbing double portrait by Max Ernst of the Bride and her attendants. She dresses in an enormous red gown before a mirror which reflects back an ossified, fossilised image⁴⁵. This is nowhere imaged in the text, but there is a transcription of Ernst's painting back into the T-cell's vision of the white walls as suddenly excoriated, reduced to "scraped clinkers". This reference to Ernst explains the colon of the penultimate sentence which posits an equivalence between the painting and

Monroe as reduced 'to stone' -- "volcanic thighs" her sexuality, "a face of ash" her death mask. This is complex enough, but the title of the paragraph also marks a citation of Dali's "soft" images. One of Dali's devices, anamorphosis ("an image or drawing distorted in such a way that it becomes recognisable only when viewed in a specified manner or through a special divide" -- *Collins Dictionary*), describes the process undertaken in the paragraph; a 'secret code' deciphers the logic of association.

The list and the associative chain recall a central element of Burger's determination of the avant-garde 'work': collage. Opposed to organic form, a harmonised unity passively received, collage detaches fragments from their original contexts and re-contextualises them. Bizarre juxtapositions demand a 'closing' response, the "spacings" between fragments necessitating an explanation of their proximity: an active, allegorical interpretation is unavoidable⁴⁶.

Burger draws on Walter Benjamin for this, and it is fascinating, in the light of Susan Buck-Morss' work, that Benjamin's theory of allegory itself resulted from the violent clash of 'theological' and 'Marxist' frames. Buck-Morss quotes Scholem (strongest defender of the 'theological' Benjamin) on allegory: it is "an infinite network of meanings and correlatives in which everything

can become a representation of everything else" ⁴⁷. This is the sense gained by the overdetermined, condensed spaces of *Atrocity*, where "all junctions...are equivalent to one another"[56], endlessly transposing meanings in a synaesthetic promiscuity.

The T-cell's search for a "modulus" is a search for an allegorical reading that would link the fragments into narrative. This is doubled by the reader's constant attempt to decode the compacted sentences of *Atrocity*. Just as 'The 'Soft' Death of Marilyn Munroe' can have a logic uncovered, so Perry and Wilkie note that the list quoted above is not as random as it appears: the T-cell figures here as a returning Messiah, not in a singular embodiment, but as dispersed through evidential traces. So the "scarring between second and third metacarpal bones" alludes to the crucifixion, just as "radio-spectra from quasar CTA 102" refers to reports of the time that "the emissions from the quasar provided evidence of an intelligence at work"⁴⁸.

Against the promiscuity of the allegorical sign Scholem opposes the 'Transcendent symbol' which "'signifies' nothing and communicates nothing, but makes something transparent which is beyond all expression"⁴⁹. This recalls Jaspers' cipher. In *Atrocity*, however, the cipher cannot attain this state of the non-signifying signified; it remains in play. If the "modulus" is also an attempt to

uncover a final interpretation, the T-cell's erasure in the closing sections of *Atrocity*, his dispersal into traces across numerous discourses, seems to signal failure to prevent promiscuous translatability. The compulsiveness of the production of allegorical narratives to 'explain' these posited patterns is thus unending -- for the T-cell, for the reader.

The main device of collage is "the insertion of reality fragments into the painting, i.e. the insertion of material left unchanged by the artist"⁵⁰. This accords with Ballard's view that *Atrocity* aims at "recovering elements of reality". The *Re/Search* edition also contains an 'Appendix' of other texts written at the same time as the other "chapters": these are "found texts" from cosmetic surgery manuals which replaces proper names (Mae West, Princess Margaret) for "the patient". This Appendix, added *after* the appended mock-scientific reports, makes the bottom edge of the text even more difficult to mark, ending as it does in folds of citation, "plugging in" to ever wider discursive frames.

The *space* of *Atrocity* can be seen as Cubist. The condensed texts suppress the connectives which might establish narrative links. Each paragraph or block appears as if superimposed on previous blocks. In 'The University of Death' the space in which the "events" are enacted is continuously re-inscribed; in painterly terms,

the ground on which the figures are drawn is no longer fixed, the ground itself becomes a figure: this is Cubism as Rosalind Krauss describes it⁵¹. Seemingly set at the edges of a city (the previous "chapter" loosely references Eurydice in "the suburbs of hell"), under abandoned motorway overpasses, the T-cell takes a helicopter flight (signifier of Vietnam) to the (Demilitarised) Zone, which nevertheless appears to be the same site. The Zone is also The Plaza, and the embankments and underpasses are clearly the fantasy-invested space of Dealey Plaza, the site of Kennedy's assassination. The Plaza is "a modulus that could be multiplied into the landscape of his consciousness"[23], and the T-cell wishes "to kill Kennedy again, but in a way that makes sense"[36]. The space shifts again, however, as the topography of ridges and embankments becomes a crash-testing circuit.

Equally, this "chapter" contains the paragraph title 'The Persistence of Memory', a reference to Dali. The paragraph appears, on one level, to be a simple description of the painting, but there is also the sense that the T-cell conceives himself as *within* it. The space of 'The University of Death' is thus complexly overdetermined, a simultaneity of differently perceived perspectives which do not "add up"; the gaps between fragments are constantly foregrounded. This is 'Cubist' but it is displaced, *citational*. Dali's illusionistic painterly space is opposed to the device of

collage, yet is cited *within* collage. One avant-garde, Surrealistic illusionism, is cited within another. These two devices are combined in a citation whose quotation marks signal a difference rather than identity.

Ballard is frequently seen in terms of his "visual" style, the evocative landscapes, the attention to ground far more than figure. When Kingsley Amis worried that Ballard was escaping from Amis' definitional rights over the genre, the solution was to "encourag[e] Ballard to abandon writing for painting"⁵². The allusions in his work to Surrealist painting have been noted in *The Drought* and *The Drowned World*⁵³.

Painting had a precarious position in Surrealism. Maurice Nadeau's *History of the Surrealist Movement* "centres" the movement in political debates of the 1920s⁵⁴. Breton asserted the dissolution of art/life through Surrealism, but simultaneously defended its artistic autonomy from the Communists' demand that Surrealism be subsumed to its project. Nadeau considers the constitution of a "surrealist aesthetic" in the 1930s as marking the failure of Surrealism as an avant-garde. The propulsive force of this failure, Nadeau intimates, is the dominance of Dali, and the rise of painterly surrealism.

Other histories suggest that the 1920s were early attempts at elaborating avant-garde strategies before Surrealism

flowered in the 1930s. For Laurent Jenny, Dali's arrival *saves* the movement²⁶. Sarane Alexandrian makes Surrealism co-extensive with Breton's life (Surrealism died with him in 1966)²⁷, but Whitney Chadwick, in 'recovering' the largely erased history of women involved in Surrealism, moves the centre of concern away from the (all-male) experiments and definitions of the 1920s to the late 1930s, where women artists established an internal distance from Breton's continuing attempts to control the movement²⁸. The "centre" of Surrealism is difficult to determine, but Dali is crucial. This is all the more remarkable given that Dali was only a member for a brief time. His entry in 1930 was delayed over the shit-smeared figure in 'The Lugubrious Game' (a painting Breton's rival Bataille praised, nearly "poaching" Dali from Surrealism²⁹). Praising Hitler as a "surrealist innovator" in 1934, he was estranged by 1936 and expelled in 1939.

It is satisfyingly symmetrical that Ballard cites Dali as his major influence. Dali meets Ballard at the edge of the high/low divide; Dali's *popularity* has marginalised him from Surrealist accounts, mirrored in reverse by the account of Ballard rising above popular ghetto origins. Carter Ratcliff places Dali's "perverse" play with the "low" as far beyond that ever achieved by Pop Art: thrown out of the "high", he entered into "the lower depths -- and that is precisely where he wanted to be, for it is in

the limitless mudflats of consumerism, with no heaven of high art above, that his image-ingestion and regurgitation brings him the fullest degree of worldly power"⁵⁹. Strangely, Ballard, was requested to remove all references to Surrealism from the catastrophe novels because association with this movement might compromise his work.

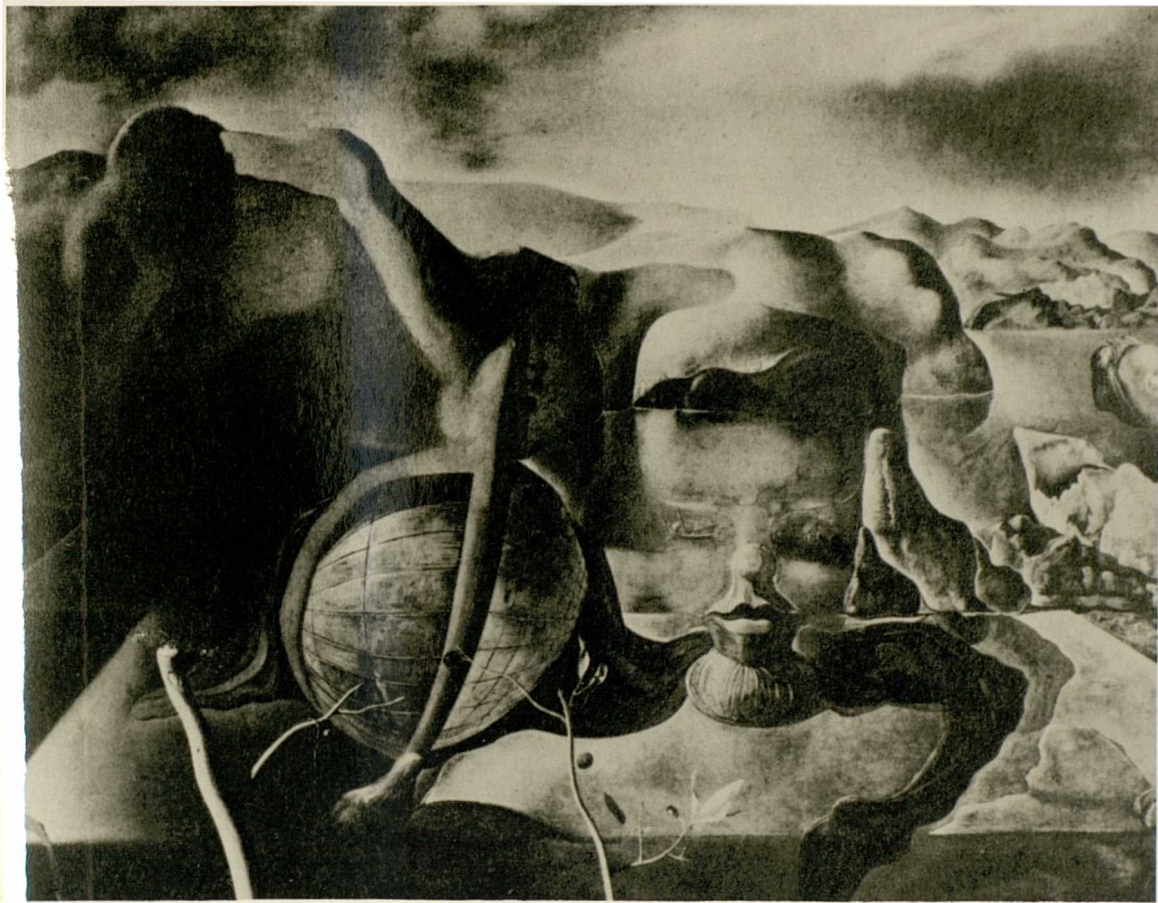
Surrealist activity at first centred on dream and automatic writing and emphasised writing rather than painting. Breton rejected "the stabilising of dream images in the kind of still-life depiction known as *trompe-l'oeil*"⁶⁰. However, when Naville pronounced "Everyone knows there is no surrealist painting"⁶¹, Breton removed him from the editorship of *La Revolution Surrealiste*, and set about finding a place for the painterly. In the 1920s, painting's *technique* disallowed it as an automatist form, although there were some attempts (Ernst's *frottage*).

Dali redressed the tortuous logic of "automatism" and the view of painting as a secondary form. He moved from the naive expressivist model of automatic transcription, to the 'paranoia'. For Dali, this was an active and *interpretive* mode of perceiving the external world according to the subject's perverse desire. Paranoia perceived the same everyday objects, but in a perverse narrative establishing unforeseen connections. The 'paranoiac-critical' method made a virtue of its

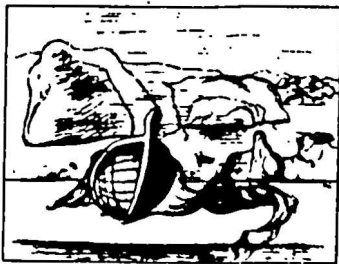
"secondary" interpretive role. It moved from passivity to the "active derealisation"⁶² of a shared environment.

Atrocity can be seen to deploy this Dali-esque device. Dali defined the paranoiac-critical method as "the critical and systematic objectification of delirious associations and interpretations"⁶³, which operated according to double or multiple condensation in a single image. The most ambitious use of the device was 'The Endless Enigma', in which six readings of the same landscape could be discerned (fig.1). This unstable oscillation condensed different meanings within the same object. There is a link here to the compression of landscapes analysed in *Atrocity*, and a certain similarity between Dali's very public performance of his obsessions and the T-cell's experimental re-enactments of atrocities.

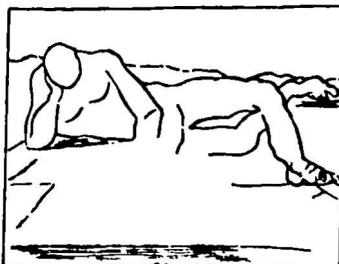
For Dali, "paranoia makes use of the external world to impose the obsessive notion with the disturbing particularity of making valid the reality of this notion for others"⁶⁴. The peculiarity of paranoia is its masterly mimicry of 'reason', and Jacques Lacan (whose early work appeared alongside Dali's work in *Minotaure*⁶⁵) confesses in his essay 'On a Question Preliminary to any possible treatment of Psychosis' that the psychoanalyst's knowledge is dependent on the paranoiac's⁶⁶. This might further illuminate Perry and Wilkie's sardonic point that Nathan is the paranoid's ideal doctor: he shares the



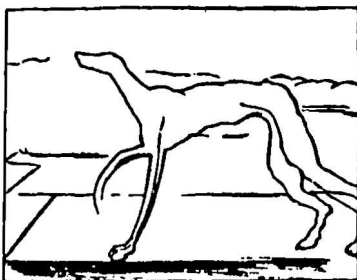
BEACH OF CAPE CREUS WITH SEATED
WOMAN MENDING SAIL SEEN FROM THE
BACK, AND BOAT.



RECLINING PHILOSOPHER.



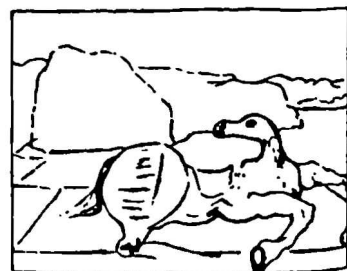
FACE OF THE GREAT ONE-EYED MONK



GREYHOUND.



MANDOLINE, FRUIT-DISH WITH PEARS,
TWO FIGS ON TABLE.



MYTHOLOGICAL BEAST.

delusion⁶⁷.

With the "terminal irony" of Ballard's experimental work, his 'sanity' is often put in question. Peter Nicholls views Ballard as "advocating a life style quite likely to involve the sudden death of yourself or those you love"⁶⁸. If part of the device of *Atrocity* is indeed a taking up of Dali's methodology, paranoia-criticism's mimicry precisely rests on the confusion of sanity and madness. Breton and Eluard's *The Immaculate Conception* used parody to simulate madness: "the authors hope to show that, given a state of poetic tension, the normal mind is capable of furnishing verbal material of the most profoundly paradoxical and eccentric nature, and it is possible for such a mind to harbour the main ideas of delirium without being permanently affected thereby"⁶⁹. Parody distances, but what of paranoia? The reader's report on *Crash* stated that the author was "beyond psychiatric help"⁷⁰.

Burger argues that the possibility of the avant-garde was opened by the 'end' of the historical development of "artistic means"; all previous methods, bounded then by their historical evolution, were now open to citation and combination. Refusing Burger's termination of art history, *Atrocity* begins to cite 'Cubism' or 'Surrealism' as themselves open to re-contextualisation. This is neither a posited identity with the "historical avant-garde" (Ballard as "modernist"), nor a hollow and

savagely ironic repetition of it (Ballard as "postmodernist"); the relation is more complex than that.

Paranoia-criticism's extreme subjectivism is disturbing in its communicability and rational mimicry. For Perry and Wilkie, *Atrocity* is to be read through the T-cell's obsessional interpretive frame, and is to be "vindicated" as the only 'sane' response: "Owing to the absence of fixed, determinate values, the only relevant measure of meaning is subjective conviction"⁷¹. This is opposed to David Punter who suggests that *Atrocity* concerns the *erasure* of Self, subjectivity "transcended by mechanism and the massive systems of information and data"⁷². This again evokes the difficulty of establishing the status of Ballard's fictional worlds: are landscapes to be seen as inner spaces, or as threatening the self with annihilation? This question begins to problematise the privileging of desire by Surrealism, and how *Atrocity* cites it in a different context: the media landscape.

III

If mass culture has already become one great exhibition, then everyone who stumbles into it feels as lonely as a stranger on an exhibition site...Mass culture [is] a system of signals that signals itself⁷³.

What does *The Atrocity Exhibition* exhibit? Does this "stylish anatomy of outrage"⁷⁴ *anatomise* or *embody*? Is this body of texts negating or affirming what it exhibits?

With its mass cultural concerns, how can *Atrocity* be positioned in relation to that mass culture?

I have suspended what is evident at the outset: *Atrocity* concerns the explosion of the "media landscape". Televisions, film festivals and billboards project images from Vietnam. The Zapruder film of Kennedy's assassination endlessly replays. The *content* of these images suddenly matches the violence that had been for so long accorded to the *form* of the media channels of mass culture. Reality is defined as that *constituted by* the media: for the T-cell, the endless fragmented projections of Elizabeth Taylor render her "a presiding deity", for "the film actress provided a set of operating formulae for their passage through consciousness"[16]. The T-cell's hope for unitary identity seems to be premised on whether Monroe's suicide can be "solved", whether it is possible "to kill Kennedy again, but in a way that makes sense". The media have released irresolvable traumatic material which can only induce repetition of the trauma, in a futile attempt at mastery. This is the media as the embodiment of the death drive.

Punter's statement that in *Atrocity* subjectivity is "transcended by mechanism and the massive systems of information and data"⁷⁸ corresponds with a narrative of the effect of technologisation in advanced industrial capitalism on the subject. If, for Jameson, postmodernism

marks the invasion of the unconscious, the evisceration of "the bourgeois ego or monad" and so "the end of psychopathologies of that ego"⁷⁶, then Jacques Ellul used virtually the same terms for the triumph of "technique", its "mechanical penetration of the unconscious"⁷⁷, in the 1950s. Ellul's account of a society dominated by the logic of the machine is not a simple determinism, for "technique" can inhabit any sphere. However, "when technique enters into every area of life, including the human, it ceases to be external to man, and becomes his very substance"[6]. Human society becomes a test ground to discover the greatest "efficiency". Central to this is mass culture which aims for "the simultaneous fusion of... consciousness with an omnipresent technical diversion"[380]. When Ellul sees in mass culture the "disappearance of reality in a world of hallucinations"[372], there is a link both to Adorno and Baudrillard.

Ellul posits that 'Man' has become a "device for recording effects and results obtained by various techniques"[79]; this recalls Breton's description of automatist experimenters as "modest recording devices"⁷⁸. Breton later admits "we remain as little informed as ever regarding the origin of the voice which it is open to each of us to hear" ⁷⁹. A disturbing "origin" for this voice is suggested by these mass media accounts. If "technique" has penetrated the unconscious, then the "voice"

automatism tried to capture can no longer be fantasised as self-presence, but is an 'external' implantation. Dali's paranoia-criticism was also founded ^{on} the subject's desire. Ellul refuses the essentialisation of desire: desire is the programmed expression of *L'homme machine*. I am not proposing to give full truth-value to this; I am interested only in its explanatory power and its links to *Atrocity*.

Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957) popularised the notion of what has been termed "psychoanalysis in reverse"⁹⁰. Packard analysed the advertisers' application of psychoanalytic techniques on consumers, the attempt to increase excitation/ anxiety and tie its neutralisation to the purchase of specific products, thus reversing the psychoanalytic 'cure'. Motivational Research was immediately transposed into narratives of the increasing erasure of the voluntary will.

This is clearly the same context for Frederik Pohl's science fiction extrapolation, 'The Tunnel Under the World' (1955), concerning the control exercised by advertisers. This is figured as a literal mechanisation and programming: the populace of Tylterton are test-robots for advertising techniques. Ballard acknowledges Pohl's influence, and two stories, 'The Subliminal Man' and 'The Secret History of World War III' are in this tradition. There is always a contradiction with such "totalitarian"

premises; the central character, as in Pohl's narrative, must somehow 'escape' control in order that the system be visible at all. In 'The Subliminal Man' Hathaway's madness (Ellul states, "only madness is inaccessible to the machine"[404]) allows him to penetrate the huge subliminal billboards that direct and control consumption. Hathaway is killed having successfully jammed the billboards to reveal their dictatorial commands, but Franklin slips back into consumption mode. 'The Secret History' is a brief piece which wittily suggests that blanket media obsession with Reagan's failing health demotes a nuclear exchange to a single line on news reports. Ballard is fully within this mode of "totalitarian" narrative by placing, in each story, the wife as emblem of fully determined consumer. As Packard is at his most ambivalent over tests operated on women in supermarkets (the eye-blink rate as measure of 'dream-like' state is "probing", but voyeuristic in the potential un-veiling of the female gaze), so Lynne Joyrich has argued that the address of advertisements is directed at women because she is deemed "too close to what she sees -- she is so attached that she is driven to possess whatever meets her eye"⁸¹.

These short, didactic, "totalitarian" narratives are unsatisfactory in that they have to *produce* a simplistic model of domination in order to arrive at a negation. *Atrocity* adopts a more sophisticated, if more difficult,

approach.

The *penetration* of the subject echoes Freud's explanation of the seeking of unpleasure in repetition compulsion. In Ellul the only defence is to "protect man by outfitting with a kind of psychological shock absorber"[332]. McLuhan argues that the electronic media, as externalisation of the central nervous system, is a response to mechanical penetration: "To the degree that this [extension of the CNS] is so, it is a development that suggests a desperate and suicidal autoamputation, as if the central nervous system could no longer depend on the physical organs to be protective buffers against... mechanism"⁸². Later theorists have *explicitly* invoked repetition compulsion in relation to television. Patricia Mellencamp sees the television coverage of catastrophes as an attempt at mastery but, it must also necessarily refuse solution, exacerbate excitation, in order to keep viewers "hooked", watching for a forever deferred closure⁸³.

In *Atrocity*, the T-cell, the text itself, is endlessly repetitive: Karen Novotny is repeatedly 'killed' in conceptual deaths that replay the irresolvable violence unleashed by television: Kennedy's assassination, Munroe's suicide, the invasive cameras that wait outside the Hilton Hotel for Elizabeth Taylor's death to be announced, the cycle of reports on atrocities from Vietnam. The Zapruder film of Kennedy's death is replayed over and over, to

signify collective trauma and the attempt at mastery, but also to *affirm* the power of the media, to celebrate its capacity to capture the full horror, and with triumph to "hook" the nation to its networks⁸⁴. *Atrocity* mantrically repeats proper names -- Kennedy, Taylor, Nader, Oswald, Reagan, Munroe -- and key phrases: "geometry", "formulae", "modulus". The cipher, a final signified that would stop this circulation, can only itself be repeated, remaining forever unreadable: "an immense cipher"[21], "elongated ciphers"[23], "muffled ciphers"[39], "a random cipher"[41], "unravelling ciphers"[48].

Does *Atrocity* "negate" this mediatised disaster? McLuhan argues that "experimental" art gives "the exact specifications of coming violence", information on "how to re-arrange one's psyche in order to anticipate the next blow from our own extended faculties"⁸⁵. For Ellul, however, the "psychic shock absorber" is developed *out of* technique, for "only another technique is able to give sufficient protection against the aggression of techniques"[332]. David Porush argues that Burroughs and others "seek a way to inoculate themselves against technique by injecting its hardness into the soft body of their texts"⁸⁶. If *Atrocity* belongs to this strategy, there is an intolerable uncertainty as to *intent*. Andrew Ross' description of McLuhan's deep ambivalence might be transcribed here : "chillingly grave, apocalyptically nonchalant and swollen with emancipatory promise"⁸⁷.

This "innoculation", poison as cure, has been theorised in another way by Baudrillard: the strategy of "hyperconformity", taking the logic of systems to their extremes. Although not seen in quite these terms, Baudrillard's essay on *Crash* and the responses to it are instructive²⁸. Baudrillard sees Ballard's work as moving into simulation. *Crash* is exemplary of an "SF which is no longer SF"[312]. The closed 'reality' of the text is entirely modelled on Vaughan's obsession: "The nonsensicalness, the banality, of this mixture of body and technology is totally immanent" [314]. The sexualisation of technology cannot be seen as 'perversion' in the classic psychoanalytic sense; refusing the 'perverse' account prevents the concepts of norm or transgression. Baudrillard concludes: "one must resist the *moral* temptation of reading *Crash* as perversion"[315].

The responses revolve around a sentence by Ballard, not from the text itself, but from the final paragraph to the Introduction to the French edition of *Crash*, where Ballard states "the ultimate role of *Crash* is cautionary, a warning against that brutal, erotic and overlit realm...of the technological landscape"²⁹. Ballard's *intent* is read against Baudrillard's irresponsibility. This ignores, however, Ballard's other comments in the introduction, which explicitly states that "the writer knows nothing any longer[,] he has no moral stance"³⁰, but also crucially ignores Ballard's *retraction* of the cautionary statement

in 1982: "I felt I was not altogether honest in the introduction because I did imply there was a sort of moral warning which I don't think is really there"⁹¹. This is not to impose another intent, but to indicate an ambivalence, an undecidability of Ballard's stance.

The relations proposed to technology suggested in both *Atrocity* and *Crash* are markedly divergent from the "penetrative" or "invasive" attack on the sovereign subject that is proposed by either Ellul or Jameson. Nathan's didactic explanatory role shifts from this position ("...the failure of his [the T-cell's] psyche to accept the fact of its own consciousness, and his revolt against the present continuum of time and space"[12]) to one which appears to advocate the T-cell's project of complete interpenetration of body and technology (see, for example, the Imaginary Perversions paragraph in 'The Summer Cannibals'[61-2]). The 'authorless' scientific reports centre solely on how "the latent identity of the machine is ambiguous even to the skilled investigator" [98]. The "chapter" also sees the car crash as "a liberation of sexual and machine libido" [my emphasis, 98], a startling moment which would seem to posit not the *cathecting* of technology, but a *desire of its own*.

This runs outside the dichotomy proposed by so many of the above accounts of technology, *demonising* it against an eroded human 'integrity' (see Ellul and Porush). *Atrocity*

undoubtedly at points would welcome the dissolution of the subject *through* technology. It is possible, perhaps, to see a trace here from Marcuse and McLuhan. In the 'humanist' account of Ellul and Porush the history of the liberatory potential of technology is erased, but for Marcuse post-scarcity results *from* the increase in "technological forces"; utopia is "inherent in the technical and technological forces of advanced capitalism"⁹². These are the forces which can potentially burst the stasis of capitalist relations of production and induce revolution. Marcuse insists on taking technology *to the end* of its logic. Technological post-scarcity is precisely that which necessitates the re-invention of the "biology" of Man. How far within or beyond is *Atrocity* in this scheme? If Marcuse invokes Eros in this liberative potential, he tends to erase its counter-force, Thanatos, the death drive, which Ballard does not. This is his 'thesis': "Just as sex is key to the Freudian world, so violence is the key to the external world of fantasy that we inhabit. There's this clash between what we all believe to be true, such as that violence is bad, in all its forms, and the actual truth, which is that violence may well serve beneficial roles"⁹³. This link of liberation with violence is crucial to the final section of this chapter.

Cautionary or affirmative, *Atrocity* oscillates, it cannot be known. Technology in this text extends beyond the

machinic: as the introduction to *Crash* states, reality is fiction determined by "mass merchandising, advertising, politics conducted as a branch of advertising, the instant translation of science and technology into popular imagery, the increasing blurring and intermingling of identities within the realm of consumer goods..."⁹⁴. This is the iconography of Pop Art, and I turn to this context now.

IV

A sequence of rooms in the Warhol Retrospective exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in 1990 was an uncanny embodiment of *Atrocity*, both in terms of "visual", thematic parallels (Jackie Kennedy, Elizabeth Taylor and the 'Death and Disaster' sequences), and as an enactment of the "maze of billboards" the T-cell negotiates. There are two elements to be discussed here: Pop Art as potential avant-garde, and Ballard's relation to the English artists of the Independent Group. Each one evokes specific concerns of the problematic of the avant-garde.

Space and distance is crucial to Jameson's conception of the avant-garde. Against the "depth" and spacing of Van Gogh's shoes are Warhol's 'Diamond Dust Shoes', too close, in this epoch of instantaneity, to effect a critique. However, as I have suggested, ambivalence locates a different emphasis. Oscillation is central to Pop Art, as

Lucy Lippard suggests of one key artist: "it is the narrow distance between the original and the Lichtenstein that provokes the tension and the great drama of his best work". Burger's third route of attack on the institution -- reception -- is also in Lippard's account: "Parody in Pop Art largely seems to depend on the viewer's response"⁹³. This is what de Duve means by the irrecoverable intention of the works: Warhol does not promise, he simply *testifies*⁹⁴.

Just as the T-cell's modulus becomes a plug with which he is "jacked" into networks that annihilate any traces of identity, so Warhol famously desired to be a machine, to erase and de-subjectivise the "artist". Breton's "modest recording device" speaks not of the authentic self, but the market. Repetition and seriality in the Factory production of silk screens structurally repeats the mass-produced commodity. It is difficult to know if his work is serious or parodic (the later oxidised metal works are literal "piss-takes", of course).

Benjamin Buchloh's periodising of *reception* is useful in reconstructing the initial shock response and *imputed* radicalism of the early work. If these exhibitions did shock Buchloh is not simply claiming an "avant-garde" status which repeats the "historical avant-garde". From the very beginning, Warhol's work played on the undecidable edge between negation and affirmation, denying

easy "access to a dimension of critical resistance"⁹⁷. The later work if anything intensifies this ambivalence as David James suggests⁹⁸.

Both *Atrocity* and Warhol are repetitive, use similar "visual" contents and appear to express a 'machinic' desire. Just as Warhol's 'non-art' commercial graphics deployed the gestures of "high" art and his "high" art commercial sources⁹⁹, so Ballard's "experimental" phase cannot be delimited to "after" his 'commercial' science fiction beginnings, as in McHale. In the late 1950s, Ballard put together a series of collages (fig.2), which were plans for a putative novel based purely on typography, on the styles of type and spacing of text, with little concern for meaning. Ballard entertained the notion of using billboards as the site for this new novel to unfold. Later, he paid for a series of "adverts" -- having failed to get an Arts Council grant -- to 'sell' the ideas of his text, the product's name being his own signature(fig.3)¹⁰⁰.

There is one further connection. It becomes difficult to discern with Warhol where parody (if that is what it is) becomes *self*-parody. This is the case with *Atrocity*. If Nathan's "thetic" speeches serve an explanatory role, they are also and at the same time complete gibberish. Part of the project of *Atrocity* is to address the convergence of "science" with "pornography", and yet it is impossible to

zero synthesis

COMA : the million year girl

KLINE: rescoring the c n s

mr. f is mr. f

psychodynamic :

neuronics the level to level hook up

biopsychic screen time

nt further out

program

all crash drills

xero

"I am 7000 years old"

Xero Run Hot with a Million Programs Starts

Larger tank car and truck shipments made possible. New continuous vulcanization markets found in welding and titanium processing medium at 400 to 600° F. a. What happens when a metal dissolves in its own process uses liquid like fedde molten halides. SRI research tries to find the existing rubber stock ACS tells Applied Research Labs's ray unit makes a ray fluo. Chromatographs to h resence competitive with emission spectroscopy. They give faster analyses. New spectroscopy devices coming to U.S. and higher temperatures. Just analysis by emission spectroscopy methods slow up at Pittsburgh cost of power. They will enjoy the near future but get out on shipping. Important plant show processors may trouble them later on. It stands at 64 mills per kw. hr.

General defends right of Executive Ed. attacks all for quality not quantity. With information boosts senate bill of amendments in science. Our budgets will take larger percentage. C&EN finds Ziegler and Schum type trial. On basis of expected sales this year. research in a for ab of

mad:

time probe

servo maze
time sea
total bureau
the nth root of wonderful
yes yes yes yes yes
blood house

ETN

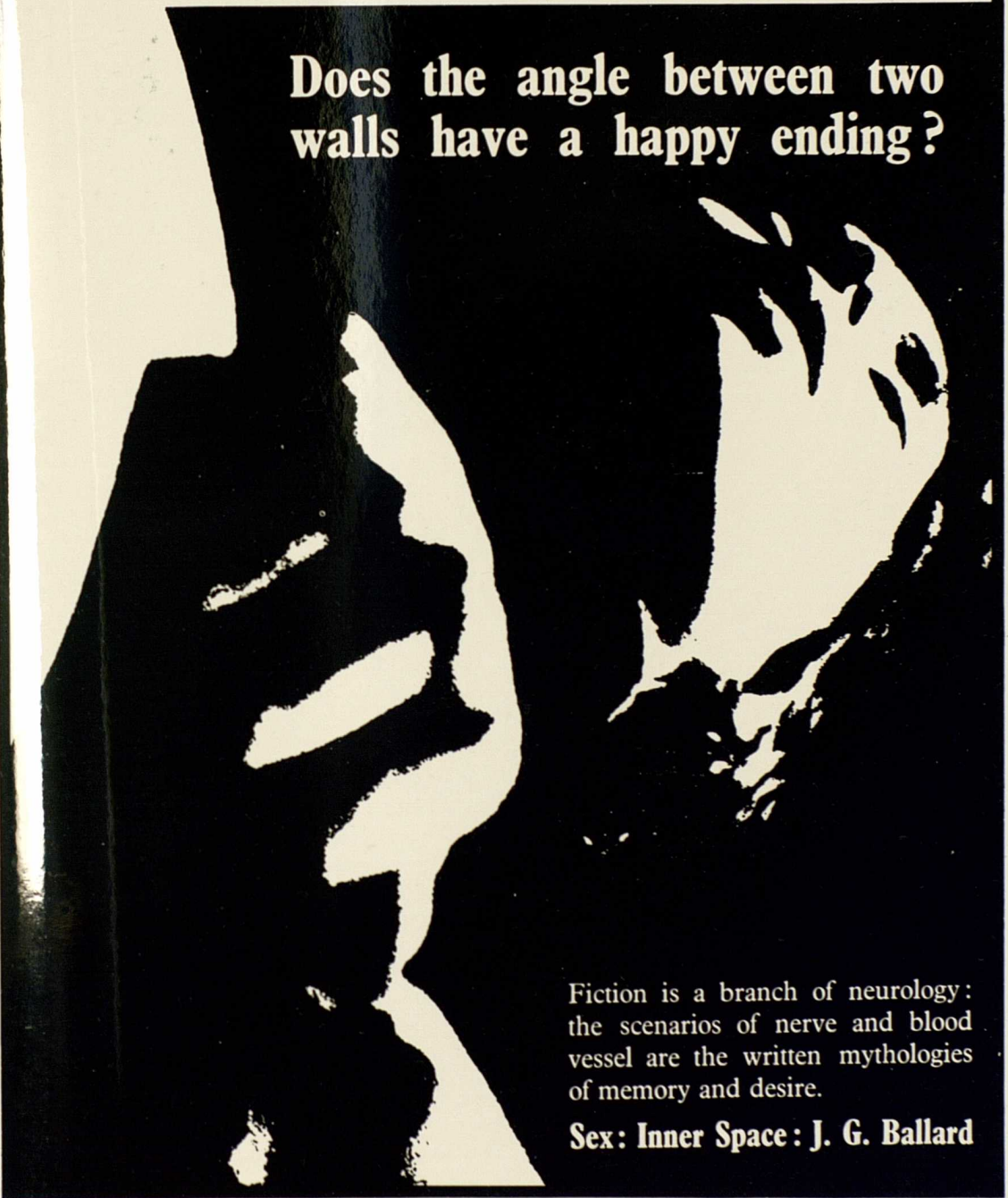
Volcano Jungle: vision of a dying star-man

Editor's Note: Feature of the March 1957 Scientific American was an article by David S. Jenkins, director of the Office of Science Water, U. S. Department of the Interior. This article, which described generally the various salt-water conversion methods being investigated under Interior's sponsorship, is a part of the Badger Hickman story. In the past three years interest in compression distillation has been heightened by an exciting new system. In essence what Hickman has added is a simple device for increasing phenomena: the rate of heat transfer to the water, namely spreading it out in a thin film. The so-called feature of this device is a rotating drum-shaped something like a child's musical top. AEC's article on the succeeding pages describes in detail the development of this still. As this article went to press, the editors were advised that the same more than those obtainable from government sources, which provide a much larger price increase from 939 to 1947 and for the overall period considered. A correlation can show that the very moderate price increase in industrial chemicals from 1939 to 1953 (compared with the sharp price increases experienced by the rest of the economy) is related to the rapid expansion of the chemical industry during this period. The result has been more goods at relatively low prices ultimately for the consumer. On these bases it can be concluded that the industry is fulfilling its functions satisfactorily.

... Coma,' Kline murmured, 'let's get out of time.'

Photo: John Blomfield

Advertiser's Announcement



**Does the angle between two
walls have a happy ending?**

Fiction is a branch of neurology:
the scenarios of nerve and blood
vessel are the written mythologies
of memory and desire.

Sex: Inner Space: J. G. Ballard

mark a line where parody lurches towards self-parody. Ballard's text is frequently hilarious in its clash of registers. The highly technical listings often end with Captain Kirby/Webster's banal questions ("You say these constitute an assassination weapon?"[34], "So you think the Novotny girl is in some kind of danger?"[56], "And all these make up one picture?"[83]) puncturing the portentousness. The descriptive sentences can also teeter on a self-parodic edge. Consider: "This strange young woman, moving in a complex of undefined roles, the gun moll of intellectual hoodlums with her art critical jargon and bizarre magazine subscriptions"[70]. This is as meaningless as the description of Buddy Holly: "the capped teeth of the dead pop singer, like the melancholy dolmens of the Brittany coastline, were globes of milk, condensations of the sleeping mind"[74]. It is precisely the *jargon* that is important, its repetitive combinations and re-combinations, that have the effect of "closing" the space of the text into its own logic, meaning giving way to pure *effect*. An impossible demand is requested of the reader: too close misses the parodic element, but too far makes the text collapse into self-parody.

Questions of "high" and "low" are brought into focus by moving to British Pop Art. The convergence of method and image amongst artists in America was initially without a stable name. 'Pop Art' was taken up from the English critic Lawrence Alloway. Alloway was the first to narrate

a 'secret history' of the 1950s, in the experimental grouping that met at the ICA. This was the Independent Group. Ballard subsequently associated with some of its key members (especially Eduardo Paolozzi and Richard Hamilton) in the 1960s and participated in "performances" at the ICA.

The links of the IG to science fiction are often noted. Paolozzi celebrated the vibrancy of American popular art by referring to gaudy science fiction magazine covers and later declared: "a higher order of imagination exists in a SF pulp produced on the outskirts of LA than [in] the little magazines of today"¹⁰¹. Alloway himself developed a non-Aristotelian aesthetic -- in opposition to the predominant ICA aesthetic of Herbert Read -- through a reading of A E Van Vogt¹⁰². Reyner Banham was also enthusiastic about science fiction. Eugenie Tsai¹⁰³ suggests that the IG were fascinated by science fiction "as a genre that was particularly in touch with the radical technological changes that were underway"[71]. This fitted with a kind of post-Futurist celebration of the machine. Tsai details Ballard's visit to the famous 'This is Tomorrow' exhibition in 1956 and the narrative produced from this visit is fascinating. *Not yet a science fiction writer*, Tsai links the publication of Ballard's first story, four months later, exactly to this visit: "while it remained tied to traditional science fiction, 'This is Tomorrow' contributed to the more

critical and cynical "new wave" through its influence on Ballard"[73]; in turn, in a kind of feedback loop, Ballard influenced the work of Robert Smithson¹⁰⁴.

The mistranslation that occurred in exporting Alloway's 'pop art' into American 'Pop Art' is crucial. As has been noted by Massey and Sparke¹⁰⁵, Alloway's pop art referred only to sources that were to be worked on *within* "high art"; pop was not conceived as an erasure of the boundary between high and low. A 1962 Alloway article makes this plain: "The term refers to the use of popular art by fine artists: movie stills, science fiction, advertisements, games boards, heroes of the mass media". Alloway goes on to criticise Derek Boshier for "seem[ing] to use pop art literally, believing in it as teenagers believe in the 'top twenty'"¹⁰⁶.

With this in mind, Tsai's network of influences becomes a complex transmission between high and low. Ballard, who had been reading science fiction since his stay in Canada in the early 1950s, finds legitimation to begin writing by its re-contextualisation in "high" art. What is produced, however, are 'conventional' "low art" texts. *The Wind From Nowhere* is a classic performance of "hack work". In this story of influence, Ballard fails to learn his lesson; he "seems to use pop art literally". It is only later, in the 1960s, that a "proper" distance is effectuated: *Atrocity* leaves "low art" to become "high".

However, this accords with the definitional centre for pop moving from England to America -- and Warhol suggests precisely the *loss* of distance. *Atrocity* is too mobile, too oscillatory to "fit" an equation of the "high" with critical distance and negation. Tsai's story thus depends on a legitimisation of "low art" by its recontextualisation in a "high" art setting. Many, however, including the artists of the IG, would refuse this distance of ironic quotation. Brian Wallis sees the IG as having the "whole-hearted enthusiasm of consumers"¹⁰⁷, and Alloway himself quotes Hamilton's insistence that his work is not "a sardonic comment on our society", but purely celebratory¹⁰⁸.

This story of influence on Ballard is too literally concerned with science fiction imagery; Tsai glosses the fact that 'This is Tomorrow', using conventionalised science fiction imagery, seemed to inspire Ballard to 'non-conventional' science fiction work. Rather than "visual" connections *methodology* is a more appropriate link. In 1953, the ICA allowed Paolozzi and others to put on an exhibition called 'The Parallel of Art and Life'. This contained 'sampled' photographs, all blown-up to the same size, ranging from "art" contents to images of radio-valves, televisions, radiograph readouts, burnt-out forests, tribal ceremonies and car designs¹⁰⁹. Reviews of the time were shocked at the equivalence being proposed by this semiotic range: "the aggressive all-over organisation"

of images made the exhibition itself a microcosm of the intrusive reality of pop culture"¹¹⁰. The IG seminars covered popular imagery, car-styling, helicopter design, modern architecture and A J Ayer's philosophy. This is more related to the strategy of *Atrocity*.

Like Surrealism, then, it is not shared iconography that puts *Atrocity* and Pop into the same frame, but a methodology, one which contracted the space of a simple critique, and set in motion oscillation. This is not the last statement to be made about the problematic of the avant-garde, however. There is one final, crucial, move to be made.

V

The extremity of violence toward the feminine in *Atrocity* is nearly always evaded by critics¹¹¹. The prosecution of the pamphlet 'Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan' placed it in a series of other texts, including Bataille. With this action, *Atrocity* is involved in yet another "avant-garde" conception: the sexual extremity of de Sade, Bataille and others.

Karen Novotny is the switching centre, the site where discursive regimes condense and disseminate. She is manipulated and brutally re-functioned by the obsessive T-cell. The choice of the name Novotny references the

'call-girl' Marielle Novotny, allegedly a mistress of John F. Kennedy and involved in the Profumo scandal in 1963. The "geometry" of Novotny's body is collapsed into architectural space (the smoothness of walls, the angles of balconies), and "translates" for Hollywood icons. To seize the 'secrets' of her geometry, the T-cell places her in a series of postures and draws "chalk outlines on the floor around her chair, around the cups and utensils on the breakfast table, and lastly around herself"[25]. He is already chalking out the posture of a dead body, as indeed she is repeatedly killed, sometimes as herself, sometimes playing roles. At one point Novotny is simply the list of objects in a "sex kit":

It contains the following items: (1) Pad of pubic hair, (2) a latex face mask, (3) six detachable mouths¹¹², (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), mostly purines &c., (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 the onset of orgasm... [54]

Affectless scientific language becomes pornography. In one startling synaesthetic translation, a paragraph titled Elements of an Orgasm lists the fourteen precise moves it takes for the T-cell to exchange seats with Novotny so that she can drive[63]. The 'authorless' scientific

reports are a wider analysis of bodies -- the effects of car-crashes and atrocity films on mentally and physically disabled test groups. It is this very choice of language which for Baudrillard (as it also operates in *Crash*) denies erotic titillation in its sheer functionalism and repetitiveness; moral outrage misreads the intent.

Intent? The "found texts" on cosmetic surgery have, in the *Re/Search* edition, two contradictory marginal notes. The first states: "the present pieces...show, I hope, the reductive drive of the scientific text as it moves on a collision course with the most obsessive pornography"[111]. The second is a eulogy to Mae West and others, which states: "Beyond our physical touch, the breasts of these screen actresses incite our imaginations to explore and reshape them. The bodies of these extraordinary women form a kit of spare parts, a set of mental mannequins...we begin to dismantle them, removing sections of a smile, a leg stance, an enticing cleavage"[114]. Against the assertion of distance in the first statement, this seems to be in the voice of the T-cell. This is alarming given the brilliant stroke of placing the proper name 'Mae West' in this reduction mammo-plasty text. It injects an elegiac tone into the medical discourse, and crosses into mimicking a Hollywood desperately attempting to re-model itself (giving it "support" as it were). If that attempt to maintain eroticism is failing, so indeed the mammo-plasty risks

"losing all", since the last, devastating sentence concludes: "The ultimate results of this operation with regard to the sexual function are not known"[116]. The intent here, however, is troubled by the marginal comment which introduces it.

A marginal note in *Atrocity* praises Sontag's essay, 'The Pornographic Imagination'¹¹³, which wants to save a *literary* pornography, where "inherent standards of artistic excellence pertain" against the "avalanche of pornographic potboilers"[84]. The former is clearly coded as avant-garde; they are limit texts, beyond good and evil. Sontag has constant recourse to science fiction in relation to pornography, surprisingly perhaps after the dismissal of science fiction film in 'The Imagination of Disaster'. "As literary forms," Sontag suggests, "pornography and science fiction resemble each other in several interesting ways"[84]. The de-legitimation of pornography as literature -- because it has an uncomplex address, single intent, a ruthless functionalism with regard to language, and no interest in character -- meshes, to some extent, with the ghettoisation of science fiction. For Sontag, however, "Pornography is one of the branches of literature -- science fiction is another -- aiming at disorientation, at psychic dislocation"[94].

A "high" pornographic tradition reveals the "authentic" extremity of sexual ecstasy, that 'Man' has, in "sexual

capacity", an impetus which "can drive a wedge between one's existence as a full human being and one's existence as a sexual being"[104-5]. Sontag's emphasis on the responsibility of these works recalls Simone de Beauvoir's *Sade-as-existentialist*¹¹⁴. Avant-gardism becomes inseparable from this discharge of desire which is both beyond the self and simultaneously more "authentic" than that merely human self; a narrative proposed by Greil Marcus for the eruptive desire that propels the precarious manifestations of the avant-garde.

This strategy takes the "high" pornographic text into a space beyond moralism. However, transgression is surely meaningful only in crossing and re-crossing a limit. Frances Ferguson reads the 'liberal' establishment of a defensible "high" pornography as adopting a disingenuous rhetoric founded on an "apparently tolerant view [that] obliges itself to manufacture monsters, to create antagonists in the form of one's contemporaries or one's ancestors so that one can demonstrate outrage at their outrage"¹¹⁵. This echoes the legitimations of Ballard's work. Ballard's texts have value in their unacceptability in science fiction, their outraging and out-reaching of the ghetto. The oscillation of his work, however, displays how it crosses and re-crosses the border.

In relation to *Crash*, however, there may be a value in the distinction between Sade and Bataille. Sade is merely

encyclopaedic; it is, as Sontag says "the body as machine and of the orgy as an inventory of the hopefully indefinite possibilities of several machines in collaboration with one another"[99]. *Crash* opens with an encyclopaedic array of extremities and moves towards epiphanies that are little more than taxonomical listings of 'perversity'¹¹⁶. Barthes sees Bataille's *The Story of the Eye* in contrast, as working through the metonymical cathecting of objects "beyond" the sexual, entraining these objects to the movement of desire. Such cathecting of 'non-sexual' objects has been seen to operate in *Atrocity*. If Sade is remorselessly phallic, Bataille's chains move across the eye and the eye-like: triumphantly non-phallic (this is not the eye of the male gaze, but one "pregnant" with associations), Bataille transgresses the phallic economy. *Crash* is indeed obsessively phallic; the centre of the text is the spreading stain of repeatedly discharged semen on the crotch of Vaughan's jeans. If 'Ballard' finally consummates his desire for Vaughan, it is not so much a "gay" act as the desire to "own" Vaughan's phallus, the "modulus" which unlocks the logic of the eroticised car-crash. *Crash* tries, clinically and affectlessly, to list perverse acts: the sexual performances with Gabrielle, crippled and supported in a set of leg and back braces (an echo of Frida Kahlo's injuries? -- the *ideal* Surrealist reference), moves away from the vagina to a dream of "other orifices"¹¹⁷ 'opened' by the scars and indentations of the car-crash, the

grooves and weals produced by the braces. These still remain, however, to be penetrated. If wounds are fetishised, this is exactly because the fetish disavows and displaces -- but also affirms -- the lacking phallus. Baudrillard, in praising *Crash* for this "artificial invagination" [316] as rendering the psychoanalytic account inoperative, is thus incorrect: it is still 'the story of the phallus'.

Atrocity's locus is difficult to determine. There is no privileged 'level' or term; chains of association are always reversible. The action of desire can be read either as the T-cell's or the implantation of the "machine libido" of mass culture. What shifts this beyond the 'liberation' narrative of Marcuse is the emphasis that Eros and Thanatos are *equally* unleashed by de-sublimation, that violence and death are concentrated obsessively on the figure of the Woman. This is intractable and troubling; it cannot be evaded by an appeal to the "high" ground of an a-morality.

I want to look at this question of "high" and "low" in terms of the figuration of Woman. On the one hand, the proponents of the modernist avant-garde deny that the assault on the institution, the violence and shock, repeatedly takes place on the ground of the female body. On the other, what the definitionlists of postmodernism -- most especially Jameson -- disavow is sexual difference.

and the problem of violence.

In *Atrocity*, the 'The Great American Nude' has a paragraph entitled Baby Dolls, which opens: "Catherine Austin stared at the object on Talbert's desk. These flaccid globes, like the obscene sculptures of Bellmer, reminded her of elements of her own body transformed into a series of imaginary sexual organs". The marginal commentary note expands: "Hans Bellmer's work is now totally out of fashion, hovering as it does on the edge of child pornography...[.]...his vision is far too close for comfort to the truth"[53]. The role of Woman as object of desire is central to Surrealism: "The problem of woman is the most marvellous and most disturbing in all the world"¹¹⁸. Bellmer takes this logic to the extreme.

The test-crash mannequins that pepper *Atrocity*, *Crash* and 'The Terminal Beach' have a link to the set of female mannequins for the 1936 International Surrealist exhibition¹¹⁹. It is possible to have recourse here to Freud's 'The Uncanny', in its analysis of Hoffmann's 'The Sand Man', which concerns a mechanical doll mistaken for a woman. The surrealist's have a "shocking" joke intent: femininity as masquerade. Bellmer is uncomfortably more exact to Hoffmann's tale, which involves dismemberment of the doll. A sequence of staged photographs, Bellmer's dolls are obsessional dismemberments, perverse combinations of limbs and bulbous protruberances (fig.4).



For Krauss, these represent "the obsessional re-invention of an always-same creature -- continually re-contrived, compulsively re-positioned within the hideously banal space of kitchen, stairwell, parlour"¹²⁰. Bellmer, son of an enthusiastic advocate of fascism, argued in a commentary that the work figured his father's threat in terms of castration and the refusal of his father in terms of a fetishised displacement onto the doll. Hal Foster whilst accepting this narrative, worries that Bellmer uses precisely a "fascist" strategy -- dismemberment -- to counter it. This throws the "radicalism" of the Surrealist avant-garde into question¹²¹.

Peter Nicholls has also analysed the violence toward the feminine that is integral to the Italian Futurist project¹²². This is vital because Nicholls makes such a clear link to postmodernism. Futurism coded the antecedent Symbolism as "feminine" for its interiority, its fetishising of the unattainable Woman, its concentration on the materiality -- the body -- of language. Against this interiorised, "blocked" desire, Futurism espoused a public expenditure of desire, a "virile" speed and purely external extension of masculinity into the metallised machines of modernity. There was to be no "depth", no interiority, no subjectivity; a surrendering to the machine, such that "sexuality is freed from the law of desire to become a purely mechanical genital contact"¹²³. In the machine sexual difference could be evaded.

Futurism codes desire into the networks of modern capitalism. This completely breaches the narrative of the 'theoretical' position of the avant-garde as "critical negation", and sounds remarkably similar to postmodernism: Baudrillard's 'subject' externalised into networks of communication; Jameson's 'schizophrenic' subject as a series of instantaneous presents. Nicholls notes that Jameson's subject is global, without class, ethnicity or gender, that "the subject is made to disappear at precisely those moments when the matter of *difference* between individuals is so palpably present"¹²⁴.

This is exactly Jacqueline Rose's point about the repeated *metaphorical* use of models of the psyche, generalised in epochal terms for definitions of postmodernism and the postmodern subject. When Jameson uses Lacan's model of psychosis, but states that "I must omit the familial or more orthodox psychoanalytic background to this situation"¹²⁵, he denies the very etiology of psychosis, which rests on the failure of the 'paternal metaphor'. For Rose, this is an effective desexualisation of the psychic model, and removes completely the question of sexual difference¹²⁶.

What is so "palpably present" in *Atrocity* is the violent figuration Woman. It is perhaps possible to agree with Bernstein (if not his defence of the maintenance of the "high" as the only ground for negation) that the

desublimation of form in postmodernism not only opens desire, but also violence¹²⁷. Lyotard's postmodern sublime, as that "without the solace of good forms" is thus attacked. Rose, discussing Lyotard's exclusion of "the case in which force operates by terror" from his model of language games, argues: "no discourse that pushes terror to the limits of its own self-recognition will be adequate to the way that violence functions as a fantasy of the social today"¹²⁸. It is possible, then, to read Ballard's profoundly troubling text alongside Rose's insistence, as in Plath's work, that "the horror and the ideal", violence and desire, are inseparable¹²⁹.

I want to consider this violence in highly figural terms, as it operates in 'You: Coma: Marilyn Munroe'. The "chapter" concerns the use of Novotny as the "modulus" through which a series of complex transcriptions are processed; ultimately, the T-cell "had come to this apartment in order to solve [Munroe's] suicide"[42]. After this statement, Novotny is obliquely murdered:

Murder...At intervals Karen Novotny moved across it [the room], carrying out a sequence of apparently random acts. Already she was confusing the perspectives of the room, transforming it into a dislocated clock. She noticed Tallis behind the door and walked towards him. Tallis waited for her to leave. Her figure interrupted the junction between the walls in the corner on his right. After a few seconds her presence became an unbearable intrusion into the time geometry of the room. [42]

Later, when Coma arrives at the apartment, Novotny's death is explained thus: "She was standing in the angle between

two walls" [42].

Just as this phrase is the leitmotif of *Atrocity*, so I have adopted it to site Ballard in the "hinge" between high and low. It is possible to argue that it operates in that manner here. Huyssen's 'Modernism's Other: Mass Culture as Woman' displays how mass culture was coded feminine by modernism. Huyssen's sources are largely from late nineteenth century German writers. However, English sources at the same moment reverse this coding: *high* culture as Woman. Chapter 6 looked at the advocacy of the "adventure" as the potential for re-vitalising a decadent and effeminate literature. Haggard attacks Naturalism as "carnal and filthy", but also notes that the American novel has developed worrying characteristics: "their men...are emasculated specimens...with culture on their lips...[.] About their work is an atmosphere like that of the boudoir of a luxurious woman, faint and delicate"¹³⁰. Between the high and the low, each marks the other as Woman. Could the conceptual death of Novotny perhaps signal the attempted destruction of this mutual projection, to clear the space of the "angle between two walls" for its impossible occupation? It is important that the *angle* is maintained, for this is no erasure of the border between high and low, but rather a "double" death, of the low's high and the high's low. Neither a simple definitional postmodernism (erasure) nor simple avant-gardism (sublation), the angle is intolerably

present.

This is the most tentatively "positive" reading of the conceptual deaths of *Atrocity*. However, it may unacceptably waive the physicality of violence towards Woman. It may repeat Breton's denial of *les femmes* for *La Femme* -- the object, the image. If, in the disaster novels, Beatrice and Suzanne Clair stand for veiled apocalyptic knowledge, *Atrocity* may mark the dismemberment of the feminine cipher, a violence to force a giving up of the truth.

Linda Williams has attempted to trace pornography's premise of "maximum visibility" in a frame derived from Foucault's first volume of *The History of Sexuality*: the implantation of the compulsion that sex speak the entire truth of being¹³¹. Muybridge's stop-action scenarios of female movement and Charcot's photographic record of hysterical seizures, constitute voyeuristic atrocity exhibitions, recalling *Atrocity's* newsreels or Vaughan's photojournals in *Crash*. Hard-core "obsessively seeks knowledge, through a voyeuristic record of the confessional, involuntary paroxysm, of the "thing" itself"¹³². This "frenzy of the visible" is, for Williams, impossibly contradictory, however. Hard-core films are directed towards ^{the}unrepresentable ^{interiority} of the woman's body, but this is displaced onto the ejaculating penis as signifier of the other's pleasure.

Is there an analogy to *Atrocity* here?

Questions, always questions..."What are you trying to build?" she asked. He assembled the mirrors into a box-like structure..."A trap". She stood beside him as he knelt on the floor. "For what? Time?". He placed a hand between her knees and gripped her right thigh, handhold of reality. "For your womb, Karen" [32-3]

The T-cell tries to capture the "secret" truth of Novotny's body, but in the logic of text the sexual does not mark the resting place of truth; these promiscuous, infinitely translatable codes have no hierarchy.

Peter Brooks notes of *Madame Bovary* that Emma's body is rarely represented whole; it is "'metonymized', fragmented into a set of accessory details rather than achieving coherence as either object or subject"¹³³. The billboards throughout *Atrocity* display "a segment of the lower lip, a right nostril, a portion of the female perineum...At least five hundred signs would be needed to contain the whole of this gargantuan woman"[15]. The visual field is shot through with desire and disavowal: the female body is never fully knowable, because the scopophilic gaze is seeking an *imaginary* object, the only body without lack: the pre-Oedipal mother. Emma's body is finally only seen 'whole' in death, and Brooks states: "At one extreme, the body must be killed before it can be represented, and indeed Freud acknowledges the link of the instinct for knowledge to sadism"¹³⁴. For the Sadist to kill means not the victory of power but its complete loss; the other's

suffering no longer affirms power. The death must be repeated again and again therefore¹³⁵. Does this explain *Atrocity's* repetition?

Foster's work on both Bellmer's dolls and Ernst's 'machinic' collages is concerned that these may participate in the very devices they seek to criticise. For Foster, Ernst's body-as-tank, body-as-diagrammatis ed-engineering-plan, has a worrying analogy with Theweleit's analysis of the fascist Freikorps soldier: the state-manufactured body, metallised armour replacing the ego. Such armour is constantly under threat, tested only by pain. Anything which threatens is violently attacked, most particularly the "oozing", non-bounded state of the feminine. If Ernst's collages of the body-as- machine serve to "shore up a disrupted body image or to support a ruined ego construction"¹³⁶, the machines are dysfunctional, as wild and fantastically inoperative as any in Roussel's fiction¹³⁷. Bellmer's sadism and mastery of the doll, however, may mean his "misogynistic effects...may well overwhelm his liberatory intentions"¹³⁸

To take the violence towards Woman in *Atrocity* in such terms may be the most positive statement: Ballard, like Bellmer, is "ambiguously reflexive about masculinist fantasies rather than merely expressive of them"¹³⁹. If Woman holds the truth, a sadistic attack must be launched,

a compulsive re-killing of Novotny. However, it must be recalled that the 'sovereignty' of the subject who kills, who experiences pleasure in the other's annihilation of pleasure, is held to by both Bataille and Sade¹⁴⁰. Sex is violence, but a violence that asserts sovereignty. Nathan's narrative of the T-cell's activity may begin with this attempt to shore up the ego, but the T-cell himself is eventually dispersed into traces, footnotes of a main document that has now been lost¹⁴¹. No object or subject can hold the truth or the gaze that would pierce the truth.

The oscillation I have ascribed to *The Atrocity Exhibition* is an overdetermined one, moving between high and low, affirmation and negation, "historical" and "neo" avant-garde. I hope to have displayed that if the text has exemplary "postmodernist" concerns, it also adopts strategies more properly ascribed to "modernism". The exclusion of avantgardism from an epochal postmodernism is once again a too monolithic opposition, troubled by a text that coils them within one another in a complex simultaneity. One leitmotif of the text, the phrase "the angle between two walls", determines the impossible site of *The Atrocity Exhibition* itself.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) quoted in the Introduction to *Cultural Revolution? The Challenge of the Arts in the 1960s*, ed. Bart Moore-Gilbert and John Seed, Routledge, 1992, p.2
- 2) J G Ballard, interview with James Goddard, *Cypher* 3, Dec 1970, p.25
- 3) Paul Theroux, review of *Love and Napalm: Export USA* (American Grove Press title for *Atrocity*), *New York Times Book Review* 29/10/72, p.56
- 4) James Blish, *More Issues at Hand*, Advent, Chicago, 1970, p.127-8
- 5) interview, translated in *Foundation* 9, 1975, p.53
- 6) Colin Greenland, *The Entropy Exhibition*, RKP 1983, p.115
- 7) The page references, which follow in the text, all refer to the *Re/Search* edition, Re/Search publications, San Francisco, 1990. The reasons for following this text will become evident below.
- 8) Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Ian MacLeod and Geoffrey Bennington, University of Chicago Press, 1987, p.24
- 9) Noel King, 'Reading *White Noise*: Floating Remarks', *Critical Quarterly*, 33:3 1991, p.69
- 10) 'Notes From Nowhere', *New Worlds* no.167, 1966, p.148
- 11) 'Notes From Nowhere', p.150
- 12) Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller, Hill and Wang, 1975, p.9-10. Peter

Brooks, it should be noted, translates this as "Isn't the most erotic place of a body *there where clothing gaps?*" ('The Body in the Field of Vision', *Paragraph* 14:1, March 1991, p.58). "Gaping" and "Gapping" would both seem to have use value here.

- 13) 'AAARGH!', Kingsley Amis statement, *Cypher* 4, 1970
- 14) Martin Amis' review of *Crash*, *The Observer*, 1/7/73, quoted by Fringle in *J G Ballard: Primary and Secondary Bibliography*
- 15) *The Times Literary Supplement*, 30/11/73, p.1466
- 16) Peter Burger, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Manchester University Press, 1984
- 17) see also Derrida's essay on Kant's aesthetics, 'Parergon', in *The Truth in Painting*.
- 18) Burger, *Theory*, p.109
- 19) Burger, *Theory*, p.109 and p.50
- 20) Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J M Bernstein, Routledge, 1991, p.59
- 21) Bernstein, intro to *The Culture Industry*, p.21. Compare this to Terry Eagleton's "In the commodified artefacts of postmodernism, the avant-gardist dream of an integration of art and society returns in monstrously caricatured form...emptying it of its political content" ('Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism', *New Left Review* 152, 1984, p.61)
- 22) John Tagg, 'Postmodernism and the born-again Avant-garde', *Block* 11, 1984; quote from Rosalind Krauss, 'The Originality of the Avant Garde', *The*

Originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths, MIT Press, 1985, p. 170

- 23) see also Peter Osborne, 'Aesthetic Autonomy and the Crisis of Theory: Greenberg, Adorno, and the problem of Postmodernism in the Visual Arts', *New Formations* 9, Winter 1989.
- 24) Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, RKP 1984, p.8 and p.26
- 25) Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, p.59
- 26) Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, p.103
- 27) Burger, *Theory*, p.61
- 28) see Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Routledge 1988, and *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Routledge 1989
- 29) Ballard, interview, *Foundation* 9, 1975, p.49
- 30) Ballard, article, *Cypher* 11, May 1974, p10-11
- 31) Ballard, interview, *Interzone* 22, 1987, p.14
- 32) detailed in marginal commentary note, *Re/Search* edition, p89
- 33) *Re/Search* 8-9: 'J G Ballard' special edition 1984, introductory note, p.88
- 34) Burger, *Theory*, p.95
- 35) Peter Wollen, 'The Situationist International', *New Left Review* 174, March 1989
- 36) Robert Hewison, *Too Much: Art and Society in the Sixties*, Methuen, 1986, p.86
- 37) Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, Allen Lane/Penguin, 1969, p.vii. All subsequent references in text

- 38) see 'Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism' printed as appendix to *The Postmodern Condition*, MUP, 1984
- 39) Situationism would seem a good example of this, where the group attempted total anonymity in its latter stages, for a set of ideas or 'situations' that would circulate freely, without authorship. In this, as Wollen notes, Situationism had learnt from the problems of "historical" avant-gardes, and did try to evade the very trappings of 'avant-garde' status. Peter Smith details the paradoxes of writing on Situationism, which inevitably writes it *back in* to art history narratives ('On the passage of a few people: Situationist Nostalgia', *Oxford Art Journal* 14:1, 1991)
- 40) 'Subcultures, Cultures and Class', by John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson and Brian Roberts, in *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain*, Hutchinson/Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1976, p.65
- 41) 'Subcultures', p.64
- 42) 'Subcultures', p.62
- 43) Fred Pfeil, 'These Disintegrations I'm Looking Forward To' in *Another Tale to Tell*, Verso, 1990 and Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, Methuen 1987
- 44) This decision is partly for convenience, partly for effect. The T-cells are those which are attacked by the HIV virus, and measuring the amount of T-cells is

the crucial indicator for the advance of the illness. Although this is in perhaps dubious taste, the medical reference (as well as questions of "taste") are in keeping with the logic of *Atrocity*. "Cell" is also useful, in that it implies both a singular entity and a close-knit collective (a "terrorist cell" for example). This seems more effective than using each version of the name, if certain resonances are lost: Traven is a reference to the reclusive American novelist known only as B. Traven; Travis now has a wonderful rhyme with Travis Bickle, the "psychotic" hero of Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976)

- 45) A description of the painting is in evidence in the text only in a commentary note in the *Re/Search* edition, p.39
- 46) see also Benjamin H D Buchloh, 'Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art', *Artforum* Sept. 1982, p.50
- 47) Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* MIT Press, 1990, p.236
- 48) Nick Perry and Roy Wilkie, 'The Atrocity Exhibition', *Riverside Quarterly* 6:3 1975, p.181
- 49) Buck-Morss, *Dialectics*, p.236
- 50) Burger, *Theory*, p.77
- 51) see Krauss, 'In The Name of Picasso', *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*
- 52) Kingsley Amis, 'AAARGH!', *Cypher* 4, 1970, p.6

- 53) see also Ballard's essays 'The Coming of the Unconscious', *New Worlds* 164, 1966 (reprinted in *Re/Search* 8-9, Ballard special issue); 'Salvador Dali: The Innocent as Paranoid', *New Worlds*, 187, 1969
- 54) Maurice Nadeau, *The History of Surrealism* (1964), trans. Richard Howard, Penguin 1973
- 55) Laurent Jenny, 'From Breton to Dali: The Adventures of Automatism', *October* 51, Winter 1989
- 56) Sarane Alexandrian, *Surrealist Art* (1969), trans. Gordon Clough, Thames and Hudson, 1970
- 57) Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, Thames and Hudson, 1985
- 58) on the details of this, see Alan Stoekl's Introduction to *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-39* (of Bataille), Manchester UP, 1985 and Krauss, 'Corpus Delicti', in *L'Amour Fou: Photography and Surrealism*, ed. Krauss and Jane Livingstone, Hayward Gallery/Gross River Press, 1986
- 59) Carter Ratcliff, 'Swallowing Dali', *Artforum*, Sept. 1982, p.66
- 60) Breton, quoted by Krauss, 'Photography in the Service of Surrealism', *L'amour Fou*, p.20
- 61) quoted by Nadeau, *History*, p.118
- 62) Laurent Jenny's phrase, p.110
- 63) Dali, quoted by Dawn Ades, *Dali*, Thames and Hudson, 1982, p.120
- 64) Dali, quoted by Dawn Ades, *Dali*, p.200
- 65) on this connection, see Dawn Ades, *Dali* and Krauss'

- 'Corpus Delicti', in *L'amour Fou*
- 66) Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, see especially the 'Post-Scriptum' to cited essay, p.216
- 67) Perry and Wilkie, 'The Atrocity Exhibition'
- 68) Peter Nicholls, 'Jerry Cornelius at the Atrocity Exhibition: Anarchy and Entropy in *New Worlds* Science Fiction 1964-74', *Foundation*, 9, 1975, p.31
- 69) selected passages from *The Immaculate Conception* in *What is Surrealism?* ed. Rosemont. This quote, p.50-1
- 70) Ballard quotes this anecdote at nearly every opportunity; most recently to Clare Boylan in *The Guardian*, 5/9/91, where the phrase headlines the article
- 71) Perry and Wilkie, 'The Atrocity Exhibition', p.183
- 72) David Punter, 'J G Ballard: Alone Among the Murder Machines', *The Hidden Script*, p.9-10. The opening paragraph of Punter's essay also claims: "Ballard is one of the few writers who can sensibly be termed post-structuralist", p.9
- 73) Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, p.71
- 74) Paul Theroux, *New York Times Book Review*, 29/10/72, p.56
- 75) Punter, *The Hidden Script*, p.9
- 76) Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *New Left Review* 1984, p.64
- 77) Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (1954), Jonathan Cape, 1965, p.404. All subsequent references

in the text

- 78) Breton, quoted Nadeau, *History*, p.97
- 79) Breton, 'What is Surrealism?', p.153
- 80) this phrase is adopted by Adorno in *The Culture Industry*, see especially 'How to Look at Television', p.143
- 81) Lynne Joyrich, 'Critical and Textual Hypermasculinity', in *Logics of Television*, ed. Patricia Mellencamp, BFI/University of Indiana Press, 1990, p.162
- 82) Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (1964), Ark Paperbacks 1987, p.43
- 83) Mellencamp, 'TV Time and Catastrophe, or *Beyond the Pleasure Principle of Television*', in *Logics of Television*. See also E. Ann Kaplan's 'Whose Imaginary?', where she suggests that TV offers the promise of plenitude but forever defers it, leaving the spectator with "the constant expectation of unity, oneness, in the next text segment" (*Female Spectators*, ed. E. Deidre Pribram, Verso 1988, p.132).
- 84) The Kennedy assassination is frequently marked as the moment when television realized its full potential; it is, for Jameson, a utopian moment in its "prodigious new display of synchronicity", *Postmodernism*, p.355
- 85) *Understanding Media*, p.64
- 86) David Porush, *The Soft Machine: Cybernetic Fiction*, Methuen 1985, p.x
- 87) Andrew Ross, *No Respect*, p.118

- 88) Baudrillard's essay on *Crash*, and the responses to it (by, among others, David Porush and Vivian Sobchack) were published in *Science Fiction Studies*, 18:3, 1991. All page references in the text
- 89) This introduction is reprinted in *Re/Search* 8-9, 1984 p.98
- 90) *Re/Search* 8-9, 1984, p.98
- 91) Cited by Mike Gane, *Baudrillard's Bestiary*, Routledge, 1991, p.161 fn. 4
- 92) Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), Ark Paperbacks, 1986, p.4
- 93) Ballard, interview with Henessy, *Transatlantic Review*, Spring 1973, p.63
- 94) Ballard, Introduction to *Crash*, *Re/Search* 1984, p.97-8
- 95) Lucy Lippard, *Pop Art* 1966, Thames and Hudson, reprinted and revised 1988, p.90 and 86
- 96) Thierry de Duve, 'Andy Warhol, or The Machine Perfected', *October* 48, Spring 1989
- 97) Benjamin H D Buchloh, 'Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art: 1956-66', in *Andy Warhol -- A Retrospective*, ed. Kynaston McShine, Museum of Modern Art, New York, for Hayward Gallery, 1989, p.57
- 98) David E. James, 'The Unsecret Life: A Warhol Advertisement', *October* 56, Spring 1991
- 99) see Buchloh's article on Warhol, which elaborates on this paradox
- 100) Compare Ballard's friend, the artist Richard Hamilton, who adapted the distinctive 'Ricard' design,

- to spell 'Richard' as a logo for ash-trays and carafes
- 101) quoted by Lawrence Alloway, 'The Development of British Pop', in *Pop Art*, p.35
- 102) for details see Sarat Maharaj's article in *Richard Hamilton*, Tate Gallery Exhibition Catalogue, 1992
- 103) Eugene Tsai, 'The Sci-Fi Connection: The IG, J G Ballard and Robert Smithson' in *Modern Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Pop*, ICA, NY, MIT Press, 1988
- 104) see also Haim Finkelstein, '"Deserts of Vast Eternity": J G Ballard and Robert Smithson', *Foundation* 37, Spring 1987
- 105) Anne Massey and Penny Sparke, 'The Myth of the Independent Group', *Block* 10, 1985. The sharp tone of this article is probably more directed at their criticism of Dick Hebdige's 'In Poor Taste -- Notes on Pop' (later printed in *Hiding in the Light*, Comedia, 1988); Anne Massey's later article, 'The Independent Group: Towards a Redefinition', *The Burlington Magazine* CXXIX:no.1009 April 1987, is far more positive towards the Independent Group itself
- 106) Lawrence Alloway, 'Pop Art since 1949', *The Listener*, LXVIII No.1761, 27/12/62, p.1087
- 107) Wallis, 'Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow: The Independent Group and Popular Culture', in *Modern Dreams*, p.9
- 108) Alloway, *The Listener*, p.1085
- 109) There is a long description of this exhibition in Anne Massey's article in *The Burlington Magazine*

- 110) Thomas Lawson, 'Bunk: Eduardo Paolozzi and the Legacy of the Independent Group', in *Modern Dreams*, p.24
- 111) Jonathan Benison has only one brief comment, in parentheses: "(not to mention the apparently overfacile adoption of a woman figure to act as cipher, as key object)", in 'In Default of a Poet in Space: J G Ballard and the Current State of Nihilism', *Just the Other Day* ed. Luk Van Der Vos, Antwerp 1985, p.414
- 112) Warhol "Reduc[es] Marilyn to an anatomical fragment, to a kind of endlessly repeating osculation machine" -- Kynaston McShine on the 'Lips' screen prints by Warhol (Introduction to *Andy Warhol -- A Retrospective*, p.18).
- 113) Susan Sontag, 'The Pornographic Imagination' printed in *The Story of the Eye* Penguin edition 1982. Page references follow in the text.
- 114) 'Must We Burn de Sade?' (1951), published as introduction to the Arena edition of de Sade's *The One Hundred Days of Sodom*, 1989
- 115) Frances Ferguson, 'Sade and the Pornographic Legacy', *Representations* 36, Fall 1991, p.4
- 116) see, for example, Vaughan's photojournal as the apotheosis of this, *Crash*, Panther 1973, ps.82ff
- 117) Ballard, *Crash*, p.154
- 118) Breton, quoted by Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, p.7
- 119) on the mannequin, see Martin Roberts, 'Mutations of

- the Spectacle: *vittrines*, arcades, mannequins', *French Cultural Studies*, Vol.2 pt.3, no.6, Oct. 1991
- 120) Rosalind Krauss, 'Corpus Delicti', *L'Amour Fou*, p.86
- 121) Hal Foster, 'Armor Fou', *October* 56, Spring 1991
- 122) Peter Nicholls, 'Futurism, Gender, and Theories of postmodernity', *Textual Practice* 3:2 1989
- 123) Nicholls, 'Futurism', p.208
- 124) Nicholls, 'Futurism', p.214
- 125) Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', p.72
- 126) Jacqueline Rose, 'The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat or A Wife Is Like an Umbrella -- Fantasies of the Modern and Postmodern', in *Universal Abandon?*, ed. Andrew Ross, 1988
- 127) Bernstein, introduction to *The Culture Industry*, p.21-2
- 128) Rose, 'The Man...', p.244-5
- 129) Rose, *The Haunting of Sylvia Plath*, Virago, 1991, p.87
- 130) H Rider Haggard, *The Contemporary Review*, Feb. 1887, p.176
- 131) Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and 'The Frenzy of the Visible'*, Pandora, 1991
- 132) Williams, *Hard Core*, p.49
- 133) Peter Brooks, 'The Body in the Field of Vision', *Paragraph* 14:1, March 1991, p.48
- 134) Brooks, p.60
- 135) This point is made by de Beauvoir, 'Must We Burn de

Sade?'

136) Foster, 'Armor Fou', p.68

137) Roussel is another figure that is referenced by *Atrocity* (paragraph titles include 'Locus Solus' and 'Impressions of Africa', two of Roussel's novels)

138) Foster, 'Armor Fou', p.87

139) Foster, 'Armor Fou', p.87

140) On this point, see Frances Ferguson, 'Sade and the Pornographic Legacy'

141) This recalls Ballard's story 'The Index' in *War Fever*

CHAPTER TEN

LIKE NO OTHER: THE SIGNATURE OF J G BALLARD

In his monograph on Ballard David Pringle lists a series of objects that he considers "unforgettably 'Ballardian'": abandoned airfields, sand dunes, half-submerged buildings, advertising hoardings, drained swimming pools. The list continues on and on, carried away by the pleasure of nominalising the 'Ballardian'. Pringle then asks:

What do all these heterogeneous properties have in common? They are Ballardian -- any reader with more than a passing acquaintance with his work will vouch for that -- but what do they mean, and are they interconnected in more than a purely private and autobiographical manner?¹

Harlan Ellison also states: "Ballard...seems to me to write peculiarly Ballardian stories -- tales difficult to pin down as to one style or one theme or one approach but all very personally trademarked Ballard"². Tautology is the only way to determine this object: Ballard writes Ballardian texts. Both of these statements hint, in those phrases "purely private and autobiographical", "very personally trademarked", at a fear of the fundamental unreadability of the texts, the reader trapped forever in tautology, never getting beyond the surface. Private iconography is one way of opening a reading; everything returns to the name, even as what is said in that name remains enigmatic. The other route is into the texts themselves, grouping them, following the structures of repetition of theme, image and character. However, a

similar disappearance is effected, for to analyse the style is, in Ellison's words, like looking at "[t]he most exquisite Wyeth landscape" which, "when examined more and more minutely, begins to resemble pointillism, and finally nothing but a series of disconnected coloured dots"².

What is approached here is the question of the *signature*, that which is presumed to be the unique mark of the signing body, and *idiom*, that which is equally presumed to mark off texts as absolutely unique. If these can establish the absolute singularity of texts signed under one name, Pringle and Ellison signal the difficulty of this project: to project meaning 'outside' the text into the signing body is to close it off from reading; to locate meaning in the innermost recess of idiom, is to transform the text into private language, one which is equally unavailable for reading. That Pringle's questions are *rhetorical*, that he begins to elaborate a reading of Ballard's texts, indicates that reading is, of course, possible; even when 'ultimate' meaning is 'outside' or encrypted 'inside', the texts partake of language, of the institution of literature. The singularity of idiom and the signature must exist in tension to general laws which establish readability. Both idiom and the signature must *let themselves go* even if this itself threatens another form of disappearance: that of the individual text being disseminated into the general. Derrida details this paradox thus: "A text lives only if it lives on, and it

lives on only if it is at once translatable and untranslatable...Totally translatable, it disappears as a text, as writing, as a body of language. Totally untranslatable, even within what is believed to be one language, it dies immediately"⁴. For Pringle and Ellison reading is possible, but it might be said that this impetus to read is founded on the seductiveness of that tautologous core -- Ballard's Ballardianism -- which refuses to give itself up, or which gives itself up only to disappear.

This chapter concerns these two forms of signature as theorised by Derrida. In the first section, given the conventional understanding of the signature as the mark of the authenticating presence, I will analyse Ballard's two "autobiographical" novels, *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women*, which have been received as providing the code to de-scramble Ballard's cryptic fiction. The second section, mindful that Derrida has termed idiom-as-signature as "a banal and confused metaphor"⁵, attempts to determine certain idiomatic effects, the *textual* signature. The occasion for this will be *Vermilion Sands*⁶.

First it is necessary to read through Derrida's work on the signature. To sign is to authenticate, validate, to assert presence here and now. To append the signature to a statement is to guarantee agreement, to *perform* that

agreement in the unique paraph that leaves the trace of the signatory on the performative staging of the proper name. Derrida perceives two structural difficulties to this description of the signature's operation. In the first place, the signature's status as authenticating mark is dependent on the *absence* of the signatory; it stands in, supposedly, as a mark of having-been-present. The guarantor of this having-been-present is the unique paraph, but *its* guarantee is dependent on its ability to be reproduced, repeated. Once open to repetition, it is no longer simply present, unique here and now, there and then; the guarantee is enforced *between* repetitions. Hence, Derrida states, "In order to function, that is, to be readable, a signature must have a repeatable, iterable, imitable form; it must be detached from the present and singular intention of its production"⁷. The "imitable" also implies that the repetitive sequence of signatures is open to the insertion of forgeries.

The second difficulty relates to the *appending* of signatures as marks of presence. The *place* of the signature is once more on that ambivalent edge of the text where the title and the frame have been seen to be problematic. What is the status of this appendage, where does it take place?

First case: the signature belongs to the inside of that (picture, relieve, discourse and so on) which it is presumed to sign. It is in the text, no longer signs, operates as an effect within the object, has its part to play within that which it claims to

appropriate to itself or lead back to its origin. Filiation is lost. The signature deducts itself. Second case: the signature holds itself, as is generally believed, outside the text. It emancipates as well the product, that can get along without the signature, from the name of the father or the mother which it no longer needs in order to function. The filiation again gives itself up, is still betrayed by what remarks it⁹

This structure can evidently be traced in the disappearances noted by Pringle and Ellison, the 'signature' of Ballard in the innermost recess of the inside, or so far outside the text becomes either unreadable, or readable without the signature of Ballard. This is not, however, an opposition: Derrida insists that the signature operates "on the edge *between* the "inside" and the "outside"¹⁰.

It is 'between' because the signature must be both kept and erased. It must be kept because the institution of literature is not possible "without the development of a positive law implying authors' rights, the identification of the signatory, of the corpus, names, titles" and so on¹⁰, and it must be erased because if the signature returned solely to the pure singularity of the proper name, it could not be read. It must take its part in the generality of language: "As a piece of the proper name, the signature points, at one extremity, to a properly unnameable singularity; as a piece of language, the signature touches, at its other extremity, on the space of free substitution without proper reference"¹¹.

A text must be detachable from the proper name in order to become readable: "As a part of a text...the signature detaches from the function of the proper name, or rather joins that function to the other textual function of producing meaning without strictly determinable intentions"¹². For Derrida the proper name, in particular the patronymic, is associated with death¹³; structurally, the name outlives its bearer, but also exceeds, in its lineage, him or her. For the name to fall outside the text, apparently irrevocably, is a kind of death. Derrida's analyses of literary texts trace, not so much the idiom, the signature of the text, "coming along to sign all by itself, before even the undersigning of the proper name"¹⁴, as the signature in the text, the monumentalising of the name within the textual body. Hence, with Francis Ponge and Gerard Titus-Carmel, Derrida seeks to trace the contamination of proper with common nouns¹⁵. This emphasizes the role of the signature on the edge, pointing both to the capitalised Proper and the desire to let go, de-capitate the name: "by not letting the signature fall outside the text anymore, as an undersigned subscription, and by inserting it into the body of the text, you monumentalise, institute, and erect it into a thing or a stony object. But in doing so, you also lose the identity, the title of ownership over the text; you let it become a moment of a part of the text as a thing or a common noun"¹⁶.

Where does Ballard's signature take place? Consider Colin Greenland's words: "J G Ballard is unmistakable. His habit of introducing a story with a tableau, meticulous and stylized, proclaims his hand no less distinctly than a name signed in the bottom right-hand corner of a canvas or flashed in capitals across a screen"¹⁷. What of Ballard's own constant recourse to the *figural* signature ("hieroglyphic shadows, signatures of all the strange ciphers of the desert sea", "signatures of a separate subject", "the tomb that enshrined the very signatures of her soul", "Such a leave-taking required him to fix his signature upon everyone of the particles of the universe"¹⁸), all those ciphers, coded landscapes, "cryptic anagrams"¹⁹, the search in *The Atrocity Exhibition* for absolute translatability, the disappearance or arbitrariness of the name? Is it possible that so persistent a group of figures, one idiomatic trait, *itself* concerns the unreadability of idiom, a kind of idiom of idiom? Does this relate to the third, elusive modality of the signature that Derrida refers to in *Signsponge*, where "the work of writing designates, describes, and inscribes itself as *act* (action and archive), signs itself before the end by affording us the opportunity to read: I refer to myself, this is writing, *I* am a writing, this is *writing*"²⁰?

I

J G Ballard has been mystifying and embarrassing readers for much of his career. Praise is mixed with comments on the awkwardness of his prose and perplexity at his intent. *Something*, however, remains that intrigues. This seduction can be staged through Martin Amis' reviews. He began by condemning the "vicious nonsense" of *Crash*²¹, but this has been progressively modulated. His review of *The Day of Creation* ends: "Ballard's novel is occasionally boring and frequently ridiculous...You finish the book with some bafflement and irritation. But this is only half the experience. You then sit around waiting for the novel to come and haunt you. And it does"²². What is this haunting remainder which survives ridicule?

Amis' 1987 review is a witty piece, which contains a dialogue between two Ballard 'fans': "'I've read the new Ballard". "And?". "It's like the early stuff". "Really? What's the element?". "Water". "Lagoons?". "Some. Mainly a river". "What's the hero's name? Maitland? Melville?". "Mallory". This serves to indicate the *cult* status of Ballard's work. Cults coagulate around secrets, arcana, are performed through private languages, gestures and rituals, and depend for their survival on an incomprehending exteriority. This secrecy has nevertheless been breached on two occasions. Ballard has been *received and understood* in his two "autobiographical"

novels, *Empire of the Sun* (1984) and *The Kindness of Women* (1991).

The sudden visibility of Ballard and Ballard's work in 1984 (Booker prize nominee, Guardian Fiction Prize) is no less astonishing for the equally sudden disappearance and then repeated 'discovery' in 1991 (the week of publication saw major interviews on Radio 3, Radio 4, a documentary on BBC 2, serialisation in *The Independent*, and later that most English of accolades, Ballard on *Desert Island Discs*). This accorded with the apparent shift from science fiction to 'autobiography'.

The terms of acceptance are clear: *Empire* and *Kindness* both detach from the prior work and then are re-attached by rendering autobiographically comprehensible the fiction. The signature becomes generally readable. Of *Empire* it was said that it was "the key to the rest of an extraordinary oeuvre and central to his project", "the first stage in a comprehensive decoding"; of *Kindness*, that it "provides a framework for comprehending much that is disturbing in his writing", that it "loops together all the strands of a story that, in the course of fictionally processing his life, reveals how and where Ballard acquired his distinct gallery of images for his literature". It now becomes "tempting to see all his earlier fiction as a kind of displacement activity"²³.

Peter Brigg detects the model Vonnegut provided for the writing of *Slaughterhouse-5* in these proposals, that "the authors worked through a series of science fiction novels to develop the style to express the almost inexpressible aspects of their own experiences"²⁴. This downgrades the science fiction texts to 'drafts' of a 'final' *literary* text. However, this move often informs the theory of autobiography in general. The autobiography is "the symptomatic key to all else he did", the "autobiographical key" unlocks the work, it is "the magnifying lens, focusing and intensifying that same peculiar creative vitality that informs all the volumes of his collected works"²⁵. Lejeune suggests that this produces an "autobiographical space"²⁶, which retrospectively occupies and 're-reads' the fictional work.

Autobiographical readings have a clear explanatory power, but this is dangerous if the reductive claim of establishing the *right* reading, through sole appeal to referential fact, ignores the problems of textuality²⁷. The peculiar force of autobiography has been theorised principally by Gusdorf, Olney and Lejeune²⁸. For Gusdorf, autobiography is inextricably connected to Western concepts of individualism. It offers the unity of identity across time, interpreting life in its totality, "a second reading of experience...truer than the first because it adds to experience itself consciousness of it"²⁹. Gusdorf, though, abandons any claim to *factual*

truth in the text, preferring the somewhat religiose "theodicy of individual being". This is crucial: not enounced factual truth, but sincerity of enunciation, which arises from the peculiar access autobiography has: "beyond all the images, he [sic] follows unceasingly the call of his own being"³⁰.

Olney dispenses with considerations of genre or historical development, and argues that autobiography comes from the "vital impulse to order that has always caused man to create"³¹. Any systematising knowledge arises from this "innate" patterning; Heraclitus is thus the first autobiographer. Olney proposes that this 'vital principle' is outside any notion of life as linear narration, outside 'experience' or even 'memory'³². Lejeune is more pragmatically concerned with defining the genre: autobiography is a retrospective prose narrative, written in such a way as to clearly identify author, narrator and character as the same person (as distinct from biography and the novel). At this stage, the slightest non-coincidence of terms bars entry to the autobiographical. This is the terms of the *pact*, signed by the author and countersigned by the reader³³. The proper name ensures fixity; Lejeune is almost pathologically concerned to counter the problem of the textual 'I' as shifter (an empty, non-referential place within the enounced which is filled, every time, by specific contextual factors) by tying it back to the

proper name of the author which appears on the cover. Once again, this is a formulation which is not concerned with fact or truth (which can never be *textually* established, as Mansell states³⁴), but with the sincerity of the enunciation, the condition of the signed/countersigned pact.

Autobiography is therefore given a transcendent position, in relation to the oeuvre as a whole and in itself, its own conditions: it accesses deeper being. A cursory reading of *Empire* and *Kindness* can witness a certain conformity to these debates. There is no problem, for example, with their "distortions", the decision to separate Jim from his parents in the Lunghua camp, unlike Ballard's real experience, and the displacement of the manner of his wife's death. As Ballard states: "It's literally true half the time, and psychologically true the whole of the time"³⁵; it is *sincere*. *Kindness* is also, far more explicitly than *Empire*, apparently structured in terms of the retrospective discovery of a patterning which informs the writer's life and work, with "Each of my novels...reflected in a section of the book"³⁶. There are three related problems, however, with this autobiographical theory and its application to Ballard, which will take up the remainder of this section.

The first revolves around the terms in which autobiography is delineated: sincerity of the pact. This does not refer

to the text, but to the *edges* of the text, the contextual determination which establishes autobiography as autobiography. Since the fictive has a disconcerting ability to mimic the *textual* appearance of autobiography, "our expectations depend heavily upon all sorts of obvious clues to authorial intention such as a preface, autographs, even cover blurbs or literary classifications"³⁷.

These framing apparati have been termed by Genette the paratext, including the framing on and around the text (*peritext*: titles, prefaces, blurbs) and those at more distance (*epitext*: reviews, interviews, conversations)³⁸. Since a text cannot appear in a naked state, unadorned, this edge determines a reading, even if its status is "fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary...devoted to the service of something else which constitutes its right of existence, namely the text"³⁹. Genette appeals to Lejeune as marking the paratext as "always the bearer of an authorial commentary either more or less legitimated by the author", that it must always return as the "responsibility of the author"⁴⁰. This is in spite of the heteronomy in which different elements of the paratext may contradict each other. MacLean notes that paratextual functions are drifting 'outwards', authority placed less on the preface than cover blurbs, citations of praise from legitimating authorities, and so on⁴¹. Can these still be said to return to the author? Is the author responsible

for the epitext? And what of Derrida's insistence that the frame has a double function, a double edge, both attaching and detaching?

John Sutherland has argued for the importance of covers in determining responses and takes as his opening example *Empire of the Sun*. His comment confirms my analysis so far:

What will condition the reader's experience of the novel are 3 points, all stressed as being important in the jacket material: (1) *Empire of the Sun* draws on autobiographical experience and therefore carries a more complex, ethical cargo than most fiction; (2) it is a 'departure' from Ballard's normal (science fiction) work; (3) it is the crowning achievement of his work in fiction -- the point to which all his previous novels tend. It seems clear to me that someone entering *Empire of the Sun* via the jacket apparatus must have a different set from the reader (particularly the reader new to Ballard) with a bald library copy⁴².

It is clear, as Murray suggests, that these two books in fact constitute four, two read in context with prior work, two as new additions to the autobiographical genre⁴³. The epitextual framework is deeply contradictory, for, of course, these are autobiographical novels, at once fiction and autobiography. This tends to entangle autobiographical theory. Lejeune's early formulations deny such texts entry, but ^{he} later includes them with a minimal condition: the author's name must equal the protagonist's. Fiction may mimic the pact, but never as far back as the name. Although many of the reviews wished to establish them as autobiography, Ballard's contribution to the epitext has

been to issue a double injunction: this is and is not autobiography. It is, in the sense that the Preface to *Empire* states that it is based "for the most part" on his own experiences, and is not, because the fictionalising goes much further than the alteration of a few facts: *Kindness* often contradicts, rewrites and even erases sections of *Empire*. No simple identity, either, can be established between J G Ballard and the Jamie/Jim figure in the texts. This creates a "zone of indetermination"⁴⁴, in which, as a novel, it belongs too closely to the coincidence of author-protagonist, but the distance between them cannot allow it full autobiographical status.

This element of autobiographical theory can prove nothing from the text, and must seek the edge for confirmation. This is also the case for those more 'metaphysical' claims, which are only the flip-side of a same anxiety of reading. Joseph Loesberg has argued that "the problems theorists attribute to writers of autobiography...are actually problems faced by a reader of autobiography unwilling to accept textual indeterminateness as inherent in an autobiographical text"⁴⁵. In effect, the claims that autobiography is expressive of a "deeper being" is the attempt to evade the epistemological impossibility of fully determining authorial intention. Mandell, for example, bypasses the 'distortions' of conscious memory by stating that autobiographies "emanate ultimately from the deeper reality of being"⁴⁶. He continues: "At every

moment of any true autobiography...the author's intention is to convey that 'this happened to me', and it is this intention that is always carried through in a way which, I believe, makes the result different from fiction"⁴⁷. This is plainly circular: "true" autobiography establishes intentional veracity but that intention can only be protected by evading the intention to write the true autobiography in the first place. The search for depth displaces the problem of intention, projecting the difficulty as the relation between autobiographer and text rather than, in fact, the relation of a reader to a text "he or she identifies as, or is presented with as, autobiography"⁴⁸.

The second problem hinges on the relation between autobiography and oeuvre. The injunction is to read Ballard's oeuvre backwards: the landscape of *The Drowned World* finds its generation in the Shanghai skyline reflected on the paddy fields beyond the Lunghua camp; the obsession with dreams of flight in much of Ballard's work reverts back to childhood obsession and the 'liberation' of Shanghai by the American Air Force, staged in *Empire* as an almost theatrical performance just beyond the limits of the camp. *Kindness* accelerates this process of identification: Ballard's brief career as an Air force pilot ties in to Traven's obsession with nuclear war in 'The Terminal Beach'; the experience with LSD equates with the visions of *The Crystal World* no less than the

transmogrification of Shepperton in *The Unlimited Dream Company*.

The separation on which this decoding depends is problematic for reasons which centre on repetition. No simple 'departure' comes with *Empire*; 'The Dead Time' is woven out of the ambivalent space between the official 'end' of the war and the beginning of 'peace' (or re-beginning of war) in the zone around Shanghai. Given the peritextual blurbs on each of his books, which always contain reference to his internment in China, this can already be read as generated out of "autobiographical" elements. Secondly, there is the curious paragraph in *Atrocity*, the longest of the book, which is the T-cell's entry on his early life in Shanghai. It begins: "Two weeks after the end of World War II my parents and I left Lunghua internment camp and returned to our house in Shanghai"[72]. This entry is startling not least because it is closer to the facts than the subsequent "autobiographies". The paragraph details the T-cell's attempt to travel to Japan on the invitation of a Captain Tulloch, and the oblique sense that the Japanese prisoners in the hold of the ship are victims of an impending American atrocity. This scene is repeated in *Kindness* [60-1], but witnessed from the ship on which Jim leaves for England. Tulloch appears in *Empire*, but as one of the roving bandits who is shot attempting to raid the Olympic stadium [see Chapter 39]. A Tulloch is also a

river-steamer Captain in *The Drought*. There is a sense here of a constant permutation of details, weaving between fiction and supposed autobiography.

This is further emphasized by the relation of *Empire* to the first part of *Kindness*, which returns to the Shanghai childhood. Although there is repetition (the same bizarre anecdote of the English driving out to survey battlefields, where, in *Empire* "the rotting coffins projected from the loose earth like a chest of drawers" with "dead soldiers...as if they had fallen asleep together in a dream of war"[29, 32], and in *Kindness* "open coffins protruded like drawers in a ransacked wardrobe" with "dead infantrymen...as if asleep in a derelict dormitory"[25]), *Kindness* is far from a reprise. Of the three opening chapters, the first predates *Empire*, the second would need to be inserted between parts I and II of *Empire* (which jumps to the end of internment rather than detailing any time between arrival and the weeks before release), and the third at points openly re-writes *Empire*. There is, for example, a casual reference to the bombs at Nagasaki and Hiroshima: "Some of the prisoners even claimed to have seen the bomb-flash"[42]; those prisoners, in *Empire*, include Jim himself, and this gesture seems to defuse the vital image-chains of apocalyptic light in *Empire*. Also, the Jim of *Kindness* only learns from television reports of war crimes that "the Japanese had planned to close Lunghua and march us up-country"[58];

this effectively negates fifty or sixty pages of the forced march in *Empire*, some of its most powerful sequences. This includes the eventual escape from the march by lying amongst the dead, imitating them [272]; a scene also in 'The Dead Time'.

One should also consider the completely different emphasis of *Kindness*, the centrality of Jamie's relation to Peggy Gardner in the camp, entirely absent from *Empire*, and the key event which resonates through *Kindness*; the casual murder of the Chinese prisoner, tortured and asphyxiated on the derelict station platform [Chapter 3]. This seems to *replace* the intensity of the identification with and guilt over the youthful Kamikaze pilot in *Empire* (which resonates with the fictive dialogue between Traven and the Japanese figure at the end of 'The Terminal Beach').

These interleavings and rewritings offer a warning that the texts should not be read as privileged moments of decoding; rather, they *perpetuate* the code. As an Air Force pilot in Canada, the Jim of *Kindness* glowingly admires the Turkish pilot's decision to deliberately fly into self-destruction, following an intensely personal mythology: "Whatever mythology I constructed for myself would have to be made from the commonplaces of my life, from the smallest affections and kindnesses"[99]. Although it is dangerous to propose a privileged status to this passage, it suggests a certain strategy with regard

to the materials of *Empire* and *Kindness*: there are no 'grounded' facts contained here; the material offers many narratives or 'mythologies', with *Empire* as one, *Kindness* as another, both overlapping and yet divergent⁴⁹.

This interleaving threatens the privilege of autobiography as decoding the oeuvre. This is already suggested, however, by Lejeune. If the autobiographical pact depends on a trust that will invite countersigning, a solitary book often cannot guarantee this. The autobiographer "lacks, in the eyes of the reader, that sign of reality which is the previous production of other texts (nonautobiographical), indispensable to that which we will call 'the autobiographical space'"⁵⁰. Autobiography and fiction are mutually dependent. This interpenetration is further implied in *Kindness*.

It is directed (not least by Ballard's epitextual work) that *The Kindness of Women* is to be read as a re-tracing of the writer's life. It is strange, given that each chapter "reflects" one of the novels, that no explicit link is ever made to the fiction. These linkages are there, but they are *encrypted*. The book itself centres on the cryptic. Internment becomes interrment; in the constant inversions encountered here, the prison camp becomes a safe and secret tomb from the anarchy on the other side of fence: "Far from wanting to escape from the camp, I had been trying to burrow more deeply into its

heart"[41]. This begins a chain of tombs and wombs: dissecting his medical school cadaver's womb, it is revelatory, "displayed like a miniature stage set"[81]; Jim's decision to leave Canada, to pursue a different mythology, is dictated by the unborn child in a prostitute's womb, which had "given me my new compass"[99]. This is followed by a chapter devoted to the inaccessible mysteries of childbirth, Miriam's withdrawal and return, encryption and decryption [111-114]. In a "secret logic" [146] Miriam's burial is overcoded with the mourning of Jacqueline Kennedy, the atrocities of the 1960s and the Chinese dead. The book's final movement contains the unearthing of a World War II fighter pilot in the Cambridge fens and a pacifying re-burial; a scene echoed by the rescue of a child from drowning, entombed in a sinking Range Rover. The text is almost a *working through* of what Abraham and Torok term the "cryptophoric subject", mourning becoming melancholia, the erection of a crypt in the ego in which the dead are introjected, kept alive, in secret, ventriloquising the melancholic in compulsions⁵¹.

The cryptic is developed in other ways. Reviewers have insisted on a rigorous division of the "autobiographies" from prior texts; the "bullshit apocalypics" have been left behind⁵². In terms of image, style and the pattern of verbal repetitions between the 'fiction' and the 'autobiographies', this seems an astonishing claim to

make. Although the fiction itself is never mentioned, there is a kind of game of reference-spotting of titles and phrases grafted from prior texts. A drunken publishing agent, touring Soho for prostitutes has his action described thus: "The atrocity exhibition was more stirring than the atrocity"[146]. The next page contains an embedded reference to a "drowned world"[147]. Phrasal echoes continually appear: in Spain, "the peculiar geometry of these overlit apartments" where "stylized" sex acts are performed [121] immediately keys into *Atrocity*, whose thesis on 'the death of affect' is repeated here [158]. Lykiard's likely view of Armageddon as "merely the ultimate happening, the audience-storming last act in the theatre of cruelty"[151] echoes Nathan's view that "For us, perhaps, World War III is now little more than a sinister pop art display" [*Atrocity*, 12]. In the car-crash sequences, the obsessional phrase "the jut and rake of the steering wheel" is repeated [182]. Relationships are repeated too: Richard Sutherland tussles for Miriam's affections by taking her flying (just as, in an internal repetition, David Hunter later takes Sally up in the air [221]), recalling any number of erotic triangles in the fiction where the narrator competes with a rogue pilot.

The chapter on LSD takes repetitive phrases from *The Crystal World* ("carapace", "coronation armour" [161]). In the epitextual interviews on the publication of *Kindness*,

Ballard both asserts that "The LSD experiences are *The Crystal World*" and that "I took LSD long after the publication of that book. *Crystal* was the product of a completely unaided visionary imagination"⁵³. The latter has long been Ballard's position in interview⁵⁴; *Kindness* demonstrates a process of re-jigging elements into 'mythology'.

Also strange is the absence of any but casual and dismissive references to the writer's milieu, so central to the 'science fiction' enclave. In fact, the one chapter title that repeats another title is not to his own work. 'The Final Programme' details Richard Sutherlands's attempt to film his own death, or rather perpetuate life through electronic media. That this final programme is a cure for cancer is an embedded reference to the first two works of Moorcock's Jerry Cornelius quartet⁵⁵. This is so encrypted that it promotes paranoia in the reader; what other cryptic references are missed?

There is no interdiction on reading these repetitions 'backwards', that these repetitions, cited in 'autobiography', decode the fictional texts. Equally there is no interdiction on reading them 'forwards', as further fictions produced out of the obsessive elements that are repeatedly combined and re-combined in the oeuvre. *Kindness* might be said to be between these two states, pointing in both directions. And yet it is clear

that the decrypting reading cannot do without the encrypting reading. The detachment of the 'autobiography' cannot be too radical; there must be repetitive elements to re-attach, even as that re-attachment threatens their separation. This problem is discussed by Ann Jefferson in her article on the disruptive "autobiographies" of Robbe-Grillet and Barthes⁵⁶. *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* toys with the role of autobiography as 'metatextual commentary' on prior works, but then sets about destroying the authority of the *meta*-. "my texts are disjointed, no one of them caps any other; the latter is just a *further* text, the last of the series, not the ultimate in meaning: *text upon text*, which never illuminates anything"⁵⁷. Jefferson suggests that the metatext is also, at the same time a 'sister-text', too close to decode, only perpetuating the code. *Kindness*, I would suggest, is precisely in this position.

Empire, however, seems far more detached, far more a remarkable 'departure'. It is less obvious, perhaps, that *Empire* continues that obsessive concern of Ballard's work and my reading of it: the permeability and impermeability of boundaries. Strictly speaking, it is a mistake to view *Empire* as a novel about World War II; the time of the war takes place in the blank space between parts I and II. Rather it is about the impossibility of determining a clear boundary between beginnings and ends, ends and re-beginnings. Early in the book, Jim's father's joke

"You might even start the war"[24] haunts Jim after his torch signals appear to produce the first barrage from the Japanese warships [43]. The latter half is full of obsessional conversations attempting to find an end, a closure. As the Japanese guards leave the camp, Jim proclaims "the war *has* ended!", to which the weary response comes: "Ended again, Jim? I don't think we can stand it"[231], and a few pages later: "Sure enough, the war's end proved to be short-lived"[234]. On the forced march, the ending seems more pressing: "The war must end". "It will". "It must end soon". "It has almost ended. Think about your mother and father, Jim. The war has ended" [edited, 225-6]. If this seems definitive, Jim's immediate question opens a further border: "But...when will the next one begin?"[256]. Official endings are meaningless: "The whole of Shanghai and the surrounding countryside was locked into a zone where there was neither war nor peace, a vacuum..."[305]. Leaving Shanghai certain that "World War II had ended", but wondering "had World War III begun?"[332], it is unsurprising that only the final part of *Kindness*, after the 1960s, can be entitled 'After the War'.

Between these blurred beginnings and endings, *Empire* moves from one bounded zone to another. "Walls of strangeness separated everything"[50], strange not least because of the inversions that attend these zones. The charmed life of the ex patriates continues until 1941 because the

International Settlement is a peculiar pocket within the colonial landscape. Once overrun, the zone retracts to the "sealed worlds"[86] of the abandoned houses on Amherst Avenue. Jim is constantly on the wrong side of the border: initially misplaced to a Navy hospital (and within that, to a misplaced ward), he misses the round-up of European and American civilians and finds it impossible to surrender ("Jim had pondered deeply on the question of surrender, which took courage and even a certain amount of guile. How did entire armies manage it?"[110]). 'Safe' as a prisoner, there is the farcical attempt to find a prison camp that will accept him. In Lunghua much of the time is spent strengthening the camp defences in order to keep the Chinese out (the fence, for Jim, is, as ever, permeable -- he is sent out by Basie to determine the terrain beyond the edge). With peace as the threat of starvation, liberation as death, the dead providing life (Jim's mimicry), perhaps the most persistent inversion is praise for the Japanese over the dour and apathetic English, that "the Japanese, officially his enemies, offered his only protection"[60].

Borders stretch and contract, values are inverted, there are zones within zones (Jim's battle for space with the Vincents over the moveable walls of their shared room[172]): this repeats and recalls the infinitely expanding interiors of 'The Enormous Room', 'Report on an Unidentified Space Station', *Concrete Island*, and the

strange border effects Blake encounters at the limits of Shepperton in *The Unlimited Dream Company*.

I suggested three problems with the autobiographical theory delineated above; I have analysed textual framing and the difficulty of extricating the autobiography from the fiction. The third problem returns to the claims of "depth" ascribed to autobiography, Olney's belief that "wholeness and completion" comes through epiphanic moments where opposites are sublated and a unified pattern is the result⁵⁸. In a sense, this has already been considered in terms of the repetition which returns Ballard's "autobiographies" to the level of the code. There is, however, another chain of images that demands attention.

Throughout both *Empire* and *Kindness* is a sense of doubling, of an uncanny re-staging that accompanies every significant event. Theatrical and cinematic analogies pervade both texts. The opening page of *Empire* establishes this immediately:

Jim had begun to dream of wars. At night the same silent films seemed to flicker against the wall of his bedroom in Amherst Avenue, and transformed his sleeping mind into a deserted newsreel theatre. During the winter of 1941 everyone in Shanghai was showing war films. Fragments of his dreams followed Jim around the city...[11]

This has a confusing circularity. No priority can be established between the dream of war (as both passive residua and active fantasy projection: later Jim is

"dreaming of the war and yet dreamed of by the war"[260]), its filmic representation and the reality of the streets. To Jim, "the landscape now exposed in many ways resembled a panorama displayed on a cinema screen"[186], and the prisoners were "like a party of film extras under the studio spotlights"[254] (as the British visiting the battlefields are "like a group of investors visiting the stage-set of an uncompleted war film" in *Kindness*[25]). It is impossible to limit this figure, since it structures both texts.

"A strange doubling of reality had taken place, as if everything that had happened to him since the war was occurring within a mirror" [*Empire*, 103]: this doubling has the weirdest effect. What is felt most intensely is the most mediated, always already a re-staging, a repetition. There is no 'deeper' reality, some apocalyptic vision. *Kindness* ends in a mass of doubling and further multiplication: the filming of *Empire of the Sun* by Steven Spielberg. This is vertiginous, because it lends a sense of pre-programming to this figural chain. Everything is doubled and re-doubled: filmed in Shepperton, his home town, the sense of a re-staged suburbia, surrounded as it is by the sound stages of the film studios, becomes re-re-staged; his neighbours are recruited as the extras they had always been. Discovering a virtual simulacra of his childhood home just outside Shepperton and reflecting that the film team was "working

to construct a more convincing reality than the original I had known as a child"[275], Jim's response is that this is "uncanny". This is itself being filmed, within the film, by a documentary crew. Later, Ballard arrives in a Los Angeles with his own name emblazoned on billboards, television and cinema hoardings (the apotheosis of *Atrocity*). The text ends with the launch of Heyerdahl's papyrus ship on the Pacific. This is not a replica ship, but a fibreglass replica of the original replica, which had sunk in the Atlantic. The doubles, the repetitions multiply in a Baudrillardian spiral. There is a sense of closure undoubtedly, the second book folding the first into itself, but it is a literalisation of figural mediation.

Summarily, then, the double injunction, this is and is not autobiography, problematises the reading that would lead the signature beyond the text to ground it in the referential body of the signatory. The privileging of autobiography must appeal to the textual frame -- of the preface, generic mark and so on. In a term that Derrida introduces in his discussion on Titus-Carmel, these appeals to the frame are to that of the *cartouche*²⁹. Titus-Carmel made 127 drawings of a model coffin; in a written statement, an appended *cartouche*, Titus-Carmel asserts that the drawings follow the model. The model "paradigm" inspires the series, but is also outside it. But what, in the series, prevents a reversal of this

reading, seeing the model as a *result* of the sketches, or inserted somewhere in the series? The repetitions between Ballard's 'fiction' and 'autobiographies' ask the same questions if the latter are presented as 'decoding' the former: such an assertion, it might be said, depends on a *cartouche*. The *cartouche* has the structure of a signature:

If I place the *cartouche* *outside the work*, as the meta- linguistic or metaoperational truth of the work, its untouchable truth falls to ruins: it becomes *external* and I can, considering the inside of the work, displace or reverse the order of the series, calmly *reinsert* the paradigm at any point... If, conversely, I make room for the *cartouche* on the *inside*, or on the inside edge of the frame, it is no longer any more than a general performance, it no longer has a value of truth overbearing. This result is the same, the narrative is reinscribed, along with the paradigm, *in* the series⁶⁰

Hence, far from the wished-for moment of decipherment, *Empire* and *Kindness* as a kind of *cartouche* which would decode the series, the "autobiographies" continue the enigma of the unreadable ciphers that litter the texts. It is time to consider those very idiomatic traits: "Vapour trails left by the American reconnaissance planes dissolved over my head, the debris perhaps of gigantic letters spelling out an apocalyptic message. "What do they say, Jamie?" "[*Kindness*, 42]

II

Something remains, something is "unmistakable"; the trait, "coming along to sign all by itself", is there like "a

name signed in the bottom right-hand corner of a canvas or flashed in capitals across a screen"⁶¹. In *Vermilion Sands* 'Studio 5, The Stars' details a literature generated purely from computer randomisations of a set of permutations: "Fifty years ago a few people wrote poetry, but no one read it. Now no one writes it either". The speaker is "one of those people who believed that literature was in essence both unreadable and unwritable"[169]. The stories of *Vermilion Sands*, with their complex repetitions, appear to be one segment of an otherwise infinite serial chain. 'Studio 5, The Stars' might appear to break the chain, to reinscribe the *mythoi* of inspiration and expressivity (Aurora acting out the legend of Melander and Corydon), but smashing the computers to return to expressive writing is itself a repetition of the myth of Melander, the Muse who demands sacrifice to reinvigorate poetry. This is no less programmed than computers.

To function "a signature must have a repeatable, iterable, imitable form"⁶². Idiom, that metaphor of the signature conventionally understood, is recognised through its repetitive recurrence in and across texts whose signature piece is performed within the frame. Caught in contradiction, the idiom guarantees singularity, but absolute idiom would be unreadable. *Vermilion Sands* will be approached in three ways: its compulsion to repeat, linked to forms of *writing*; its occasion for the most

extreme display of Ballardian figuration; its openness to parody.

Vermilion Sands is a sequence of nine stories linked by setting (an "overlit desert resort as an exotic suburb of my mind" [Preface, 7]) and a repeated plot structure. Introduced as a retrospective narration of events, the narrator, differently named each time, details an entanglement with a desirable, but ultimately murderous *femme fatale*. Internally, each story is also, very precisely, about repetition compulsion; the narrators or other male characters find themselves, too late, inserted into a sequence of murderous events which has already been enacted previously, and will be re-enacted again. They are only one male in a series, objects apparently of female compulsion.

The women are standardly enigmatic, beautiful and quite insane. Their names are chosen for their powerful iconic resonance: Leonora Chanel (invoking Coco Chanel and Leonora Carrington, surrealist painter, mystic, chronicler of her own insanity and Ernst's lover), Emererlda Garland (an obvious reference), Hope Cunard (recalling modernist writer, patron and *rive gauche* iconoclast Nancy Cunard), Raine Channing (is it to look too far to stretch to Dorothea Tanning, another surrealist painter, wife of Tanguy, who committed suicide soon after his death?), Gloria Tremayne (the atmosphere of 'Stellavista', the

final story, clearly makes this a reference to Gloria Swanson's role as the egomaniacal Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*). Nearly all are possessed of a charismatic infamy, resulting from deaths in the past: Leonora Chanel lives in the wake of the "mysterious" death of her husband, "officially described as suicide"[18]; Emerelda Garland is married to Van Stratten, whose mother died "in circumstances of some mystery"[51]; Lorraine Drexel had a brief affair with a pop-singer "later killed in a car crash"[112]; Raine Channing survives after "the death of her confidant and impresario"[132]; Howard Talbot hires the house where Gloria Tremayne was alleged to have shot her husband[194].

The stories concern compulsion, but the question is *whose* compulsions are to be dealt with. In many ways, these narratives are case histories, but ones which have failed to draw the lesson from Freud's conclusion to the incomplete analysis of Dora: "I did not succeed in mastering the transference in good time"⁶³. In Freud's 'Papers on Technique' repetition, in the sense of acting out, re-enaction, is the enemy of the analysis, that process of *remembering* and *working through*. "This struggle between the doctor and patient,...between understanding and seeking to act, is played out exclusively in the phenomena of transference"⁶⁴. Failing to control this transference, the doctor may be inserted "into one of the psychical "series" which the patient has already

formed"⁶⁵. In this fictional realm, Freud's *textual* figure is to be recalled: "What are transferences? They are the new editions or facsimiles of the impulses and phantasies which are made conscious during the process of the analysis"⁶⁶.

In this sense, the narrators' psychoanalytic 'explanations' come too late, cannot control the compulsion, as in 'The Screen Game' or 'Stellavista'. What is peculiar, however, is that whilst the (male) narration is in effect a *remembering* to counter (female) *repetition*, this remembrance is forgotten each time a story closes, and each narrator must begin again, *repeat* the remembering. Whose compulsion, then, is it? The women repeat trauma, but the narrators are also compulsive. The narrators may have different names, but they borrow each other's language. 'The Singing Statues' begins "Again last night, as the dusk air began to move across the desert..."[75]; 'Cry Hope, Cry Fury!' begins "Again last night, as the dusk air moved across the desert..."[91]. Are they not, perhaps, traumatophiles -- actively seeking situations of trauma that they cannot control?

On these 'explanations' -- as ever courting hilarity -- Ballard's later story, 'A Host of Furious Fancies', is worth citing⁶⁷. The deliciously named Dr. Charcot steps in to authoritatively "solve" the Cinderella complex of an

orphaned heiress, by repeating the father's incestuous relationship with her. This jargonistically rationalised account, however, is finally revealed as the fantasy of a decrepid old man, utterly controlled by his daughter. The authority of the 'thetic' is once more undercut, it cannot be separated from the lures of countertransference.

Further, the 'explanations' fail to grasp the extent of repetition. In 'Say Goodbye to the Wind', Samson is enraptured by a somnambulating woman and discovering her name, he recalls the death of Gavin Kaiser. He becomes unwittingly transferred into repeating Kaiser's role, although he escapes death. Samson proposes that: "She had come back to Lagoon West to make a beginning, and instead found that events repeated themselves, trapping her into this grim recapitulation of Kaiser's death"[143]. The reason for Kaiser's paroxysm and death remains unclear: "What he saw, God knows, but it killed him"[142]. There is in fact nothing to suggest Kaiser is not himself repeating a prior death, just as Samson nearly repeats his: the sequence is open to extension. To be strictly psychoanalytic, this must be the case: trauma must presuppose *two* events, the first prepubertal, a sexual event lying unrecognised until a second, postpubertal event, however obliquely or associatively, sparks off and reinscribes the first as sexually traumatic. However, Freud warns that: "We must not expect to meet with a single traumatic memory and a single pathogenic idea as

its nucleus; we must be prepared for successions of partial traumas and concatenations of pathogenic trains of thought"^{ee}. Since this lies beyond the purview of the text and the purblind narrators, the repetition cannot be limited or mastered.

Vermilion Sands has strange science fictional elements. It is populated by plants that sing arias, sonic sculptures, psychotropic houses, photosensitive canvases and bio-fabrics, all of which respond to emotional surrounds. These function as the sites on which trauma is *written*. They become, in effect, externalisations of the psyche, have scored on them the lines of trauma which will be repeated by the next owner. Initially, the women seem to have a calmative effect (there is repetition here: as Jane Cyclacides enters the shop full of discordantly screeching plants, they die down: "They must like you"[35]; when Raine enters the clothes shop full of neurotically oversensitive bio-fabrics, they are soothed: "You've calmed everything down...They must like you"[133]). Denouements, however, tend to revolve around the *betrayal* of their murderous pasts in the evidences left as writing traces on these objects. This version of trauma as writing means that compulsion can continue in the absence of its actors. In 'The Thousand Dreams of Stellavista' this continues beyond death, with Talbot and his wife repeating the violence between Miles Vanden Starr and Gloria Tremayne. The wife frozen out, Talbot enters

into a sole relation, playing Miles to the convulsing, vaginal house. Once the scene of death is recapitulated, however, Talbot stays on: the story (and the text) ends: "I know that I shall have to switch the house on again" [208].

To end on "again" is to disrupt the security of closure; to open with "again" ('The Singing Statues', 'Cry Hope, Cry Fury!') is to undercut by implying prior, inaccessible repetitions. There is a quite deliberate coding and overcoding involved: it is interesting to compare 'Venus Smiles' (a title repeated in or repeated from *Atrocity*) with its original version, 'Mobile', written in 1957⁶⁹. The plot is kept, but 'Mobile' was not set in Vermilion Sands and centred on a male sculptor, Lubitsch. The enigma of the furiously self-generating sculpture is coded into female obsession in its revision, as a perverse memorialisation of her dead lover.

To say that repetition is a mark of recognition of a signature in the text before the text is undersigned is perhaps not to say anything until *what* is repeated is considered. However, textual repetition, abstractly and in itself, effectively *cuts out* the paratextual apparatus. Entering the Ballardian oeuvre is like entering a chain whose seriality severs any visibility of beginning or end. This is repetition understood not as secondary, copying a prior 'original', but as primary and instituting: these

repetitions are "controlled by no centre, origin, or end outside the chain of recurrent elements... Such a sequence is without a source outside the series"⁷⁰. Each text resonates not in itself but in the overdetermined tangle of lines of repetitive elements. This, to emphasize again, is a *textual* event; just as the male narrators of *Vermilion Sands* cannot control or bring to termination the sequence, quite beside explaining what instituted it, the reader can immediately *recognize*, by textual elements, a Ballardian fiction, but can do little to articulate its power or divine its meaning. It *remains*, enigmatic, bizarre.

In the attempt to detach the autobiographies from the oeuvre, some reviewers proposed that they could be stylistically distinguished: *Kindness* is "free of those *bijou* adjectives -- 'cerise', 'vermilion' -- that occasionally marred the prose in the past"⁷¹. *Vermilion Sands* was condemned for excessive "Wildean opulence", and the stylistic fault of the overused simile⁷².

I want to keep for the moment with that naive view of figuration -- of rhetoric as a whole -- as an *addition*, as the detachable ornament to a delimitable 'literal' language. This is evidently the sense behind Galen Strawson's praise for *War Fever* as having "lost the descriptive encrustations that clogged some of his earlier work"⁷³. This accords with the still largely pejorative

sense of rhetoric: writings which are too 'rhetorical' equate with bad writing. "Bijou" is in fact the perfect adjective for *Vermilion Sands*, because the text is indeed studded with 'ornamental' tropes which precisely refer to jewels. Leonora Chanel is persistently referred to as having "jewelled eyes" [16,17,18,19]; Hope Cunard has "opal hair" [100,103] and "opal hair, like antique silver" [93]; in 'Venus Smiles', Carol's eyes flash "like diamonds" and there is Lorraine Drexel's "diamond heel"[114]; Raine Channing has "jewelled hands"[127] and carries "a sonic jewel, like a crystal rose"[134]; Emerelda already names a jewel, and has her army of jewelled insects.

Rhetoric is classically coded as feminine: the "best dress of thought", "clothing" language. The allegorical figure of Rhetoric is presented as "a beautiful woman, her garments...embellished with all the figures, she carries the weapons intended to wound her adversaries"⁷⁴; these figures were also represented as jewels. This allegory combines both the figural and suasive elements of rhetoric, what Derrida terms *style* and *stylus* as dagger or stilleto⁷⁵. If clusters of figures tend to proliferate around the women of *Vermilion Sands* in an attempt to catch their truth, the veil of rhetoric is poisonous: 'Say Goodbye to the Wind', in which Raine presents the bio-fabric suit to Samson in which Kaiser had died, recalls the myth of Deianira, who gives the coat poisoned

by Nessus' blood to Hercules. The 'Muses' of *Vermilion Sands* may give a language that could return the narrators from a literature "both unreadable and unwritable"[169], but that language, as will be seen, is also more than occasionally entirely unreadable.

Rhetoric, of course, has been re-established in literary studies, not least by de Man. It is no longer naively perceived as an addition to a zero degree 'literal' language: the difficulty of dividing figural and literal levels is exactly the question. Much work can be found on metaphor, but there is little on simile. Simile is the most dominant trope employed in the Ballardian text, and it is alarmingly pervasive in *Vermilion Sands*. Almost any page will present numerous examples. Only Colin Greenland has attempted to determine its effect, and his comments are excellent. Greenland discovers a Surrealist strategy smuggled into an apparently simple device of explicit analogy: the forcing of a conjunction in a "like" of terms which are entirely unlike. These 'pseudo-similes' offer a "comparison which mystifies instead of elucidating", "there is no discoverable parity between terms", and Greenland offers a prime example from 'My Dream of Flying to Wake Island': "Laing had not been particularly interested in Melville, this ex-pilot who had turned up here impulsively in his expensive car and was now prowling relentlessly around the solarium as if hunting for a chromium rat"⁷⁶. Greenland lets this example speak for

itself, but it is possible to analyse its combination of, in effect, two devices. If the first is a simile that fails to elucidate a comparison, the comparing term "chromium rat" can only be read as hypallage -- but from where is this epithet transferred? The nearest candidate is the "expensive car", but this is on the other side of the comparison. Effectively, an initially incomprehensible simile can only have a meaning offered by *negating* the simile. This is what Greenland means when the device "keeps the relation but blurs the distinction, so that the two halves of the simile, the actual and the virtual, can be swapped over"⁷⁷.

Such abuse of tropes and tropes of abuse are consistently encountered in *Vermilion Sands*. Indeed, finding oneself in the role of the 'close reader' can tempt madness, for the closer the text is read the more unreadable it gets, the more bemusing it is that any meaning can 'leak' from its dense weave. Take, for example, the description of landscape in the opening pages of 'The Screen Game'. The mesas rise "like the painted cones of a volcano jungle"[47] (*painted?*), the reefs are "like the tortured demons of medieval cathedrals"[47] and towers of obsidian are "like stone gallows"[47]. Following this:

The surrounding peaks and spires shut out the desert plain, and the only sounds were the echoes of the engine growling among the hills and the piercing cry of the sand-rays over the open mouths of the reefs like hieratic birds. [47-8]

The simile, "like hieratic birds", refers back to the cry of the sand-rays, but this "piercing cry" is confused with the "open mouths" of the reefs. The analogical axis is confused by the metonymic contiguity of "cry" to "mouths". And in what sense can birds be "hieratic"? Does this move back over the sentence as a kind of metatextual comment, 'hieratic' in the sense of 'the cursive form of hieroglyphs', declaring its "private" language? The passage through the landscape continues, following the road ("like a petrified snake"[48]) into a 'zone of illusion' where "fragments of light haze hung over the dunes like untethered clouds"[48] (how could a cloud ever be *tethered*?). A few pages later, there is this: "...we barely noticed the strange landscape we were crossing, the great gargoyles of red basalt that uncoiled themselves into the air like the spires of demented cathedrals" [52]. Gargoyles "uncoil" simply because of the euphony of the words, and 'gargoyles like spires' imposes an analogy between the terms where there evidently is none; gargoyles may be a synecdoche for spires, but they cannot be compared. The "strange landscape" is more to do with the strangeness of the tropes used to describe it; de Man is right to suggest that "there seems to be no limit to what tropes can get away with"⁷⁰. Another more readable cluster surrounds Emerelda: her face is "like a marble mask"[60], veined "like a delicate interior lacework"[60], and the hood is "like a protective bower"[60] with her face "like an exotic flower withdrawing into its

foliage"[61]. However, when the narrator suggests that "Talking to her was like walking across a floor composed of blocks of different height"[61], this is meaningless without the immediately following description of the squares of the terrace, once more negating the simile by literalising it. No wonder that Charles Van Stratten "smiled bleakly, as if aware of the slenderness of the analogy"[64]!

These knots in the text can be found throughout *Vermilion Sands*. Is it simply bad writing (is "eyes crossed by disappointment"[93] intentional or just inept??) The issue seems prejudged: in recent discussions simile is posited as the 'low' equivalent of the heights of metaphor. Culler states: "It is not easy to explain why the idea of a conference on metaphor seems perfectly natural, while the idea of a conference on simile seems distinctly bizarre and unlikely"⁷⁹. This bars simile from consideration as a form of metaphor, which is certainly how de Man (whose analysis Culler is partly glossing) sees it in his reading of Proust⁸⁰. Both work by analogy, but cannot be *simply* related: Davidson criticises the view of metaphor as 'elliptical simile', which argues that any metaphor can be 'translated' back into simile, which reveals, through the "like", the terms of comparison⁸¹. Metaphor is more complex than the 'trivial' analogies of simile.

In what follows -- in attempting to say what the Ballardian simile is *like* -- I am aware of Culler's warning: "One can never construct a position outside tropology from which to view it; one's terms are always caught up in the processes they attempt to describe"⁸². Flatness is an apt, metaphorical, term to describe the prose. The landscapes of *Vermilion Sands* are horizontal: wide expanses of sand, infinitely receding horizons. Flatness also has a pejorative sense, and this has been a consistent criticism of the prose style (of *Kindness* it was said the writing was "slow, stately, curiously flat"⁸³). Flatness seems to be induced by the rhetorical devices used. There is, in the multiple taxonomies of rhetoric, a distinction sometimes made between figures and tropes. Figures keep the sense of the words, but work effects by distribution, by syntactical devices (anaphora, parallelism, and so on). Tropes alter the meaning of a word or phrase from its 'proper' meaning. I want to suggest that simile, as an analogical trope, is used here figurally. In Jakobson's opposition, metaphor is *vertical* whilst metonymy is flat, horizontal. When a metaphor is read, the reader has to 'make a leap', to discover the basis of comparison; in simile, the terms are laid out, and the reader is lulled by the connecting "like". The *grammatical* presence of "like" or "as" distributes the terms on either side of it, visibly, in conventionalised form. So pervasive is the simile in *Vermilion Sands* that it becomes hypnotic; the reader is flattened by its

repetition. Lulled by the distributive function of the "like", the *abuse* of its role is all the more jolting.

Simile is not the sole device by which the awkwardness of the text is found. It would be necessary to consider the 'clumsy' clause constructions, the clashing of different registers, from hard science to soft conventionalised "poeticisms", and the repetitive vocabulary. There is also repeated recourse to images associated with writing, which re-fold the text back on itself. Their effect is to double up an obscure similitude which cannot be read, a kind of idiom of idiom. It is in this sense perhaps that de Man's proposal that "any narrative is primarily the allegory of its own reading", and that "the allegory of reading narrates the impossibility of reading" can be understood²⁴

The question of the countersignature has not yet been broached. Derrida proposes that:

the signature becomes effective -- performed and performing -- not at the moment it apparently takes place, but only later, when ears will have managed to receive the message. In some way the signature will take place on the addressee's side...it is the ear of the other that signs²⁵

To read is to countersign; the text's affirmation takes place on the other's side. This structure opens two risks: in the first, "a countersignature comes both to confirm, repeat and respect the signature of the other, of the "original" work; and to *lead it off* somewhere, so

running the risk of *betraying* it"⁶⁶; the second returns to the necessity of the signature having to possess a "repeatable, iterable, imitable form"⁶⁷. I propose that parody is a form of countersignature that imitates the "original" signature such that it problematises the latter's authority. This, then, is the third part of this section.

There is a structural similarity between the desire to monumentalise the name in a text, which is also a loss, and parody which attempts to steal, even ridicule, but also of necessity monumentalises. For science fiction (for Genre?) parody, homage, collective conventions (forms, concepts, plots) remain vital. Of the New Wave writers, Harry Harrison and Philip Jose Farmer could be said to have gained their reputations *as* parodists. With a culture that has parody (and self-parody) at its heart, Ballard's texts did not survive long before entering this circulation. *New Worlds* published James Cawthorn's brief 'Ballard of a Whaler', playing on the frequent *Moby Dick* references and puncturing the familiar elegiac tone⁶⁸. A later *New Worlds* collection also contained Disch's mock interview with G G Allbard, author of *Rash* (who talks so obsessively about his bodily fluids that the interviewer is incapable of posing any questions). Sladek also wrote a brief parody of the catastrophe novels, 'The Sublimation World', which accurately picks up on stylistic tics ("The whole city was a gibbous dune, once a mercury refinery,

now frozen into a single gaseous crystalline chrysalid, depended from what had once been a flaming bloodfruit tree, now gone to iron, ironically"; "He was barely visible, a slash of red among the yellow balloons, like a wound"⁸⁹).

Most intriguing, however, are the series of stories published by *Fantasy and Science Fiction* that were eventually collected under the title *Aventine*⁹⁰. There is no framing reference anywhere to the fact that they are parodies of *Vermilion Sands*. This is a delicious opportunity: parody is monumentalisation, but equally it is a stealing of the signature from the unique signatory. In that latter sense it is a kind of death. The writer of these stories is Lee Killough. Should that be pronounced 'killer' or 'kill-off'? The kindness of women does not extend to her; Ballard tersely refused to read them⁹¹. Pringle attacks them, but his review of the book with *Greenland* is written in the form of parody, a parodying of the parodist, which cannot defend Ballard, only escalate the complexity of the circulation of the text now detached from the signature of Ballard⁹².

Killough's borrowings are extensive. 'The Siren Garden' shifts from the singing plants of Ballard's 'Prima Belladonna' to crystals, which like many of the objects in *Vermilion Sands* are sensitive to extremes of emotion. Lorna Dalridian exploits them to ensnare the narrator into

a murder of her husband. Lorna's eyes, incidentally, move through the range of silver, violet and obsidian. The garden is borrowed from another Ballard text, 'The Crystal Garden'. 'Tropic of Eden', with psychotropic houses, synthesizes elements of 'The Singing Statues' and 'Venus Smiles', whilst the series of portrait-sittings before psychically reactive materials recalls 'Cry Hope, Cry Fury!'. 'A House Divided' uses props from 'Stellavista', as does 'Broken Stairways, Walls of Time'. 'Menage Outre', meanwhile, has a narrator who writes computer-generated novels and becomes ensnared with a mysterious female neighbour, just as in 'Studio 5, The Stars'. 'Menage' begins: "At night the sound of flutes and drums pulsed across the lawns"⁹³; 'Studio 5' opens: "At midnight I heard the music playing from the abandoned nightclub". Verbal echoes are constant, as is the (less obsessive) use of simile and the opening paragraphs which structure the narrative as retrospection. The women tend to have suitably mysterious and tragic pasts (one narrator remembers reading of Cybele's husband's "death in a hovercraft accident"⁹⁴). A compulsive narrative unleashed by *Vermilion Sands* cannot be contained between its covers; distorted, perhaps, but with the same compulsion, it arises elsewhere. This is the inevitable risk of the signature: to repeat it means it must be imitable and therefore open to forgery, use by imposters.

That there is no acknowledgement of 'borrowing', no

obvious sign of homage, raises the interesting question of "plagiarism" (is it significant that Cas refuses to sign his sculpture, or that the objectionable Jason Ward loses his sister by going on a book-signing tour: a book which is computer-generated and thus not, in a loose sense, his?)⁹⁵. As I have argued in Chapter 6, however, science fiction as generic cannot operate a strict concept of ownership in its shared space. Derrida, further, suggests that ownership cannot be applied to any signature-act; it is at once a holding-to and a letting-go.

McGucken suggests that science fiction's 'subcultural convivialities' and 'collaborations' make it "the most interesting site for a post-individualist writing practice"; the cutting edge of postmodernist aesthetic practice. This point is made in a critique of Brigg's separation of Ballard from dominant modes of science fiction writing. This elevation can only (re)invoke "that most conservative and "literary" modernist and romantic cliché, the isolated and creative artist"⁹⁶. This strategy of legitimation is one that I have consistently criticised; parody only further intertwines Ballard's texts into the *context* of science fiction.

However, if by concentrating on Ballard I have inevitably monumentalised his name, I hope to have displayed, both

through the bewildering intertextual resonances of his work and the problem of authorising his signature, that monumentalisation also disperses the name through the networks of general textuality. McGucken's opposition is one that, through the readings of "postmodern thought", is rendered problematic. Ballard remains, enigmatically, between two walls.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) David Pringle, *Earth is the Alien Planet*, Milford Series No. 26, Borgo Press, 1979, p.15-6
- 2) Harlan Ellison, *Dangerous Visions*, combined edition, Victor Gollancz, 1987, p.458
- 3) Harlan Ellison, *Dangerous Visions*, p.459
- 4) Derrida, 'Living On: Borderlines', in *Deconstruction and Criticism* ed. Harold Bloom, et. al., Yale, 1979, p.102
- 5) Derrida, *Signsponge*, extracted in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge, Routledge 1992, p.362-3
- 6) References (included in text) are from the following editions: *Empire of the Sun*, Panther Books 1985; *The Kindness of Women*, HarperCollins 1991; *Vermilion Sands*, J M Dent, 1985 (collection originally issued in 1971)
- 7) Derrida, 'Signature, Event, Context', *Limited Inc.*, Northwestern UP, 1988, p.20
- 8) Derrida, *Glas*, Nebraska UP, p.4 (right hand column), quoted by Peggy Kamuf, *Signature Pieces*, p.13
- 9) Derrida, '"This Strange Institution Called Literature": An Interview with Jacques Derrida', *Acts of Literature*, p.68
- 10) Derrida, 'No Apocalypse, Not Now', *Diacritics* Summer 1984, p.26
- 11) Peggy Kamuf, *Signature Pieces: On the Institution of Authorship*, Cornell UP, 1988, p. 13

- 12) Kamuf, *Signature Pieces*, p. 65-6
- 13) this is a recurrent theme in Derrida's work: see for example the opening pages of 'Otobiographies', *The Ear of the Other* Nebraska University Press, 1988
- 14) Derrida, 'Cartouches', *The Truth in Painting*, Chicago UP, 1988, p.193
- 15) Such examples are impossible to extract from the general arguments of the texts in question: see *Acts of Literature*, p.356 and 366ff. for Ponge; *The Truth in Painting*, p.235ff. for Titus-Carmel
- 16) Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p.363
- 17) Colin Greenland, *The Entropy Exhibition*, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1983, p.92
- 18) quotes from *Vermilion Sands* ps. 91, 100, 196 and 'The Terminal Beach' (in eponymous collection) p.150
- 19) This phrase is taken from *Concrete Island* (Panther Books edition 1985) p.112, which allows me to mention David Punter's suggestive analysis of the Island as a palimpsest- like scene of writing in his 'Alone Among the Murder Machines', *The Hidden Script* RKP 1985, p. 16-7
- 20) Derrida, 'Signsponge' extract, *Acts of Literature*, p.363
- 21) Martin Amis, 1973 *Observer* review of *Crash*, quoted by Pringle in his *Primary and Secondary Bibliography*
- 22) Martin Amis, 1987 *Observer* review of *The Day of Creation* (undated cutting); see also Martin Amis, 'Author's Note', *Einstein's Monsters*, Penguin 1988,

- p.ix, which admits Ballard's influence on his work.
- 23) the quotes are from: WL Webb, 'An Educated Eye for Atrocity', *The Guardian* 29/11/84; Charles Shaar Murray, *Literary Review* September 1991; David Blow, Waterstone's New Books Catalogue, Winter 1991; Peter Kemp, *The Times Literary Supplement* 20/9/91; Lynn Barber, interview, *Independent on Sunday* 15/9/91
- 24) Peter Brigg, *J G Ballard*, Starmont Reader's Guide, Starmont House, 1985, p.106. 25) the first and last quotes from James Olney, *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography*, Princeton UP, 1972, p.4 and p.3; the second from Gusdorf, 'Conditions and Limits of Autobiography' in Olney (ed.), *Autobiography*, Princeton UP 1980, p.46
- 26) Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, Minnesota UP, 1989, p.12
- 27) on a robust dismissal of over-dependence on autobiographical readings see Rosalind Krauss, 'In the Name of Picasso', *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths*, MIT Press, 1985
- 28) also the point of departure for much of the feminist work on autobiography. See Shari Benstock (ed.) *The Private Self: theory and practice of women's autobiographical writing*, Routledge 1988, especially essays by Benstock, Susan Stanford Friedman and Jane Marcus; Mary Mason, 'The Other Voice' in Olney (ed.) *Autobiography*; Nancy K. Miller, *Getting Personal:*

feminist occasions and other autobiographical acts, Routledge, 1991. Mason's thesis that "the self-discovery of female identity seems to acknowledge the real presence and recognition of another consciousness, and the disclosure of female self is linked to the identification of some 'other'" (p.210) is frequently taken as the position against Gusdorf. The *generality* of this position has been questioned by Jeanne Costello, 'Taking the "Woman" out of Women's Autobiography: the perils and potentials of theorising female subjectivities', *Diacritics* 21:2-3, 1991.

- 29) Gusdorf, 'Conditions and Limits', p.35
- 30) Gusdorf, 'Conditions and Limits', p.33
- 31) Olney, *Metaphors of Self*, p.3
- 32) see Olney, 'Some Versions of Memory/Some Versions of *bios*: the Ontology of Autobiography', *Autobiography*
- 33) see Lejeune, 'The Autobiographical Fact', *On Autobiography*
- 34) see Darrel Mansell, 'Unsettling the Colonel's Hash: "Fact" in Autobiography', in *The American Autobiography*, Albert E. Stone (ed.), Prentice-Hall 1981
- 35) Ballard to Barber, *Independent on Sunday*, 15/9/91, see Robert Towers' long review of *Kindness*, which argues that "Ballard's wavering between fact and fiction has ultimately a trivialising effect", *New York Review of Books* 24/10/91, p.38

- 36) Ballard to Pickering, *The Sunday Times*, 22/9/91
- 37) Stone, introduction to *The American Autobiography*, p.6. c.f. Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, p.29: "[the] fringe of the printed text...controls the entire reading (author's name, title, name of collection, name of the publisher, even including the ambiguous game of prefaces)".
- 38) Genette, 'Introduction to the Paratext', *New Literary History* 22:2 Spring 1992
- 39) Genette, 'Paratext', p.261, 267
- 40) Genette, 'Paratext', p.262
- 41) Marie MacLean, 'Pretexts and Paratexts: The Art of the Peripheral', *New Literary History* 22:2
- 42) John Sutherland, 'Fiction and the Erotic Cover', *Critical Quarterly*, 33:2, 1991, p.4
- 43) Charles Shaar Murray, *Literary Review*, September 1991
- 44) Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, p.19
- 45) Joseph Loesberg, 'Autobiography as Genre, Act of Consciousness, Text', *Prose Studies*, 4:2 Sept. 1981, p.169
- 46) Barrett J Mandel, 'Full of Life Now', in Olney (ed.) *Autobiography*, p.50
- 47) Mandel, 'Full of Life Now', p.53
- 48) Loesberg, 'Autobiography as Genre', p.172
- 49) see Angela Carter's review of *Empire*, where she quotes Ballard as stating: "I don't just mean to bring them to mind, but to flesh them out, to *remythologise* them", *Expletives Deleted*,

- Chatto+Windus, 1992, p.48
- 50) Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, p.12
- 51) Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, translated Nicholas Rand, Minnesota UP, 1986
- 52) The phrase is Galen Strawson's, *Independent on Sunday* 29/9/91
- 53) Ballard to Paul Pickering, *The Sunday Times* 22/9/91 and to Ian Thomson, *The Independent*, 21/9/91
- 54) see, for example, interview with *Re/Search* magazine, 'Ballard' special issue, ed. Juno and Vale, 1984, p.24
- 55) Michael Moorcock, *The Final Programme*, first published in book form 1968, and dedicated "To Jimmy Ballard, Bill Burroughs and The Beatles, who are pointing the way through" (in Avon edition, 1968) and *A Cure For Cancer*, first published in book form in 1971
- 56) Ann Jefferson, 'Autobiography as Intertext: Barthes, Saurate, Robbe-Grillet' in *Intertextuality: theories and practices* ed. Judith Still and Michael Worton, Manchester UP, 1990
- 57) *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, Macmillan 1977, p.120
- 58) Olney, *Metaphors of Self*, p.25
- 59) Derrida, 'Cartouches', *The Truth in Painting*
- 60) 'Cartouches', p.220
- 61) Derrida, 'Cartouches', p.193; Greenland, *The Entropy*

Exhibition, p.92

- 62) Derrida, 'Signature, Event, Context', p.20
- 63) Freud, *Pelican Freud Library* Volume 8, p.160
- 64) Freud, 'The Dynamics of Transference', *Standard Edition*, Volume 12, p.108
- 65) Freud, *Pelican Freud Library* Volume 8, p.157
- 66) Freud, 'The Dynamics of Transference', p.100
- 67) collected in *Myths of the Near Future*, Panther Books 1982
- 68) Freud, 'The Psychotherapy of Hysteria', *Pelican Freud Library*, Volume 3, p.373
- 69) originally published in *Science Fantasy* 8:23, 1957
- 70) Hillis J Miller, *Fiction and Repetition*, Basil Blackwell, 1982, p.142; on two types of repetition, the 'naked' and the 'clothed' see Steven Connor's *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text*, Blackwell 1988, especially the first chapter which glosses Deleuze's *Difference et Repetition*
- 71) Ian Thomson, *The Independent* 21/9/91
- 72) Anon, *Times Literary Supplement*, 30/11/73
- 73) Galen Strawson, *Independent on Sunday*, 11/11/90
- 74) noted by Barthes in 'The Old Rhetoric: An Aide-Memoire', *The Rustle of Language*, Blackwell, 1988, p.32
- 75) Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Style*, University of Chicago, 1979
- 76) Greenland, *The Entropy Exhibition*, p.103
- 77) Greenland, p.103

- 78) Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, Yale UP, 1979, p.62
- 79) Jonathan Culler, 'The Turns of Metaphor', *The Pursuit of Signs* p.168
- 80) see Chapter 3 'Reading (Proust)', *Allegories of Reading*, which although sidelining a simile in the Proust passage analysed is clearly reading it as part of the assertion of metaphor.
- 81) Donald Davidson, 'What Metaphors Mean', *Critical Inquiry*, 5:1, 1978
- 82) Culler, 'The Turns of Metaphor', p.209
- 83) Galen Strawson, *Independent on Sunday* 29/9/91, Margaret Foster, *Evening Standard* 19/9/91 (a review, incidentally, which seems most concerned with the amount of "deviant sex" in *Kindness*)
- 84) Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, p.76,77
- 85) Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, p.50-1
- 86) Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p.63
- 87) Derrida, 'Signature Event Context', p.20
- 88) in *New Worlds* 50, 120
- 89) Disch, *New Worlds* 10, ed. Hilary Bailey, Corgi Books, 1976 and Sladek, 'The Sublimation World', *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, July 1968, p.105
- 90) 'The Siren Garden', *Fantasy and Science Fiction* March 1974
 'Tropic of Eden', *F + SF*, Aug 1977
 'A House Divided', *F + SF*, June 1978
 'Broken Stairways, Walls of Time', *F + SF* March 1979

'Menage Outre', *F + SF*, Feb 1981

- 91) Ballard to Pringle, *Primary and Secondary Bibliography*, p.20
- 92) Colin Greenland and David Pringle review, *Foundation* 25
- 93) 'Menage Outre', p.5
- 94) 'Broken Stairways', p.11
- 95) 'Tropic of Eden', p.152; 'Menage Outre', p.14
- 96) Dennis McGucken, 'J G Ballard's "Terminal Irony"', *Science Fiction Studies* 17, 1990, p.280

CONCLUSION

Ballard proposed that *Crash* was written with a "terminal irony, where not even the writer knows where he stands"¹. In *Fatal Strategies*² Baudrillard speaks of the "ironic derision"[93] of the object, its infinite reserves of caprice in evading the mastery of the analyst's systems of knowledge. The revenge of the object takes numerous, intertwined forms: it can be implacable, impenetrable, a 'black hole' which exhausts any potential theoretical grasp; more cunningly, the object can simply reflect back anything the subject projects onto it. The object "bends willingly, like nature, to any law we impose upon it; and disobeys all legislation"[182]. To conform to what the subject's gaze wants to see can escape its power forever.

It is not possible, of course, to judge the status of Baudrillard's proposal; this thesis of ironic derision is written with a derisive irony about the powers of the 'thetic'. Nevertheless, it is tempting, even seductive, to suggest that Ballard's "terminal irony" equates to the 'evil genius' of the object. The texts are both resistant and pliant; both 'unreadable' cipher-scripts and densely over-suggestive sign-systems. The oeuvre teases with glimpses of a *project*, a system, with internal repetitions of plot, character, figure and thesis. Critics develop the conviction of having discovered the secret essence, the "modulus", that would de-code the enigma. However, these

multiple and contradictory commentaries are provided for, are initiated, by the peculiar register of the half-proffered, half-self-ironising theses of the texts themselves. The oeuvre retracts behind the super-abundance of its own propositions.

'Objectal irony' accords with Baudrillard's abandonment of the "banality" of the theoretical. If taken seriously, this would seem to bear out Jameson's caricature of "postmodernism theory" as arguing the "impossibility of all thinking"³. Reading Ballard via Baudrillard would constitute a 'non-reading', a narrative of seduction and surrender. What I have characterised as "postmodern thought", however, whilst interrogating Theory, does not surrender thought but *intensifies* it. I have attempted to determine this thought less as a tabulating and determining theory than as a mode of reflective and *agitated* judgement, a "state of difficulty"⁴ that disturbs and disrupts. Against the taxonomy of names in definitional postmodernism, "postmodern thought" testifies and honours the singularity of the name.

The name of J G Ballard troubles, irritates, and frustrates. The myriad explanatory frames that have been followed here adjust to each text but can never quite control that excess, that *something* which remains. I have emphasized that this is not some 'pseudo-transgression', a vector that simply moves *beyond* the line. It is not

possible to narrate trajectories of Ballard's 'departures' -- from traditional to experimental science fiction, from science fiction to the 'mainstream', from 'popular' to 'serious', from fiction to autobiography. What returns again and again is the border and the crossing and re-crossing of the border. If there is a lesson, it is not that borders are final, ruptural (between modernism and postmodernism) or erased (*within* postmodernism), but that their logic, their determinations must be thought every time with regard to the singularity of the name. What hinges on Ballard is the registration of the necessity of thinking borders in their numerous operations; what Ballard *hinges* is the law of genre: the imbrication of purity and impurity.

I suggested in Part One that postmodernism and "postmodern thought" could be figured in the relation of administered city space to the itinerary. 'Concentration City' may detail the frustrated attempts of the protagonist to find the limits of an apparently enclosed and borderless city, but the interesting text here is 'The Lost Leonardo'². Narrated by an art dealer, it concerns the "impossible" theft of Leonardo's *Crucifixion* from the Louvre. The narrator is presented with perplexing evidence that a sequence of crucifixion paintings have been stolen and returned with one figure re-touched: that of Ahasuerus. The Wandering Jew, condemned to roam the earth until Christ's second coming, apparently serves out his exile as

a patron to the arts, sitting for crucifixion scenes, later re-touching his fabled contempt with piteous compassion. The ultimate itinerant is finally glimpsed, suitably enough, in the environs of Dali's circle at Cadaques. He escapes capture.

The exiled itinerant enters canonical art history through illegal means, re-touches in ways that appear indiscernible to the uneducated eye. The line between assaulting the paintings or re-invigorating them is confused; the real, the fake, the re-touched intermix. Once again, as with so many Ballard texts, this can be read as an allegory of its own *itinerant* writing.

Chtcheglov, in one of the first Situationist texts, proclaimed: "We are bored with the city...We move within a *closed* landscape". The deadly fixity of administered places can, nevertheless, be opened up, disrupted: place can be once more set in motion. He continues: "Certain *shifting* angles, certain *receding* perspectives, allow us to glimpse original conceptions of space, but this vision remains fragmentary"⁶. It is not the originary that is of value here, but the notion of the shifting *angle*. The hinge, *la brisure*, the continuities and discontinuities of difference and articulation, are what have consistently concerned me throughout this dissertation. Ballard's enigmatic question, "Does the angle between two walls have a happy ending?", has become complexly overdetermined. If

the "vision remains fragmentary", this is partly due to this very overdetermination, and partly with having to follow the unmapped itinerary of Ballard's scene of writing. "Postmodern thought" demands a difficult and continual attention to singularity, to the name. I hope this work on Ballard has exemplified the dangers of a too easy definitional postmodernism, and illustrated the *responsibility* of "postmodern thought".

FOOTNOTES

- 1) J G Ballard, letter, *Foundation* 10, 1975, p.51
- 2) Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies* 1983, Semiotext(e) 1987. References in text.
- 3) Jameson, *Postmodernism*, Verso 1991, p.218
- 4) quote from Robert Young 'The Politics of 'The Politics of Literary Theory'', *Oxford Literary Review* 10, 1988, p.146
- 5) 'The Lost Leonardo', in *The Terminal Beach*, Gollancz 1964
- 6) Ivan Chtcheglov, 'Formulary for a new Urbanism', *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. Ben Knabb, Bureau of Public Secrets, p.1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1) PRIMARY TEXTS

A: BALLARD'S FICTION

- The Wind From Nowhere* 1962 (London: Penguin, 1967)
- The Voices of Time* 1962 (originally published as *The Four Dimensional Nightmare*; re-titled 1984, London: Dent, Everyman Fiction 1984)
- The Drowned World* 1962 (London: Penguin 1965)
- The Terminal Beach* (London: Gollancz 1964)
- The Drought* 1965 (London: Triad/Panther 1978)
- The Crystal World* 1966 (London: Triad/Panther 1978)
- The Day of Forever* (London: Panther 1967)
- The Disaster Area* 1967 (London: Triad/Panther 1979)
- The Venus Hunters* 1967 (originally published as *The Overloaded Man*; re-titled London: Granada 1980)
- The Atrocity Exhibition* 1970 (London: Triad/Panther 1979)
- Vermilion Sands* 1971 (London: Dent, Everyman Fiction 1985)
- Crash* 1973 (London: Panther 1975)
- Concrete Island* 1974 (London: Triad/Panther 1985)
- High-Rise* 1975 (London: Triad/Panther 1977)
- Low-Flying Aircraft* 1976 (London: Triad/Panther 1978)
- The Unlimited Dream Company* 1979 (London: Triad/Panther 1981)
- Hello America* 1981 (London: Triad/Granada 1983)
- Myths of the Near Future* 1982 (London: Triad/Panther 1984)

Empire of the Sun 1984 (London:Panther 1985)

The Day of Creation 1987 (London:Grafton 1988)

Running Wild (London:Hutchison 1988)

War Fever (London:HarperCollins 1990)

The Atrocity Exhibition (with added commentary notes, and appendix of extra stories, San Francisco:Re/Search Publications, 1990)

The Kindness of Women (London:HarperCollins 1991)

B: KEY NON-FICTION

'Which Way to Inner Space?', *New Worlds* 40, 118, 1962

'Myth-Maker of the 20th Century', *New Worlds* 48, 142, 1964

'The Coming of the Unconscious', *New Worlds* 50, 164, 1966

'Notes From Nowhere: Comments on a work in progress', *New Worlds* 50, 167, 1966

'Salvador Dali: The Innocent as Paranoid', *New Worlds* 187, 1969

(the complete listing of Ballard's non-fiction, up to 1982, is in David Pringle's *J G Ballard: A Primary and Secondary Bibliography*)

2) SECONDARY TEXTS

note: where possible, French texts are ordered by initial French publication date.

- Abraham, Nicholas and Torok, Maria *The Wolf-Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, translated Nicholas Rand, Minneapolis:Minnesota UP, 1986
- Ades, Dawn *Dali*, London:Thames and Hudson, 1982
- Adorno, Theodor *Prisms*, London:Neville Spearman, 1967
- *Aesthetic Theory*, London:Routledge Kegan Paul, 1984
- *The Culture Industry*, ed Bernstein, London:Routledge, 1991
- Ahmad, Aijaz 'Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the National Allegory' *Social Text* 17, 1987
- Aldiss, Brian *Billion Year Spree*, London:Weidenfeld, 1973
- Alexandrian, Sarane *Surrealist Art* (1969), translated Gordon Clough, London:Thames and Hudson, 1970
- Amis, Kingsley *New Maps of Hell*, London:Gollancz, 1961
- Barthes, Roland 'The Old Rhetoric: An Aide-Memoire' (1970), *The Semiotic Challenge*, translated Richard Howard,

- Oxford:Blackwell, 1988
- *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973)
translated Richard Miller, NY:Hill and Wang,1975
- *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*
(1975), translated Richard Howard,
London:Macmillan,1977
- *Selected Writings*, ed. Susan Sontag,
London:Fontana, 1983
- Bataille, Georges *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings*
1927-39, ed. Alan Stoekl, Manchester:
Manchester UP, 1985
- Baudrillard, Jean 'Ballard's *Crash*' (1976), *Science*
Fiction Studies 18:3, 1991
- *In The Shadow of the Silent Majorities*
(1978), NY:Semiotext(e),1983
- *Simulations* (1981), NY:Semiotext(e),
1983
- 'Simulacra and Science Fiction' (1981),
Science Fiction Studies 18:3, 1991
- *Fatal Strategies* (1983), NY:
Semiotext(e), 1990
- *America* (1986), London:Verso,1988
- *The Ecstasy of Communication* (1987),
NY:Semiotext(e),1987
- 'The Year 2000 Has Already Happened',
Body Invaders: Sexuality and the
Postmodern Condition, ed. A. and M.

- Kroker, London:Macmillan,1988
- *Selected Writings*, edited Mark Poster,
Oxford:Polity Press,1988
- Bauman, Zygmunt *Intimations of Postmodernity*,
London:Routledge,1992
- Beardsworth, 'On the Critical 'Post': Lyotard's
Richard Agitated Judgment', *Judging Lyotard* ed.
Andrew Benjamin,1992
- Beauregard, R A 'Between modernity and postmodernity',
*Environment and Planning D: Society and
Space* 7:4,1989
- de Beauvoir, Simone 'Must We Burn de Sade?' (1951), as
introduction to Arena edition of de
Sade's *One Hundred and Twenty Days of
Sodom*, 1989
- Benison, Jonathan 'In Default of a Poet in Space: J G
Ballard and the Current State of
Nihilism', *Just the Other Day*, ed. Luk
Van Der Vos, Antwerp, 1985
- Benjamin, Andrew (ed) *The Lyotard Reader*, Oxford:
Blackwell, 1989
- (ed) *Judging Lyotard*, London:Routledge,
1992
- Benjamin, Walter *Charles Baudelaire*, translated
Harry Zohn, London: Verso, 1989
Illuminations, translated Harry
Zohn, NY:Harcourt, 1968
- Bennington, Geoffrey 'Not Yet', *Diacritics* 12, 1982

- *Lyotard: Writing the Event*,
Manchester:Manchester UP, 1988
- 'Deconstruction and the Philosophers
(The Very Idea)', *Oxford Literary
Review* 10, 1988
- 'Postal Politics and the Institution
of the Nation', *Nation and Narration*
ed. Homi Bhabha,1990
- (ed) *ICA Documents 4-5: Postmodernism*,
London:ICA, 1986
- (ed) *Poststructuralism and the Question
of History*, Cambridge:Cambridge UP,
1987
- Berman, Marshall *All That is Solid Melts into Air*
London:Verso,1982
- Bhabha, Homi 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence
of Colonial Discourse', *October: The
First Decade*, Cambridge, Mass. MIT
Press, 1987
- (ed) *Nation and Narration*, London:
Routledge,1990
- Blanchot, Maurice *The Writing of the Disaster*,
translated Ann Smock, University of
Nebraska Press, 1986
- Blish, James *More Issues at Hand*, Chicago:
Advent,1970
- Bogdanor and Skidelsky (eds) *The Age of Affluence*,
London:Macmillan,1970

- Bosmai, jin, Hamida 'Conventions of Image and Form in nuclear war narratives for young readers', *Papers on Language and Literature* 26:1, 1990
- Boyer, Paul *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*, NY:Pantheon, 1985
- Boyne, Roy and Rattansi, Ali (eds) *Postmodernism and Society*, London: Macmillan, 1990
- Bretnor, Reginald (ed) *Modern Science Fiction: Its meaning and its Future*, Advent 1953, re-issued 1979
- Breton, Andre *What is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, ed. Franklin Rosemont, London: Pluto, 1978
- Brians, Paul *Nuclear Holocausts: Atomic War in Fiction 1895-1984*, Kent, Ohio: Kent State UP, 1987
- 'Nuclear War Fiction for Young Readers', *Science Fiction, Social Conflict and War*, ed. Philip Davies, 1990
- Brigg, Peter *J G Ballard*, Starmont Reader's Guide, no. 26, WA, USA: Starmont House, 1985
- Brooks, Peter 'Freud's Masterplots', *Yale French*

- Studies 55-6, 1977
- 'The Body in the Field of Vision',
Paragraph 14:1, 1991
- Bruno, Guilianiana 'Ramble City', *October* 41, Summer 1987
- Buchloh, Benjamin H D 'Allegorical Procedures:
Appropriation and Montage in
Contemporary Art', *Artforum* Sept. 1982
- 'Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art,
1956-66', *Andy Warhol* ed. McShine, 1989
- Buck-Morss, Susan *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter
Benjamin and the Arcades Project*,
Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1990
- Bukatman, Scott 'There's Always Tomorrowland: Disney
and the Hypercinematic Experience',
October 57, 1991
- Burger, Peter *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*,
Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984
- Callinicos, Alex *Against Postmodernism*, Cambridge:
Polity, 1989
- Camus, Albert *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), London:
Penguin, 1975
- Cargill, Howard 'Architectural Postmodernism: The
Retreat of the Avant-Garde?',
Postmodernism and Society, ed. Boyne
and Rattansi, 1990
- Carroll, David *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard,
Derrida*, London: Methuen, 1987
- (ed) *The States of "Theory"*, NY: Columbia

- UP, 1990
- Carter, Dale *The Final Frontier: The Rise and Fall of the American Rocket State*, London: Verso, 1988
- Carter, Paul *Another Part of the Fifties*, NY: Columbia UP, 1983
- de Certeau, Michel *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated Stephen Ronnell, London: California UP, 1984
- *The Writing of History* (1975), translated Tom Conley, NY: Columbia UP, 1988
- Chadwick, Whitney *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1985
- Chambers, Iain 'Maps for the Metropolis', *Cultural Studies* 1:1, 1987
- *Border Dialogues*, London: Routledge, 1990
- Ching-Liang Low, Gail 'His Stories? Narratives and Images of Imperialism', *New Formations* 12, Winter 1990
- Christie, John R R 'Science Fiction and the Postmodern: The Recent Work of William Gibson and John Crowley', *Fictional Space* ed. Shippey, 1991
- Clareson, Thomas (ed) *SF: The Other Side of Realism*, Ohio: Bowling Green UP, 1971

- Collier, Peter and Geyer-Ryan, Helga (eds)
Literary Theory Today, Oxford:Polity,
 1990
- Collins, Jim *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and
 Postmodernism*, London:Routledge,1989
- Connor, Steven *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and
 Text* Oxford:Basil Blackwell, 1988
- *Postmodernist Culture*, Oxford: Basil
 Blackwell, 1989
- *Theory and Cultural Value*, Oxford:Basil
 Blackwell, 1992
- Cooper, David E. *Existentialism: A Reconstruction*,
 Oxford:Blackwell, 1990
- Corcoran, Paul 'Godot is waiting too: Endings in
 thought and history', *Theory and
 Society* 18, 1989
- Cubitt, Sean 'Video Art and Colonialism', *Screen*
 40:4, 1989
- Culler, Jonathan *The Pursuit of Signs*, London:Routledge,
 Kegan and Paul, 1981
- 'Criticism and Institutions: The
 American University', *Poststructuralism
 and the Question of History*, ed.
 Bennington,1987
- Davidson, Donald 'What Metaphors Mean', *Critical Inquiry*
 5:1, 1978
- Davies, Philip(ed) *Science Fiction, Social Conflict and
 War*, Manchester:Manchester UP, 1990

- Davis, Mike 'Urban Renewal and the Spirit of
Postmodernism', *New Left Review* 151,
1985
- Derrida, Jacques *Of Grammatology* (1967), translated
Gayatri Spivak, London: John Hopkins
UP, 1974
- *Writing and Difference* (1967),
translated Alan Bass, London: Routledge
Kegan and Paul, 1978
- *Dissemination* (1972), translated Barbara
Johnson, London: Chicago UP, 1981
- *Margins of Philosophy* (1972), translated
Alan Bass, Brighton: Harvester, 1982
- *Positions* (1972), translated Alan Bass,
London: Chicago UP, 1981
- *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* (1976),
translated Barbara Harlow, London:
Chicago UP, 1979
- *The Truth in Painting* (1978), translated
Bennington and MacLeod, London: Chicago
UP, 1987
- 'Living On: Borderlines', *Deconstruction
and Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom et al.,
New Haven: Yale UP, 1979
- 'The Law of Genre' (1979), translated
Avital Ronell, *Glyph* 7, 1980
- *The Post-Card* (1980), translated Alan
Bass, London: Chicago UP, 1987

- 'Of An Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted
in Philosophy (1981), translated John P.
Leavey, *Oxford Literary Review* 6:2, 1984
- *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography,
Transference, Translation* (1982),
translated Kamuf and Ronell, ed.
Christie V. MacDonald, London:Nebraska
UP, 1985
- 'Before the Law' (1984), translated
Avital Ronell and Christine Roulson,
Acts of Literature, ed. Derek Attridge,
London: Routledge, 1992
- 'No Apocalypse, Not Now (full speed
ahead, seven missiles, seven missives)',
translated Catherine Porter and Philip
Lewis, *Diacritics* 14, 1984
- *Limited Inc.*, translated Samuel Weber
and Geoffrey Mehlman, Evanston,
IL:Northwestern UP, 1988
- '"This Strange Institution Called
Literature"' (1989) interview with Derek
Attridge, translated Bennington and
Bowlby, *Acts of Literature* ed. Attridge,
London:Routledge,1992
- 'Some Statements and Truisms about
Neologisms, Newisms, Postisms,
Parasitisms, and other small Seismisms',
The States of "Theory" ed. David

- Carroll, 1990
- Doane, Mary Ann 'Information, Crisis, Catastrophe', *The Logics of Television* ed. Patricia Mellencamp, 1990
- Docherty, Thomas *After Theory: Postmodernism/Postmarxism*, London: Routledge, 1990
- Dowling, David *Fictions of Nuclear Disaster*, London: Macmillan, 1987
- During, Simon 'Postmodernism or post-colonialism today', *Textual Practice* 1:1, 1987
- de Duve, Thierry 'Andy Warhol, or the Machine Perfected', *October* 48, 1989
- Eagleton, Terry 'Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism', *New Left Review* 152, 1984
- Ebert, Theresa 'The Convergence of Postmodern Innovative Fiction and Science Fiction', *Poetics Today* 1:4, 1980
- Ellul, Jacques *The Technological Society* (1954), trans John Wilkinson, London: Cape, 1965
- Ferguson, Frances 'Sade and the Pornographic Legacy', *Representations* 36, 1991
- Fiedler, Leslie *The Collected Essays Vol. II*, NY: Stein and Day, 1971
- Finkelstein, Haim '"Deserts of Vast Eternity": J G Ballard and Robert Smithson', *Foundation* 37, 1987
- Fokkema, Douwe *Literary History, Modernism and*

- Postmodernism*, Antwerp: John Benjamins, 1984
- Foster, Hal 'Postmodernism: A Preface', *Postmodern Culture* ed. Hal Foster, London: Pluto, 1985
- 'Armor Fou', *October* 56, 1991
- Frampton, Kenneth 'Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance', *Postmodern Culture* ed. Hal Foster, 1985
- Freud, Sigmund 'The Psychotherapy of Hysteria' (1895), Pelican Freud Library Vol. 3 (*Studies in Hysteria*)
- 'Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria ('Dora')' (1905), Pelican Freud Library Vol. 8
- 'The Dynamics of Transference' (1912), Standard Edition Vol. 12
- 'Remembering, Repeating and Working Through' (1914) Standard Edition Vol. 12
- 'Observations on Transference-Love', Standard Edition Vol. 12
- 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (1920), Pelican Freud Library Vol. 11 (*Metapsychology*)
- Frisby, David *Sociological Impressionism: A Reassessment of Georg Simmel's Social Theory*, London: Heinemann, 1981

- Genette, Gerard 'Introduction to the Paratext',
translated Marie Maclean, *New Literary History* 22:2, 1991
- Glover, Edward *Freud or Jung*, London:Allen and Unwin,
1950
- Greenberg, Clement *Art and Culture*, Boston, Mass:
Beacon Press, 1961
- Greenland, Colin *The Entropy Exhibition: Michael Moorcock and British 'New Wave' in Science Fiction*, London:Routledge, 1983
- Gross, David 'Marxism and Resistance: Fredric Jameson and the Moment of Postmodernism', *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 12:3, 1988
- Grossberg, Lawrence 'The In-Difference of Television',
Screen 28:2, 1987
- 'Putting the Pop back into Postmodernism', *Universal Abandon?* ed. Andrew Ross, Edinburgh UP, 1988
- 'Rockin' With Reagan: or, the Mainstreaming of Postmodernity', *Cultural Critique*, Fall 1988
- Habermas, Jurgen 'Modernity -- An Unfinished Project', *Postmodern Culture* ed. Hal Foster, 1985
- *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. F Lawrence, Oxford: Blackwell, 1987
- Harvey, David *The Condition of Postmodernity*,

- Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989
- Hebdige, Dick *Hiding in the Light*, London: Commedia/
Routledge, 1988
- Herron, Jerry 'Postmodernism Ground Zero, or Going
to the Movies at Grand Circus Park',
Social Text 18, Winter 1987/88
- Hall, Stuart(et.al) *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth
Subcultures in Postwar Britain*, London:
Hutchinson/ Centre for Contemporary
Cultural Studies, 1976
- Hayward, Philip and Kerr, Paul (eds) *Postmodern Screen*,
28:2, 1988
- Hewison, Robert *Too Much: Art and Society in the
Sixties 1960-1975*, London: Methuen, 1986
- *Future Tense: A New Art for the
Nineties*, London: Methuen, 1990
- Hobsbawm, Eric *The Age of Empire 1875-1914*, London:
Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, 1987
- Hobson, Marion 'History Traces', *Poststructuralism
and the Question of History* ed.
Bennington, 1987
- Horne, Haynes 'Jameson's Strategies of Containment',
*Canadian Journal of Political and
Social Theory* 12:3, 1988
- Hutcheon, Linda *A Poetics of Postmodernism*,
London: Routledge, 1988
- *The Politics of Postmodernism*,
London: Routledge/ New Accents, 1989

- Multinational Capitalism', *Social Text* 15, Fall 1986
- 'Hans Haacke and the Cultural Logic of Postmodernism', in *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business* ed. Brian Wallis, Cambridge, Mass:MIT Press, 1986
- 'On Magic Realism and Film', *Critical Inquiry* 12:2, Winter 1986
- 'Reading Without Interpretation: Postmodernism and the Video Text', in *The Linguistics of Writing* ed. Fabb, Attridge, Durant and Macabe, Manchester: Manchester UP, 1987
- 'Postmodernism and Utopia', in *Utopia Post Utopia: Configurations of Nature and Culture in Recent Sculpture and Photography*, Boston ICA, 1988
- 'Cognitive Mapping', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* ed. Grossberg and Nelson, London:Macmillan, 1989
- 'Modernism and Imperialism', *Field Day Pamphlet*, Derry, Eire: Field Day Theatre Company, 1988
- 'Marxism and Postmodernism', *New Left Review* 176, 1989
- 'Spatial Equivalents: Postmodern Architecture and the World System', in *The States of "Theory"* ed. David

- Carroll, 1990
- *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* London:Verso, 1991
- Jaspers, Karl *Philosophy 3* (The Metaphysics), 1932, translated E B Ashton, London:Chicago UP, 1971
- Jefferson, Anne 'Autobiography as Intertext: Barthes, Sarraute, Robbe-Grillet', *Intertextuality: theories and Practices*, ed. Judith Still and Michael Worton, Manchester: Manchester UP, 1990
- Jencks, Charles *The Language of Postmodern Architecture*, London:Academy Editions, 1977
- *What is Postmodernism?*, London:Academy Editions, third edition, 1987
- Jenny, Laurent 'From Breton to Dali: The Adventures of Automatism', *October* 51, Winter 1989
- Joyrich, Lynne 'Critical and Textual Hypermasculinity', *Logics of Television* ed. Patricia Mellencamp, 1990
- Jung, Carl (et al) *Man and His Symbols*, London:Aldus Books, 1964
- Kamuf, Peggy *Signature Pieces: On the Institution of Authorship*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1988
- Kaplan, E. Ann 'Whose Imaginary? The Televisual Apparatus, Female Body and Textual Strategies in Select Rock Videos on MTV', *Female Spectators*, ed. Pribram, Verso, 1988

- Kellner, Douglas 'Postmodernism as Social Theory: Some Challenges and Problems', *Theory, Culture and Society* 5:2-3, 1988
- *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*, Oxford:Polity, 1989
- (ed) *Postmodernism/Jameson/Critique*, Washington, DC:Maisonneuve Press, 1989
- King, Noel 'Reading *White Noise*: Floating Remarks', *Critical Quarterly* 33:3, 1991
- Knabb, Ken (ed) *Situationist International Anthology*, Berkeley, California: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981
- Krauss, Rosalind *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other modernist myths*, Cambridge, Mass:MIT Press, 1985
- (ed) *L'Amour Fou: Photography and Surrealism*, London:Hayward Gallery/ Gross River Press, 1986
- Kuhn, Annette (ed) *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema*, London:Verso, 1990
- Kuspit, Donald 'The Contradictory Character of Postmodernism' in Hugh J. Silverman ed., in *Postmodernism -- Philosophy and the Arts*, London:Routledge,1990
- Lacan, Jacques *Ecrits: A Selection* (1966), translated Alan Sheridan, London:Tavistock,1977

- Laing, R D. *The Divided Self*, London:Penguin, 1965
- *The Politics of Experience*, London:
Penguin, 1967
- Laplanche, Jean *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* (1970),
translated Jeffrey Mehlman, London:John
Hopkins UP, 1976
- Laplanche, Jean and Pontalis, B. *The Language of
Psychoanalysis*, London:Karnac Books,
1988
- Lawson, Thomas 'Bunk: Eduardo Paolozzi and the Legacy
of the Independent Group', *Modern Dreams*
ed. Brian Wallis, 1988
- Lejeune, Philippe *On Autobiography*, translated Katherine
Leary, ed. Paul John Eakin, Minneapolis:
Minnesota UP, 1989
- Leventure, Albert and Keenan, Thomas 'A Bibliography of
the Works of Jacques Derrida', *Derrida:
A Critical Reader*, ed. David Wood, 1992
- Lippard, Lucy *Pop Art* 1966, updated and revised,
London:Thames and Hudson, 1988
- Loesberg, Joseph 'Autobiography as Genre, Act of
Consciousness, Text', *Prose Studies* 4:2,
1981
- Lyotard, Jean-Francois *The Postmodern Condition* (1979),
translated Bennington and Massumi,
Manchester:Manchester UP, 1984
- 'Answering the Question: What is
Postmodernism?' (1982), translated Regis

Durand, Appendix to *The Postmodern Condition*

- 'Presenting the Unpresentable: The Sublime', translated Lisa Liebmann, *Artforum*, April 1982
- *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (1983), translated Van Den Abbeele, Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988
- 'Philosophy and Painting in the Age of their Experimentation: Contribution to an Idea of Postmodernity' (1984), *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Benjamin 1989
- 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde', translated Lisa Liebmann, *Artforum*, April 1984
- 'Anamnesis of the Visible, or Candour' (1985), *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Benjamin, 1989
- 'Universal History and Cultural Differences' (1985), *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Benjamin, 1989
- 'Defining the Postmodern', *ICA Documents* ed. Bennington, 1986
- 'Rules and Paradoxes and Svelte Appendix', translated Brian Massumi *Cultural Critique* 5, Winter 1986-7
- 'The Sign of History', translated Bennington, *Poststructuralism and the*

- Question of History*, ed Bennington, 1987
- 'An Interview with Jean-Francois Lyotard'
Willem van Reijen and Dick Veerman,
Theory, Culture and Society 5:2-3, 1988
- 'After The Sublime: The State of
Aesthetics', in English, "revisited" by
Anne Tomiche, *The States of "Theory"*, ed
David Carroll, 1990
- Luciano, Patrick *Them or Us: Archetypal Interpretations
of Fifties Alien Invasion Films*,
Bloomington:Indiana UP, 1987
- Maclean, Marie 'Pretexts and Paratexts: The Art of the
Peripheral', *New Literary History* 22:2,
1991
- Maharaj, Sarat 'A Liquid, Elemental Scattering: Marcel
Duchamp and Richard Hamilton', *Richard
Hamilton*, Tate Gallery, 1992
- de Man, Paul *Allegories of Reading*, Yale UP, 1979
- Mandell, Barrett 'Full of Life Now', *Autobiography*, ed.
Olney, 1980
- Marcus, Greil *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the
Twentieth Century*, London:Secker and
Warburg, 1989
- Marcuse, Herbert *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), London:Ark
Paperbacks, 1986
- *An Essay on Liberation*, London:Allen
Lane, 1969
- Massey, Anne 'The Independent Group: Towards a

- Re-definition', *The Burlington Magazine*
CXXIX no:1009, April 1987
- Massey, Anne and Sparke, Penny 'The Myth of the
Independent Group', *Block* 10, 1985
- Mazzoleni, Donatello 'The City and the Imaginary', *New
Formations* 11, 1990
- McGucken, Dennis 'J G Ballard's "Terminal Irony"', *Science
Fiction Studies* 17, 1991
- McHale, Brian *Postmodernist Fiction*, London: Methuen,
1987
- McLuhan, Marshall *Understanding Media* (1964), London: Ark
Paperbacks, 1987
- McShine, Kynaston *Andy Warhol -- A Retrospective*, Museum
of Modern Art, New York, 1989
- Mellencamp, Patricia (ed) *Logics of Television*, Bl 1,
Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990
- Merril, Judith 'What Do You Mean Science? Fiction?', *SF:
The Other Side of Realism*, ed. Clareson,
1971
- Miller, Hillis J. *Fiction and Repetition*, Oxford:
Blackwell, 1982
- Moore-Gilbert, Bart and Seed, John (eds) *Cultural
Revolution? The Challenge of the Arts in
the 1960s*, London: Routledge, 1992
- Morgan, Kenneth *Labour in Power 1945-51*, Oxford:
Clarendon, 1984
- Morris, Meaghan *The Pirate's Fiancee: Feminism, Reading,
Postmodernism*, London: Verso, 1988

- 'Metamorphosis at Sydney Tower', *New Formations* 11, 1990
- Nadeau, Maurice *The History of Surrealism* (rev.1964), translated Richard Howard, London: Penguin, 1973
- Newman, Charles *The Postmodern Aura*, Evanston, IL.:Northwestern UP, 1985
- Newman, Michael 'Revising Modernism, Representing Postmodernism', *ICA Documents*, ed. Bennington, 1986
- Nichol, Charles 'J G Ballard and the Limits of Mainstream SF', *Science Fiction Studies* 3:2, 1976
- Nicholls, Peter 'Jerry Cornelius at the Atrocity Exhibition: Anarchy and Entropy in *New Worlds Science Fiction*', *Foundation* 9, 1975
- (ed) *The Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction*, London: Granada, 1981
- Nicholls, Peter 'Futurism, Gender, and Theories of Postmodernity', *Textual Practice* 3:2 1989
- 'Consumer Poetics: A French Episode', *New Formations* 13, Spring 1991
- 'Divergences: modernism, postmodernism, Jameson and Lyotard', *Critical Quarterly* 33:3, Autumn 1991
- Norris, Christopher *Derrida*, London: Fontana Modern Masters, 1987
- 'Limited Think: How Not to Read Derrida',

- Diacritics* 20:1, 1990
- 'Deconstruction, Postmodernism and
Philosophy: Habermas on Derrida', *Derrida:
A Critical Reader*, ed. David Wood, 1992
- *Uncritical Theory: Postmodernism,
Intellectuals and the Gulf War*, London:
Lawrence and Wishart, 1992
- Olney, James *Metaphors of the Self: The Meaning of
Autobiography*, Princeton, NJ:
Princeton UP, 1972
- Olney, James (ed) *Autobiography*, Princeton, NJ:
Princeton UP, 1980
- Osborne, Peter 'Aesthetic Autonomy and the Crisis of
Theory: Greenberg, Adorno, and the Problem
of Postmodernism in the Visual Arts', *New
Formations* 9, Winter 1989
- Parrinder, Patrick (ed) *Science Fiction: A Critical Guide*,
London:Longman, 1979
- Perry, Nick and Wilkie, Ray 'Homo Hydrogenesis: Notes of
the Work of J G Ballard', *Riverside
Quarterly* 4:2, 1969
- 'The Undivided Self: J G Ballard's *The
Crystal World*', *Riverside Quarterly* 5:4,
1970
- 'The Atrocity Exhibition', *Riverside
Quarterly* 6:3, 1975
- Pfeil, Fred *Another Tale to Tell: Politics and
Narrative in Postmodern Culture*, London:

- Verso,1990
- Pike, Burton *The Image of the City*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1981
- Plant, Sadie *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age*, London: Routledge,1992
- Porphyrios, Demetrios 'Architecture and the Postmodern Condition', *ICA Documents*, ed. Bennington, 1986
- Porush, David *The Soft Machine: Cybernetic Fiction*, Methuen,1985
- Pringle, David *Earth is the Alien Planet*, Milford Series: Popular Writers of Today, number 26, San Bernadino, CA:The Borgo Press, 1979
- *J G Ballard: A Primary and Secondary Bibliography*, Boston, Mass:Hall and Co., 1984
- Punter, David *The Hidden Script*, London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1985
- Radway, Janice *Reading the Romance*, Verso,1987
- Ratcliff, Carte 'Swallowing Dali', *Artforum*,Sept 1982
- Roberts, John *Postmodernism, Politics and the Arts*, Manchester:Manchester UP, 1990
- Ronnov-Jensen, Peter 'Science Fiction in the Market-Place: The Incorporation of 'New Wave' science fiction into the Literary Establishment Considered as

- a downhill motor-race', *The Dolphin*
11, April 1985
- Rose, Gillian 'Architecture to Philosophy -- The
Postmodern Complicity', *Theory, Culture
and Society* 5:2-3, 1988
- Rose, Jacqueline 'Fantasies of the Modern and the
Postmodern', *Universal Abandon?* ed.
Andrew Ross, 1988
- *The Haunting of Sylvia Plath*, London:
Virago, 1991
- Rose, Mark (ed) *Science Fiction: A Collection of
Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliffs,
NJ: Prentice-Hall 20th Century Views,
1976
- Rosmarin, Adena *The Power of Genre*, Minneapolis:University
of Minnesota Press, 1985
- Ross, Andrew *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular
Culture*, London: Routledge, 1989
- 'Getting Out of the Gernsback Continuum',
Critical Inquiry 17:2, 1991
- (ed) *Universal Abandon? The Politics of
Postmodernism*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP,
1988
- Ryan, Anthony 'The Mind of Mr. J G Ballard', *Foundation*
3, 1973
- Said, Edward *The World, The Text, and The Critic*,
London: Faber, 1984
- Samay, Sebastian *Reason Revisited: The Philosophy of Karl*

- Jaspers*, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan,
1971
- Scholes, Robert and Rabkin, Eric *Science Fiction:
History-Science-Vision*, Oxford: Oxford UP,
1977
- Schulte-Sasse, Jochen 'Modernity and Modernism,
Postmodernity and Postmodernism: Framing
the Issue', *Cultural Critique*, Winter
1986-7
- Schwenger, Paul 'Writing the Unthinkable', *Critical
Inquiry* 13, Winter 1986
- Sedgwick, Christina 'The Fork in the Road: Can Science
Fiction survive in Postmodern,
Megacorporate America?', *Science Fiction
Studies* 18:1, 1991
- Segal, Alex 'Language Games and Justice', *Textual
Practice* 6:2, Summer 1992
- Sharpe, William and Leonard Warnock (eds) *Visions of the
Modern City*, London: John Hopkins UP, 1987
revised edition
- Sharrett, Christopher 'Defining the Postmodern: The Case
of the Soho Kitchen and *El International*,
Postmodernism/Jameson/Critique ed.
Kellner, 1989
- Shippey, Tom (ed) *Fictional Space*, Essays and Studies,
Vol. 43, The English Association, Oxford:
Blackwell, 1991
- Silverman, Hugh J. (ed) *Postmodernism -- Philosophy and*

- the Arts*, London: Routledge, 1990
- Sinfield, Alan *Literature, Politics and Culture in Post-War Britain*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1989
- Smart, Barry 'Modernity, Postmodernity and the Present' in *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*, ed. Brian Turner, 1990
- Smith, Peter 'On the Passage of a Few People: Situationist Nostalgia', *Oxford Art Journal*, 14:1, 1991
- Smyth, Edmund (ed) *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction*, London: Batsford, 1991
- Sobchack, Vivian *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film*, NY: Ungar Publication Company, 1987
- Soja, Edward *Postmodern Geographies* Verso, 1988
- Sontag, Susan 'The Imagination of Disaster', *Science Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed Mark Rose, 1976
- 'The Pornographic Imagination', reprinted in Penguin edition of Bataille's *The Story of the Eye*, 1982
- Spinrad, Norman *Science Fiction in the Real World*, Southern Illinois UP, 1990
- Spivak, Gayatri 'Post-Structuralism, Marginality, Post-Coloniality and Value', in *Literary Theory Today*, ed. Collier and Geyer-Ryan, 1990
- 'Reading *The Satanic Verses*', *Third Text*

11, 1990

- Stevenson, Gregory 'J G Ballard: the Quest for an
Ontological Garden of Eden', *Foundation*
35, Winter 1985-6
- *Out of the Night and Into the Dream: A
Thematic Study of the Fiction of J G
Ballard*, Westport, CT:Greenwood Press,
1991
- Sutherland, J A 'American Science Fiction Since 1960',
Science Fiction ed. Parrinder, 1979
- Sutherland, John 'Fiction and the Erotic Cover', *Critical
Quarterly* 33:2, 1991
- Suvin, Darko 'On the Poetics of the Science Fiction
Genre', *Science Fiction* ed. Rose, 1976
- *Positions and Presuppositions in Science
Fiction*, London:Macmillan, 1988
- Tagg, John 'Postmodernism and the Born-Again
Avant-Garde', *Block* 11, 1984
- Tate Gallery *Richard Hamilton*, London, 1992
- Trey, George A 'The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity:
Habermas' Postmodern Adventure',
Diacritics 19:2, 1989
- Tsai, Eugene 'The Sci-Fi Connection: The IG, J G
Ballard and Robert Smithson', *Modern
Dreams* ed. Brian Wallis, 1988
- Turner, Brian (ed) *Theories of Modernity and
Postmodernity*, London:Sage Publications,
1990

- Vale, V and Juno, Andrea (eds) *Re/Search 8-9*, Ballard special issue, San Francisco: Re/Search Publications, 1984
- Venturi, Robert and Scott-Brown, Denise *Learning From Las Vegas*, Cambridge, Mass:MIT Press, 2nd edition, 1977
- Wagar, Warren W. 'J G Ballard and the Transvaluation of Utopia', *Science Fiction Studies* 18:1, 1991
- Wallis, Brian *Modern Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Pop*, ICA NY, Cambridge, Mass:MIT Press, 1988
- Wallraff, Charles *Karl Jaspers: An Introduction to his Philosophy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1970
- Watson, Steven 'In Situ: Beyond an Architectonics of the Modern', *Postmodernism -- Philosophy and the Arts*, ed. Silverman, 1990
- Weber, Samuel *The Legend of Freud*, Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1982
- West, Cornel 'Ethics and Action in Fredric Jameson's Marxist Hermeneutics', *Postmodernism and Politics* ed. Jonathan Arac, Manchester: Manchester UP, 1986
- White, Hayden 'Getting Out of History', *Diacritics* 12, 1982
- Williams, Linda *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the Frenzy of the Visible*, London: Pandora, 1991
- Williams, Raymond *The Politics of Modernism*, London:

Verso, 1989

- Wilson, Elizabeth *Hallucinations: Life in the Post-Modern City*, London: Radius, 1988
- 'The Invisible Flaneur', *New Left Review* 191, 1992
- Wollen, Peter 'The Situationist International', *New Left Review* 174, 1989
- Wood, David (ed) *Derrida: A Critical Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992
- Wymer, Rowland 'How "Safe" is John Wyndham?', *Foundation* 55, 1992
- Young, Robert 'Post-structuralism: The End of Theory', *Oxford Literary Review*, 5:1-2, 1982
- 'The Politics of "The Politics of Literary Theory"', *Oxford Literary Review* 10, 1988
- *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, Routledge, 1990
- Zukin, Sharon 'The Postmodern Debate over Urban Form', *Theory, Culture and Society* 5:2-3, 1988
- Zurbrugg, Nicholas 'Jameson's Complaint: Video-Art and the Intertextual 'time-wall'', *Screen* 32:1, 1991