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**RECONCILING YOUR SELF:
INDIVIDUATION AND ONTOLOGICAL AMBIGUITY
IN J.G. BALLARD'S *THE EMPIRE OF THE SUN*
AND *THE DROWNED WORLD***

Abstract

This article explores the multifaceted ways in which J. G. Ballard's work grapples with the problematics of the self and its codependency with ideological representation. One of the most interesting critical contexts which sheds light on this theme is Jungian psychology, which also happened to wield considerable influence on New Wave writers during the 1960s, and it is especially Jung's notion of individuation that is of relevance in regards to the particularly ambiguous relationship Ballardian protagonists have with exterior reality. It is the contention of this article that acceptance of the inherently fictional and textual nature of the depicted exterior reality is a prerequisite for individuation to take place. What this means is that two seemingly incompatible discourses, that of Jungian psychoanalysis and postmodernism, can be seen to share a certain liberatory theme that can be found in Ballard's novels. This is a contention that will be developed in an analysis of Ballard's *The Empire of the Sun* and *The Drowned World*.

Keywords

Ballard; Jung; individuation; postmodernism

If there was one word that could encapsulate J. G. Ballard's fiction it would have to be ambiguity. Roger Luckhurst argues that "the framings of his [Ballard's] work have remained undecided (and undecidable) throughout his career, such that multiple, often incompatible, Ballards have proliferated" (Luckhurst 1997: xii). Indeed, Ballard's work consistently defies categorization into a single genre or theme. Ballard's place as a science fiction author has never been stable. Though

his fiction has come to represent a distinct aesthetics of bleak urban SF dystopias infused with biting cultural commentary, it has been cast in wide range of styles, ranging from experimental prose to traditional autobiographical narratives. It is precisely this indeterminacy and marginality that defines Ballard's work, in his style and in his themes, making him a particularly difficult author to locate within a fixed literary tradition. Perhaps this is why one of the most salient themes running through J. G. Ballard's fiction is an all-encompassing sense of ontological instability and fictionality underpinning the cultural environment that is responsible for structuring a sense of identity. This theme is just as present in *Empire of the Sun* as it is in his earlier *The Drowned World*. Read alongside one another, these two novels reveal the (de)constitution of identity in ways that are not only complimentary but also evocative of C. G. Jung's notion of individuation, a notion which at first sight seems incompatible with the postmodern insistence on fictionality and textuality. Though Jung's influence on Ballard's work has been the subject of critical interest, with Francis Samuel's and Gregory Stephenson's work being the most important in this respect, attention has usually been drawn to how Ballard incorporates such Jungian concepts as the collective unconscious, mandalas and archetypes into his narratives without going much beyond psychoanalytical discourse. What follows, therefore, is an extension of this research by indicating the conceptual links between this imagery and postmodern concerns with the mutability of external reality. One of the major assumptions developed in this paper is that acceptance of an inherently textual and ideologically constructed nature of outer reality is a prerequisite for individuation to be at all possible.

Much of Ballard's biography comes to us through a series of autobiographies and semi-autobiographies, such as *Empire of the Sun* (1984), *The Kindness of Women* (1991), and *Miracles of Life* (2008). Of these novels, *Empire of the Sun* is perhaps Ballard's most critically acclaimed and it is the novel that catapulted him from the literary peripheries occupied by science fiction literature to the central position of mainstream literature. Short-listed for the Booker Prize, winner of the Guardian Fiction and the James Tate Black Memorial prizes, it was later adapted by Steven Spielberg in 1987, further cementing Ballard's status as a mainstream author. *Empire of the Sun* was not only responsible for propelling Ballard into mainstream literary prominence but it also provided critics the opportunity to apply the biographical elements scattered throughout the book as a key to his previous, more ambiguous, literary output. Though the reliability of the historical accounts described in *Empire of the Sun* is heavily contested, sparking even some controversy following its publication, the book does provide a biographical backdrop to the themes pervading much of Ballard's literary output. Many themes and motifs can indeed be traced to the traumatic experiences depicted in *Empire of the Sun*, allowing critics to apply a convenient psychological lens to the rest of his work. This is a practice that Roger Luckhurst (1997: 155) criticizes, claiming that *Empire of the Sun* is often deployed as an "autobiographical machine", which supposedly unlocks the texts by anchoring them in an ontologically privileged space of factual history. Luckhurst's claims are substantiated by Jeannette Baxter,

who recalls the reviews written by William Webb and Charles Murphy (Baxter 2009: 135) describing *Empire of the Sun* in terms that unequivocally lend it an air of authoritative facticity from which critics expect to draw insight into Ballard's fictional work. One can criticize this approach for its instrumental treatment of *Empire of the Sun* as well as for the simplifications that would inevitably result from such a critical reading, but what is even more dangerous from a critical point of view are the assumptions underlying the implementation of autobiographical novels to such ends.

It should be pointed out that utilizing *Empire of the Sun* as a means to elucidate the more ambiguous aspects found in his novels and short stories rests on the assumption that Ballard's autobiographies present a more realistic, sober, serious, and stable vantage point from which to view the rest of his more overtly fictional literary output. What this presupposition fails to take into account is the inherently fictitious nature of autobiographies in general and of Ballard's autobiography in particular. As Baxter contends, "Both autobiographies [*Empire* and *Miracles*] are replete, for instance, with biographical omissions and historical transmutations, the ramifications of which extend beyond debates on authenticity" (Baxter 2009:138). It is for these reasons that *Empire* should be treated more as a part of his literary output than an excursion into fact-based nonfiction.

Apart from attempting to avoid privileging the ontological status of the autobiography over the overtly fictional books, there is yet another reason to read these novels as extensions of his fictional output; Ballard's autobiographies appeared quite late in his career, only after he had already developed his trademark tropes and conventions, which he then applied to his autobiographies. Memories from his childhood were not just recalled, but were recast through the prism of those tropes and conventions. Therefore, instead of looking at Ballard's fiction through his autobiographies, it would perhaps be more productive to do what Ballard did, which is to look at his autobiographies through his fiction and as fiction.

Empire of the Sun, in its account of Ballard's childhood in Shanghai and later his internment in a Japanese camp, pays particular attention to the environment which structures Jim's frame of reference. Indeed, there was something inherently unique and ontologically ambiguous about prewar Shanghai, which, as was the case with many other English colonies, continued under the trappings of a typical English environment. The outward reality of English life was reconstructed with the help of European architecture, European restaurants, nightlife, and a metropolitan lifestyle, which made Shanghai into one of the most international of Chinese cities.

During his journeys around the camp Jim encountered many signifiers of a reconstructed London:

A sun-beached sign, crudely painted with the words 'Regent Street', was nailed to a bamboo pole beside the pathway. Jim ignored it, as he did the similar signs 'Piccadilly', 'Knightsbridge' and 'Petticoat Lane' which marked the main pathway within the camp. These relics of an imaginary

London – which many of the Shanghai-born British prisoners had never seen – intrigued Jim but in some way annoyed him. (Ballard 1989: 167)

London was effectively reconstructed within an unfamiliar context through props and signs, thereby exposing the fictitious nature of the environment. Though patently colonial in its intent, this situation also paints a surreal picture of England defiantly preserving its manufactured identity in a foreign land. This constructed sense of Englishness bore little resemblance to the one he would encounter upon his return to England at the age of sixteen. The parochial, war-torn London with its class divisions and inclusiveness was nothing like the image of England propagated in literature, propaganda war movies, and schooling to which he was exposed during his childhood.

This is why, upon arriving in England, Ballard underwent yet another surreal experience of encountering his mother country which was his home only by name. Like so many other writers who grew up in the British colonies, he found the ‘mother land’ at odds with the picture he constructed from his exposure to British literature and culture.

My image of London was formed during my Shanghai childhood in the 1930s as I listened to my parents’ generation talk nostalgically of West End shows, the bright lights of Piccadilly, Noel Coward, and Gertie Lawrence, reinforced by a Peter Pan and Christopher Robin image of a London that consisted entirely of Knightsbridge and Kensington, where 1 per cent of the population was working-class and everyone else was a barrister or stockbroker. When I actually arrived in 1946 I found a London that looked like Bucharest with a hangover – heaps of rubble, an exhausted ferret-like people defeated by war and still deluded by Churchillian rhetoric, hobbling around a wasteland of poverty, ration books and grotesque social division. (Ballard 1997: 185)

This return to London prompted a kind of Baudrillardian experience of encountering the copy’s original, which is nothing more than a deferred original. Since Ballard’s notion of England had already been pre-constructed, this encounter provides us with a perfect example of Englishness being here a mere construct perpetuated by cultural roles.

An earlier event that had an equally formative effect on Ballard was being relocated along with his family to the Lunghua internment camp, known as the Civil Assembly Centre, following the Japanese invasion of China and seizure of the International Settlement. That traumatic event of his environment disintegrating in front of his eyes is one that Ballard was to return to in interviews, emphasizing how this realization of the brittle and inherently illusory nature of reality informs much of his work.

Ballard conveyed this experience of destruction as productive, and this is a point that will be reiterated later in regards to individuation. When we think of

how he portrays young Jim in *Empire of the Sun*, breaking out of his stereotyped and contained world of mock Englishness (pretend Eton of the Cathedral School) into new realms of freedom, possibility and identity, we see Ballard constructing a worldview in which the destruction of a simulated Europe was traumatic yet liberating, because at least such traumas exposed social illusions – in this case a mock England built in a Chinese environment. There is a new-found sense of liberation gained as a result of this disintegration in the form of a new engagement with reality. For example, when home again on Amherst Avenue, alone after the house had been abandoned, Jim takes advantage of this freedom: “he did something he had always longed to do: mounted his cycle and rode through the formal, empty rooms” (Ballard 1989: 47). What was once a prohibited space now became his playground.

Ballard refers to this experience of ontological ambiguity in “The End of My War”, where he remarks that “Reality, I was fast learning, was little more than a stage set whose actors and scenery could vanish overnight” (Ballard 1997: 288). This emphasis on the illusory nature of reality, lack of permanence in the visual landscapes surrounding him, disintegrating faith in the stability of surface appearances is what most closely links Ballard’s prose to the brand of postmodernism represented by Jean Baudrillard’s fascination with the hyper-real.

Though a sense of indeterminacy and ambiguity pervades much of Ballard’s fiction, lending itself nicely to a postmodernist reading, the question still remains to what extent this ontological instability affects identity formation. Is subjectivity also portrayed in much the same manner as physical spaces? If one were to treat *Empire of the Sun* as ‘interpretation machine’, one could connect the disintegrating ‘outer reality’ Ballard witnessed in the internment camp with the many ways in which Ballardian characters disintegrate psychologically, the veneer of their habitual existence and personality peeling off. What is left when the last layer of humanity is stripped depends on whether we approach this work from an essentialist or anti-essentialist standpoint. What is important to note in *Empire of the Sun* is that the disintegration of Jim’s outer reality took place in concert with the fragmentation of his sense of self. When Jim first returns to his home after having been separated from his parents, he looks at his reflection in a cracked mirror, and sees “the star-like image of himself that radiated from the centre of the mirror... pieces of himself seemed to be flying across the room, scattered through the empty house” (Ballard 1989: 44). This shattered reflection represents Jim’s fragmented self, the dissolution of a stable ego, and it is this condition that will later be described as being akin to individuation.

In his many comments and editorials, Ballard leads us towards an emphasis on inner spaces. Ballard’s notion of inner space became the means of redirecting science fiction inward, away from the conventional fascination and fetishization of technology and outer space, towards human psychology as the locus of interest. This emphasis on “inner spaces” can first be found in Ballard’s manifesto editorial for *New Worlds*, “Which Way to Inner Space?” (1962), in which he argues for a new direction science fiction should take in order to meet the cultural challenges

of the twentieth century, where “The biggest developments of the immediate future will take place, not on the Moon or Mars, but on Earth, and it is *inner* space, not outer, that needs to be explored. The only truly alien planet is Earth” (Ballard: 1997: 197). This shift in emphasis called for a more psychologically engaged, more intellectually sophisticated and literate science fiction that would break with what had already become staid conventions dominating the genre at the time. It was Ballard’s conviction that only such a development of science fiction could adequately respond to the psychological effects of technological advancement with its attendant cultural changes. The psychological aspects of Ballard’s fiction have not gone unnoticed by critics and psychoanalysis still remains one of the most often utilized theoretical contexts applied to Ballard’s work, which seems to be a theoretical approach prescribed by Ballard himself, given the multiple references he makes to psychoanalysis, particularly to R. D. Laing and Carl Gustav Jung.

It should be remembered that during the 1960s there was a resurgence of interest in Jung’s theories about how to achieve the psychic order and balance which was the goal of individuation. This was part of a more general anti-psychiatric movement represented by Robert Laing and Michel Foucault, who exerted an enormous influence on writers of all genres in the 1960s and 1970s, but science fiction in particular was especially attuned to this intellectual leaning. Writers who displayed a serious interest in Jung included editor-in-chief of *New Worlds*, Michael Moorcock, Brian Aldiss, Rojer Zelazny, and D.M. Thomas, all of whom at one point published in *New Worlds*, but it was Ballard in particular, whose interest in Jungian psychoanalysis was most pronounced in the surrealist imagery of his work. Various elements of Jungian psychology, especially archetypal imagery, have already found extensive commentary by Samuel Francis in *The Psychological Fictions of J. G. Ballard* and Gregory Stephenson’s *Out of the Night and into the Dream*. In fact, this abundance and even overreliance on Jungian psychology has been a crutch that critics have leaned on too often, leading Luckhurst to accuse critics of reducing Ballard’s ambiguity to “an unrigorous mish-mash of mystical religiosity, which is then – and this is the major concern – offered as the interpretation which would unlock the entire chain of Ballard’s oeuvre” (Luckhurst 1997: 48). This complaint is reminiscent to the one made by Luckhurst earlier in regards to the instrumental fashion in which the autobiographies are used to “unlock” Ballard’s texts. What becomes problematic, however, is attempting to juxtapose the well-established Jungian frame with postmodern concerns with ideology and fictionality, but before pursuing that line of inquiry, it is necessary to establish some defining features of individuation.

In defining individuation as a process during which a person becomes an indivisible psychological unit, Jung states that it is “a developmental process which is peculiar to the psyche and consists in integrating the unconscious contents into consciousness” with the result that “the psychic human being becomes whole” (Jung 1960: 223). From these two definitions it is clear that individuation is a process between two states of knowing, between the subject and object, indicating

an active malleable state of “dual struggle of the subject with, on the one hand, the ‘inner world’ of the unconscious in all its infantile, personal and collective aspects, and, on the other hand, the struggle with the ‘outer world’ of collective society” (Francis 2011: 169). Individuation is, therefore, a process predicated on the possibility of reconciling these two states of knowing, the ‘inner world’ of and the ‘outer world’ in much the same way Ballard’s surrealist brand of science fiction purports to achieve. However, what becomes problematic is the position of the unconscious in relation to language. The Modernist perspective would have it that the unconscious can be analyzed and discovered with the tools at our disposal, whereas the Jungian, more postmodernist, approach precludes such ostentatious claims on the part of language and rationality.

We have already established that Jung’s concept of individuation plays a prominent role in his fiction. In the hands of critics it goes some way towards contextualizing how ‘outer reality’ is rendered in Ballard’s fiction in relation to the ‘inner reality’ of the characters. In other words, the mutually constitutive relation that exists between the ideologically constructed social reality and a stable sense of identity; these notions are very often conflated in Ballard’s fiction. Applying this concept to Ballard’s work also allows us to substantiate this particular conflation by emphasizing the inextricable link between outer and inner spaces, which serve as a metaphorical representation of Jung’s process of individuation which integrates the self with the ego.

It is in this context that we now move to Ballard’s 1962 novel, *The Drowned World*, thematically included into his natural disaster novels consisting of *The Drought*, *The Crystal World*, *The Wind from Nowhere*. Both *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World* have been analyzed in the context of Jungian archetypes, but it is the former which most succinctly presents the process of individuation. *The Drowned World* describes an environment where temperatures have risen to such levels that, as a result of melting ice caps, most of the cities and continents have been submerged by floodwater and vegetation. Ballard manages to create an oppressive atmosphere engulfing any remnant of an earlier civilization, which with time we learn is London.

Soon it would be too hot. Looking out from the hotel balcony shortly after eight o’clock, Kerans watched the sun rise behind the sense groves of giant gymnosperms crowding over the roofs of the abandoned department stores four hundred yards away on the east side of the lagoon. (Ballard 17: 2012)

Swamps, reptilian life, prehistoric vegetation indicate that the world is regressing to the Triassic Period and, along with it, as one of the characters theorizes, people also are also following suit. The city of London surrenders itself to wilderness and a pre-human state: “the cities had been beleaguered citadels, hemmed in by enormous dykes and disintegrated by panic and despair, reluctant Venices to their marriage with the sea” (Ballard 2012: 32). Dykes, which are man-made structures built for the purpose of keeping the force of nature/water at bay, are the walls defining

civilization, but soon they give way, and all the cities are gradually engulfed. There is little scientific explanation provided to make sense of the ecological catastrophe, other than perfunctory statements about an expanding sun. Ballard sidesteps these traditional science fiction explanations in order to concentrate on the psychological turmoil brought about by the radical alterations in the environment, as “the return to the Triassic landscape provokes ‘triggers’ of regression and devolution, figured as a literal descent down ‘spinal’ consciousness” (Luckhurst 1997: 53). “Hard” science is further elided by the abundance of surreal dream imagery depicting the jungle literarily overwhelming the man-made environment in a manner very much reminiscent of the scenes depicted in Max Ernst’s paintings, a theme that was exhaustively researched by Jeannette Baxter in *Surrealistic Imagination*. The surreal aspects of this novel reinforce the psychological interstitial zone in which the characters find themselves, poised precariously between consciousness and unconsciousness, inner and outer reality, at a point in which this external reality is gradually overwhelmed or simply eradicated, thus establishing the conditions for the process of individuation to take place.

Our theme of individuation can be traced in the “development” of the protagonist, Kerans, whose gradual withdrawal from his established preconceptions of identity towards a more primitive self-awareness marks a familiar Ballardian theme of psychological regression and is one that mirrors the regression of the world from civilization to nature. Gasiorek observes that “Kerens, the novel’s main character, is temporarily trapped between two intersecting worlds, which exist both in physical space and in his own mind” (Gasiorek 2004: 74). Liminal experience between life and death, reality and fantasy, is a theme that Ballard utilizes in many other novels and short stories (e.g. *Concrete Island*, “Enormous Space”), but here it is magnified by the ecological catastrophe gripping the world, which serves as a reflection of the internal process taking hold of the protagonist.

Incidentally, the imagery found in *The Drowned World* is directly linked to Ballard’s childhood in Shanghai, a point explored in his “Time, Memory, and Inner Space” which asks “How far do the landscapes of one’s childhood, as much as its emotional experiences, provide an inescapable background to all one’s imaginative writing?” (Ballard 1997: 199). The answer to this question is found a few lines later: “On reflection it seems to me that the image of an immense half-submerged city overgrown by tropical vegetation, which forms the centerpiece of *The Drowned World*, is in some way a fusion of my childhood memories of Shanghai and those of my last ten years in London” (Ballard 2012: 199). Ballard makes it clear that his aesthetic tropes are indebted to his experiences in Shanghai, but in a way that further highlights its unique place as a link between two separate and distinct psychological topographies, two separate stages in his life.

The confusion experienced by the protagonists of *The Drowned World* results to a large extent from the loss of any external coordinates according to which the protagonists could locate themselves, which is, according to Gasiorek, “disclosed through a preoccupation with cognitive mapping – an attempt to find some way of orientating himself within a situation he is not equipped to understand”

(Gasiorek 2004: 157). However, external reality acts merely as a reflection of internal psychological reality, and, therefore, what is emphasized is a conflation of the inner and outer topological mappings: “A more important task than mapping the harbours and lagoons of the external landscape was to chart the ghostly deltas and luminous beaches of the submerged neuronomic continents” (Ballard, 2012: 58). If Jung’s notion of individuation is defined as an “internal registering of an inner-outer relationship that would otherwise remain unknown or unconsciously projected” (Hauke 2000: 76), Jameson’s cognitive mapping, mentioned in Gasiorek’s account, would serve as a possible method of coalescing the fragmented state of outer reality, thereby, analogically, reintegrating the psychological state of the individual, though it is a method fraught with the same ideological assumptions that make it incompatible with Jung’s notion of individuation.

Jameson develops the concept of cognitive mapping in *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, from two sources: urbanistic and political. The ideological process of cognitive mapping is an extension of Kevin Lynch’s statement about alienation being proportional to the spatial unmappability of a postmodern city. He claims that “Disalienation in the traditional city, then, involves the practical reconquest of a sense of place, and the construction or the reconstruction of an articulated ensemble which can be retained in memory and which the individual subject can map and remap along the moments of mobile, alternative trajectories” (Jameson 1991: 51). Whereas Lynch applies his reading to urban sites, Jameson extends the argument to an entire social system, encompassing the globalized, multinational and late capitalist space, which may carry the label “postmodern,” if only because its indefiniteness and lack of landmarks remove from the subject any semblance of stability. Jameson’s notion of cognitive mapping is not only a response to Lynch’s urban theory, it is also indebted to Louis Althusser’s, and admittedly to Jacques Lacan’s understanding of ideology as “a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser 1971: 167). In much the same way the function of cognitive mapping is “to enable a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society’s structures as a whole” (Jameson 1991: 51). It is, therefore, ideology that provides the means by which the self can negotiate its position in relation to his cultural environment, thereby fostering a sense of belonging which would otherwise be absent, but, at the same time, it is ideology that prevents the subject from attaining the wholeness of unity, which is the end product of individuation. This is not because ideology is false consciousness, but because ideology, as a necessarily imposed system of beliefs, mediates our relationship with the environment to the extent that it co-produces it. As a result the essentialist faith in “authenticity” and “truth” that would exist beyond ideological bounds is put into question.

Without spatial orientation, or an understanding of where one is in relation to one’s surroundings, a sense of self comes under threat, a situation that Gasiorek recognizes in relation to *The Drowned World*: “The question of identity lies at the

heart of *The Drowned World*. It is bound up with skepticism as to the validity of the scientific outlook, which the novel, focalized through Kerans's consciousness, presents as the cornerstone of a superseded modernity" (Gasiorek 2004: 34). As the narrative progresses, the scientific outlook based on empiricism and faith in linguistic referentiality is undermined by the dislocating intrusion of the unconscious. Perhaps, it is at this point that *The Drowned World* is closest to Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*. Certainly the case could be made that the ivory skinned Mr Strangman and Kerens are meant to recall Kurtz and Marlow, respectively, though this is a consideration that, due to the scope of this paper, would be best left for another occasion. Suffice it to say that the same loss of bearings experienced by Marlow on his journey towards the heart of the jungle is duplicated here with the same attention paid to how socially manufactured reality disintegrates in response to the uncontrollable play of the unconscious.

The colonializing thrust of reconquering places in order to map them in accordance with set ideological guidelines is quite visible here and harkens back to Jim's realization of linguistic colonization in *Empire of the Sun*, and it would seem that such a conquest is a necessary condition of individuation. This is, however, not to imply that what Jameson understands as "disalienation" ought to be conflated in a wholesale manner with individuation. This assumption would present individuation as a kind of colonizing project which appropriates the unconscious into the Symbolic Order. Doing so, however, is rendered entirely impossible, as language being here the means of mapping one's surroundings is responsible for generating only representations of an ideologically predetermined existence, as is the case in *Empire of the Sun*, when Jim realizes that the place names, such as "Piccadilly" and "Knightsbridge" are superimposed by a colonizing English force: "Jim's hunger for names remains unsatiated not just because his mind is so voracious but because he learns that languages are arbitrary systems that cannot map reality with any completeness" (Ballard 1989: 158). Here the unsatiated hunger to name, i.e. to structure and cognitively map the environment, presents itself as the discernible postcolonial strategy with its whiff of imperialistic colonization imposing a map onto another space. This totalizing strategy of cognitive mapping would afford the mapper a sense of ontological stability and coherence, but this, as we have earlier established, is a strategy that is inherently entrenched in the essentialist notion of personal identity. This futility is visible when seen through the eyes of an outsider, an Other; and Ballard was in the unique position to see the meaninglessness of this system, as these place names had no hold over him, referring as they did to memories he did not share with the other soldiers. The whole system of memories and references was propped up on a foundation which was alien to him from the start.

In much a similar way, signification in *The Drowned World* is also suspended. A global catastrophe has successfully erased all borders and landmarks that could provide reference points to undertake the cognitive mapping project. Firstly, this is made evident with location markers being withheld from the reader and from the characters, which in effect makes the environment nameless: "had it once

been Berlin, Paris or London?, Kerans asked himself” (Ballard 2012: 19). Secondly, this is made manifest by how both money and time have lost their referential significance. There are references to stopped clock hands, European art and culture in ruins or entirely submerged under water. The idea of human, historical time being superseded by natural, biological time is especially poignant, considering the idea of civilization/language giving way to nature/silence which precedes and underlies the trappings of civilization. Money plays a particularly interesting role in this regard, as it can be seen to stand for the referentiality of linguistic systems in general. Sebastian Groes (2008: 83) in his analysis of *Empire of the Sun* refers to how money can either be viewed as a stable referential system with gold being the ultimate signified or an empty symbol of with no stable reference beyond itself. The former view would coincide with realism and the realistic novel, whereas the absence of a stable foundation of value would coincide with Modernist prose, that of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, where realist conventions, based on the faith of language ultimately referring to a reality outside itself, are discarded in favor of linguistic play. Either the abundance of money or its absence was the case in Shanghai and the Langhua camp. In effect, money is presented as having lost its meaningfulness. Money in *The Drowned World* also has been discarded, which metaphorically represents the lost stability of symbolic signification used to map reality.

Once again, Ballard does not present this apocalyptic scenario in apocalyptic terms, indicating instead a liberating aspect to this apocalypse. According to Groes, “The destruction of the metropolis implies a positive regeneration into a primitive state that sees the reconstitution of man at one with the world because experience is unmediated by systems of signification produced and controlled by other and not dependent on our ‘fallen’ language” (Groes 2008: 84-85). “Reconstituting man with the world” is precisely what Jung’s process of individuation purports to accomplish, though in Ballard’s work, this unity seems to be possible only after renouncing language as a stable system of meaning, which is why, instead of attempting to reestablish a language and conventional forms of signification, our main character, Kerans, regresses “to a point where a second Adam and Eve found themselves alone in a new Eden” (Ballard 2012: 23). In terms of the plot, this direction is indicated by the decision to abandon the journey north to Greenland, where there is still civilization and turn south, where nature has completely devoured man-made topography. This final destination is given to us in the last paragraph of the narrative:

So he left the lagoon and entered the jungle again, within a few days was completely lost, following the lagoons southward through the increasing rain and heat, attacked by alligators and giant bats, a second Adam searching for the forgotten paradises of the reborn sun. (Ballard 2012: 198)

Thus, the desired prelapsarian state, or, as Gasiorek’s more Jungian description more aptly puts it, this “return to pre-conscious state of undifferentiated unity”

(Gasiorek 2004: 36) is conceptualized here as a post-apocalyptic placelessness that puts into question categories of self and identity. This is precisely the necessary condition for Jung's individuation to take place. Without any determining limits and signifiers, with no markers defining him as an ego, Kerans can return to a state of maternal unity, much like Jim in *Empire*, with his shattered sense of identity can now regain a sense of self that precedes cultural/linguistic imposition. Both Groes's and Gasiorek's approaches reveal an unmistakably Lacanian influence, insofar as language, or the Symbolic Order, is depicted as an imposition that forever severs the subject from its experience of unity, which in Lacanian terms is associated with the mother. Language organizes our sensations, categorizes objective reality and differentiates the "I" from the other, thereby establishing itself as a subject, but the fallout of this differentiation is an irrevocable sense of loss fueling the insatiable desire to return to this sense of oneness.

The sudden dissolution of outer reality laying bare its constructedness brings about not only surreal defamiliarization but attendant dissonance in self-identity, which Ballard usually renders by means of regression towards non-existence. Kerans at one point is lured by the seductive pull of the ocean to which he jumps and almost drowns, providing a powerfully symbolic representation of Freud's understanding of oceanic experience as oneness felt between the ego and the outside world. For Freud in *Future of an Illusion* and *Civilization and its Discontents*, the oceanic feeling of blissful submersion is akin to a religious experience and maternal potency, as "it represents a regressive escape from the demands of reality and a return to the selfless state of maternal unity" (Fauteux 1994: 1), which, in *The Drowned World*, is represented by the amniotic fluidity of the flooded landscape.

Because Kerans is shown to regress to the point of suicide, "the individuation process as envisaged by Jung is recast here in terms of the late-Freudian theory of the death instinct" (Francis 2011: 73), a claim that could be made in regard to other Ballardian characters who implode into themselves, adapting to their new circumstances with resigned affirmation. This point is reiterated by Peter Briggs, who recognizes that "What Ballard stresses in this novel, and what he has stressed elsewhere in discussions of the disaster novels, is that his heroes conquer reality not through scientific discovery but through the discovery of themselves and adaptation of the selves resulting from that discovery" (Briggs 1985: 46). It is, indeed, Ballard's signature trope to present a character's identity reaffirmed by the end the journey in terms of resignation and death; however, viewed within the context of Jung's process of individuation, this so-called descent and regression could be construed more in terms of erasing the constitutive role of objective reality. Being little more than ideological constructs ("Piccadilly" and "Knights-bridge") which allow the subject to orient him or herself in space, the cultural environment only reinforces an identity that has been imposed on the self in much the same way that Jim's environment in Shanghai was artificially constructed to perpetuate a myth of Britishness. In both cases, the experience of these constructs can be seen as a necessary condition of individuation.

If unification between inner and outer reality, between interiority and exteriority is to take place, it would have to occur within Ballard's paradigm of dissolution; that is, individuation here rests on the acceptance of foundational instability as a prerequisite for any affirmation of unity to take place. The worlds which dissolve in Ballard's novels, whether they be internment camps, mock British towns or modern high-rises, have been constructed by culture, habit and money, much in the same way that identity formation emerges as a result of accepting the exchange value such constructs demand. Ballard consistently presents his readers with a kind of death that is the result of relinquishing these constructs, instigating a journey back to the Lacanian Imaginary Stage which precedes the imposition of ideology and language. This would be a death enacted purely on the symbolic level, presented in Ballard's novels as a way towards individuation, towards the erasure of the ego's boundaries in a Freudian oceanic experience that effectively unites the self with the outer reality. Of course, this theme is as old as the Platonic tradition of *anamnesis*, where the shattering of the outer world reveals a 'truer' metaphysical world occupying a realm beyond the empirical physical world, but what is perhaps a development is the way Ballard frames this theme within the postmodern concern with how language imposes itself on our subjectivity in much the same way that Britishness was imposed on Jim, in the same way street signs and British architecture in Shanghai were impositions on a foreign reality. The manifestly constructed reality had to disintegrate, whether through war as was the case in *Empire of the Sun* or through an ecological catastrophe as was the case in *The Drowned World*. The effect, however, was similar. In severing the protagonists, Jim and Kerans, from their habitual experience of reality, this experience of destruction made it possible for them to undergo the process of individuation which would effectively transcend that imposition.

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