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One of the central problems of contemporary society is that of "the social"; how it is defined, constituted, conjured into existence, and supported. Jean Baudrillard has coined the term "the social" in his work, but it is never explicitly defined; it is best understood as a form of simulation that has sprung into existence in the absence of symbolic social relations. The social is constituted of all the phenomena that are generally studied by sociology, so is therefore ideologically conceived of as an organic structure that is waiting for analysis. The "social" is society, both as it stands in the present but also in the future, in that it has a "destiny" of its own. The "social" is the "real" hypostatized by sociological discourse. Baudrillard has pointed out that the masses are always stronger than the messages broadcast to them, since they unequivocally absorb them.1 Baudrillard says "they haven't waited for future revolutions nor theories which claim to 'liberate' them by a 'dialectical' movement. They know that there is no liberation, and that a system is abolished only by pushing it into hyperlogic, by forcing it into an excessive practice which is equivalent to a brutal amortization" (Baudrillard 1983: 46).

A way emerges of subverting the dialectical finalities of Reason through taking the logic of mass consumption to the Nth power. In the face of this the social becomes difficult to sustain, and ironically it recedes as swiftly as it is instantiated, meaning that the fundamentalists of the social who seek to employ this form of social legitimation must continually fight a losing battle. So the social as a macro-formation becomes untenable, hence the decline of Grand Narratives, and there is a shift of focus to social micro-practices. The writer J.G.Ballard is important in understanding this process, as his work delineates the formation of

the flawed utopias of the near future, namely that of the "gated community". This is a kind of simulation of the social, a site where the signs of the social are excreted. This more localized form of the social must be made to utter more signs, to attest to the renewed existence of the social; it must survive as a surrogate reality principle. But this is the bulimic social, alternately a hypertrophy of the signs of community and a concomitant purge, all occurring under the auspices of a new sentimental order. Baudrillard explains "the usage of signs is always ambivalent. Its function is always a conjuring— both a conjuring up and a conjuring away: causing something to emerge in order to capture it in signs (forces, reality, happiness, etc.) and evoking something in order to dent and repress it" (Baudrillard 1998b: 33).

This paper will show how this ideology underpins the ethos of security that pervades the gated community, but also how the gated community comes to serve as a kind of survival strategy of the social, and as a privileged domain for the affluent of society. This mythic thinking forms the bedrock of the liberal pieties of contemporary times— Baudrillard points out "we know that, in its myths, magical thought seeks to conjure away change and history. In a way, the generalized consumption of images, of facts, of information aims also to conjure away history with the signs of change, etc." (Baudrillard 1998b: 33). It is in this fashion that Enlightenment reverts to myth, that the facts of production (or indeed social reproduction) are concealed from our eyes.

In order to explore these ideas this paper will be examining three short stories by J.G.Ballard: "The Message from Mars" (1997), "A Place and a Time to Die" (1992) and "The Enormous Space" (1991). The first story concerns a space journey on the ship Zeus to Mars, which despite the outward altruistic intention conceals more ambiguous social motives. The crew turns against their role as the surrogate social, and takes recourse to a somewhat unorthodox rebellion, but one that under the circumstances makes complete sense. In the second story the protagonists, who unwittingly act as representatives of the social, make the mistake of assuming that war is always waged in the interests of the social (for them the social is apprehended through the second-hand abstraction of "society"),

since here the conflict takes a far more inertial form. The story "The Enormous Space" concerns an attempt by a previously prosperous and contented businessman to withdraw from the world. In all three cases opposition emerges from "survival sickness", which Raoul Vaneigem describes as "an acute consciousness of the evanescence of alienated time and space, the consciousness of alienation" (Vaneigem 1983: 179). In the society of survival, where the agonistic and vertiginous play of the potlatch is displaced by accumulation, an awareness of this has a deleterious effect on humanity. In response to this survival sickness emerge new forms of violence or contestatory behaviour, not linked to oppression or dialectics— Ballard explores these new contestatory energies via his literary "extreme metaphors". Baudrillard points out that we are now seeing:

> New forms of anonymous, anomalous virulence— a reactive, reactional vehemence against the dominant thrust of society, against any dominant system— which is no longer a historical violence or liberation, but a violence from the confines of a sacrificed destiny, from the confines of a sacrificed symbolic order (Baudrillard 1998a: 65-66).

This makes complete sense when looking at novels by Ballard such as Running Wild (1988) and High-Rise (1993), where the same theme is reiterated time and again: "in a totally sane society, madness is the only freedom" (Ballard 1988: 84). But in "The Message from Mars", the more aggressive acts of madness are not really an option; as a surrogate social, the ship Zeus has little to violently explode against, and such violent gestures can ultimately be rendered intelligible by the social via an act of recuperation. An alternative is to simply cease functioning, to "switch off" by opting out of the social via an inertial strategy. This is a total repudiation of the social and constitutes a refusal to "play the game". But this also displays a significant "epistemic shift" within literature from the exploration of "Otherness" to the interrogation of notions of "Identity". In the transpolitical, crystallized in such emergent social spaces as the gated community or the literature of simulation (best exemplified by Ballard), the notion of "difference" or "Otherness" becomes a very problematic concept. Ballard's fiction raises the

radical view that notions of "difference" are either redundant, or were a somewhat tendentious concept anyway linked to the formation of the social.

Edward J.Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder explain that "gated communities have their antecedents in modern utopias, but they have been transformed into a totally new product, organized and marketed as a solution to contemporary problems rather than as a search for a better communal system" (Blakely and Snyder 1997: 15). The gated community is a relatively recent development, and in order to fully understand the social logic that operates behind such spaces we need to follow the steps that have lead to the institution of such restrictive spaces. In these exclusionary spaces new subjectivities emerge as the social and spatial overlap; these are rigid environments that exclude social remainders and the corollary of this is the emergence of "deviancy" as a social problem (Sibley 1995: 86-87). The social space that preceded the gated community was the suburb, which according to Robert Fishman is a bourgeois conception of Utopia, as opposed to the one conceived by planners. The suburb is more of an ad hoc social development, a forerunner of the gated community, built around the principle of exclusion. Fishman explains: "where other modern utopias have been collectivist, suburbia has built its vision of community on the primacy of private property and the individual family" (Fishman 1987: x). The suburb is a space set apart from work areas and the urban sprawl, but Fishman primarily sees the suburb as a cultural creation, not simply as the logical consequence of production. Fishman explains:

> The emergence of suburbia required a total transformation of urban values: not only a reversal in the meanings of core and periphery, but a separation of work and family life and the creation of new forms of urban space that would be both class-segregated and wholly residential (Fishman 1987: 8).

So suburbia serves the needs of the bourgeois family— by separating work and leisure, the emotional cocoon of bourgeois family life could be launched as a viable project. Ballard has said of the suburb: "they represent the optimum of what people want. There’s a certain sort of logic leading towards these immaculate

suburbs. And they're terrifying, because they are the death of the soul" (Juno and Vale 1984: 15). Clearly Ballard resents the embourgeoisment that the suburb offers; through the suburb, any traces of difference (such as the poor) can be excluded. But the gated community represents something entirely different— in the suburb, the poor may still exist, if only as an "absent cause", perhaps merely an unseen fact of production that needs to be removed by effacing the links between work and family life. But the gated community operates through identity, not difference, and may even encourage the concept of difference in order to fulfil its own aims, employing difference as an alibi of the social. David Sibley has explained "it appears the boundaries between the consuming and non-consuming public are strengthening, with non-consumption being constructed as a form of deviance at the same time as spaces of consumption eliminate public spaces in city centres" (Sibley 1995: xii). This is the "Voodoo City" that David Harvey has described, where the scramble for capital investment has replaced ethical social policy. But as every form of social remainder is processed by the social, it is the non-consumer in this new city that is marginalized since it may function as a fresh site of resistance to the consumer society. In contemporary living spaces, it is no longer a question of excluding "Otherness", but rather what is at stake is a postmodern conception of identity that the "flawed consumer" disrupts.2 An example of this are the prostitutes in Crash; they occupy liminal spaces on the fringes of the social (such as the airport terminals), but instead of representing a difference that cannot be assimilated, rather they are the waste matter of the social, simultaneously both in and out of the social. David Sibley explains: "the middle classes have been able to distance themselves from their own residues, but in the poor they see bodily residues, animals closely associated with residual matter, and residual places coming together and threatening their own categorical scheme under which the pure and the defiled are distinguished" (Sibley 1995: 56). But this threat to postmodern purity doesn't issue from an intractable Otherness, but from the waste matter of the social— matter that has been processed and expelled from the social.As the failings of the suburb become manifest the gated community supersedes it. Fishman has pointed out that that the

"technoburb" is the suburb taken to its logical conclusion— the technoburb is a "perimeter city", a new decentralized city that draws new technological industries into itself. The suburb changes function, with the result that it is no longer necessary to even enter the core of the city, since the technoburb has everything. Fishman explains that the technoburb is "a peripheral zone, perhaps as large as a county, that has emerged as a viablesocioeconomic unit" (Fishman 1987: 184). It is no coincidence that Ballard's Crash is set in the Ashford/Heathrow technoburb area of London. The "real" city is now located in these decentralized urban areas, occupied by the affluent, but the problem is that the technoburb has no real boundaries, since the split between work/home has been effaced; in a sense the suburb is too successful. The gated community can be seen as a solution to this problem; it is a reactivation of the ideology of the suburb within the technoburb, with necessary changes. There is no longer any need for the bourgeois family, but the technoburb does successfully sever links with the core of the city, allowing urban decay to accelerate.

But since the gated community is now the social, there is no longer any need to manage Otherness, as it no longer exists as a feature of the social, and this conveniently circumvents the shortcomings of the suburb. Edward J.Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder remark: "they market not just homes in a carefully planned environment, but a total living experience. This is the new town as lifestyle. As reflected in advertizing and the complexity of design and amenities, the commodity they are selling is not just houses, but a community" (Blakely and Snyder 1997: 63). This is not just a commodified version of community as these writers imply, but also the formation of the social itself. This is what is interesting about Ballard's fiction; much of Ballard's oeuvre can be considered to be "science fiction", or at least some form of speculative fiction, but this form of writing is generally predicated upon the exploration of "Otherness".3 In Ballard's fiction, there is an overall move from the exploration of "Otherness" (always an ideological concept anyway as this paper seeks to demonstrate) to the exploration of "Identity". None of the short stories examined by this paper are about the gated community in any explicit sense (unlike novels such as Running Wild), but are

more useful for since they illustrate how the ideology of "the social" underpins the gated community ethos, and how under such circumstances we can react against this. The ideology of the social reaches its apotheosis in the postmodern valorization of "Identity", and this paper seeks to show how the gated community is a concrete manifestation of this process. Ultimately this paper seeks to expose how the ideologies of the social lurk behind our best intentions, and so attempts to eschew the moral critique of the gated community in favour of one that is more radical.

Life within the spaceship Zeus follows sharply imposed media roles, immediately suggesting that this space flight serves far more covert desire than those of scientific enquiry. Ballard writes, "life within the spacecraft was presented as a cross between a TV sitcom and a classroom course in elementary astronautics. The crew tolerantly went along with these charades" (Ballard 1997b: 34). The crew is forced to watch episodes of Dallas, Dynasty, and The Flintstones, and have interviews with the media. Arguably these films correspond to a North American conception of the social, fusing what Timothy W.Luke calls "teletraditional values" with old-fashioned materialism.4 Ballard points out "everyone responded to the calm and dignified presence of Colonel Irwin, the deadpan humour of Captain Horner, the chirpy computer-speak of the mercurial Japanese, and the mothering but sometimes flirtatious eye of Dr.Valentina" (Ballard 1997b: 33). Romance, drama and pathos are injected into the slightly boring shell of the everyday, ushering in a conception of the social as a site of adventure and possibility that has more in common with soap opera than the real world.

Ballard goes further, saying, "Dr.Valentina was seen replacing a filling in Commander Merritt's mouth, and Professor Kawahito, the heart-throb of a billion Asian viewers, won a hard-fought chess tournament against the Zeus IV's combined on-board computers. Romance was in the air as Dr.Valentina's cabin door remained tantalizingly ajar" (Ballard 1997b: 34). Herein lies the popularity of "reality TV", since it functions as a surrogate social; these programs would be far more revolutionary and interesting if instead of engaging in group activities

and mindless intrigues, the contestants just kept to their rooms and avoided each other. Interestingly, this has parallels with Ballard's description of the ship as resembling Star Trek— he writes "its wide control rooms and observation decks, its crew facilities and non-denominational chapel (if a marriage was arranged, Colonel Irwin was authorized to conduct it) happily reminded TV viewers of the Starship Enterprise in the Star Trek TV series, still endlessly broadcast on a hundred networks' (Ballard 1997b: 33). Similarly, the TV series Star Trek, far removed from the science fiction milieu and in fact more closely resembling a soap opera, is a surrogate social for many people; it has its everyday dramas and its social workers to cope with them, and the crew's overall aim is to facilitate a galaxy-wide birthing of the social. Significantly, the "bad guys" in this TV series are those that resist this "humane" assimilation process.

Baudrillard describes the process whereby the social is created and ultimately regresses as follows:

> If the social is formed out of abstract instances which are laid down one after the other on the ruins of the symbolic and ceremonial edifice of former societies, then these institutions produce more and more of them. But at the same time they consecrate that ravenous, all-consuming abstraction which perhaps devours precisely the "essential marrow" of the social. From that point of view, it could be said that the social regresses to the same degree as its institutions develop (Baudrillard 1983: 65-66).

The social is an alibi, an empty term concealing a loss of reciprocity, but no matter how hard the fundamentalists of the social strive, working in charities, local authorities or quangos, the masses will ultimately resist this acculturation process. The social has a liminal existence, located somewhere between the lost symbolic societies and our own, where it struggles on in simulation. The result is that in simulation the social is more prevalent than ever— Baudrillard says "litter piling up from the symbolic order as it blows around, it is the social as remainder which has assumed real force and which is soon to be universal. Here is

a more subtle form of death" (Baudrillard 1983: 72). If the social cannot be impressed upon all and is a failing strategy, then the social can and must emerge through the production and management of social "waste". This "new sentimental order" is a paroxystic phase, symptomatic of the general crisis of mediocrity in Western culture. As a result "other people's misery and humanitarian catastrophes have become our last stamping ground for adventurers" (Baudrillard 1998a: 15). This ideology forms the soft core of current "inclusive" thinking, whereby emphasis is shifted from sovereignty to identity through the processing of social groups that are perceived in some way to be outside society. Baudrillard says:

> Proportional to the reinforcement of social reason, it is the whole community which soon becomes residual and hence, by one more spiral, the social which piles up. When the remainders reach the dimensions of the whole of society, one has a perfect socialization. Everybody is completely excluded and taken in charge, completely disintegrated and socialized (Baudrillard 1983: 74).

Opposed to this, reversion has more power than force, since it does not follow the polar model of power—agonistic challenge exterminates each pole, precluding the formation of a "social contract". With no social contract (the desideratum of the advocates of the social), there can be no social relations, and therefore no social. This is the danger of uncritically celebrating the liberation of sexuality, since it can only lead to the formation of a "sexual relation", and in turn legitimate the social. Alternatively, seduction is based around challenge, so no "sexual relation", in the sense of social relation, is possible. Curiously, on the Zeus the opportunities for such sexual relations are rife and in fact are actively encouraged by the authorities, yet this event never occurs.

Hence the social allows the formation of social relations, and when socialization reaches its fulfilment, the social itself becomes refuse; the social itself becomes the remainder. The social is transmuted into waste, excrement. This has lead Baudrillard to conclude, "retrospectively, it will be seen that the social sphere was only ever invented as a place to park the have-nots. And that today

they're even being gradually expelled from there, like the Indians being driven off their reservations, thus allowing the better-off classes to occupy the social sphere as a second home" (Baudrillard 1998a: 68).

A good example of this is how the phenomena of crime, once considered an unavoidable facet of the social, becomes in the gated community a privileged commodity to which the affluent have sole access. In Cocaine Nights (1997) Ballard points out "deviance in Estrella de Mar was a commodity under jealous guard" (Ballard 1997a: 35). This is a problem with "punk" theorists conceiving of violence and crime as a source of pure negation; within the gated community crime can be a form of recreation, while outside it is considered to be a dangerous activity. In the gated community "fatality is evoked and signified on all sides, so that banality may revel in it and find favour" (Baudrillard 1998b: 36). The sublimity of the car crash or ratissage can be an ideological prop to the consumer society, in order to justify its empty hedonism. Ballard writes, "the Zeus, in fact, no longer needed the Earth, and the Nasa officials accepted that only psychological means would ever persuade the crew to leave their craft" (Ballard 1997b: 39). The Zeus is now the social, and enjoys this status once everyone else has been excluded. The social is conjured into existence only for it to be disposed of; social remainders are processed into a "substance", dumped like industrial waste, facilitating the crystallization of a social that only the affluent may occupy. This vast emptying out of the social circumvents the problem of the recalcitrant masses, since its effects are achieved in miniature.

Perhaps the underlying thought is that the affluent will not resist the social since they have too much at stake in it, therefore a more localized strategy is called for. But this can be a dangerous underestimation, as the children in Running Wild testify. This is perhaps one of the problems with Roger Luckhurst's view of Concrete Island as a kind of technological uncanny in which:

> Surmounted and abandoned technologies and artefacts live on in the interstices of new economies. The rubble and ruins of the concrete island

> constitute the surmounted urban spaces that Crash, in its glazed, ecstatic rhetoric, seeks to repress but cannot (Luckhurst 1997: 135).

Luckhurst is correct to point out that simulacral landscapes encourage the idea that all-previous historical moments have been erased, and that this is the wrong attitude to take. Of course, the world still exists outside the social as it did before, it is simply that as far as the social is concerned it does not exist, and since the social can and does define what is "real" (certainly in the sense of what is historically contingent). For example, for a historical materialist such as Marx, the "real" can only be the proletariat, the subject/object of History, and for him the dialectic of History emerges from this point. The protagonists of Concrete Island are the social remainders that no longer have anything at stake in the social; this accounts for their invisibility and for all intents and purposes they lie outside History. To assign some sense of "archaeological depth" to these spaces is a misguided attempt to draw these social remainders back within the trajectory of conventional Marxist eschatology; the social no longer wants these people since their usefulness is at an end. To ascribe a historical destiny to a putative archaeological space, one considered to be a sump of "lost" historical energy that can be recovered, is perhaps an unwise move to resurrect a moribund conception of the social. Clearly the rooms in "The Enormous Space" expand because of their position outside History, outside the social, but this strength doesn't come from a forced exile but inertial forms of resistance tapped through a voluntary exile. To a certain degree the outcasts of Crash and Concrete Island have little choice but to occupy these non-places.

In the story "A Place and a Time to Die", Ballard produces a nightmare scenario for the pious fundamentalists of the social. For Baudrillard, the feminist valorization of "difference" and the attendant ideology of identity constitute a more contemporary form of alienation, whereby social remainders are absorbed into the social, assigned a differential mark and expelled as processed matter. Baudrillard explains, "we no longer fight for sovereignty or glory, we fight for identity. Sovereignty was a mastery; identity is merely a reference. Sovereignty

was adventurous; identity is linked to security" (Baudrillard 1998a: 49). Identity emerges as one of the survival strategies of the social, and the Asian regime conquering Britain in this story have no interest in this concept whatsoever. Ballard describes the central protagonists of this short story as follows: "Mannock, the retired and now slightly eccentric police chief, and his reluctant deputy, a thyroidal used-car salesman" (Ballard 1992: 155). These are people who have a great deal ideologically invested in the idea of the social, one as its protector while the other as its parasite. Forbis represents the inverse of the liberal pieties of the social, and has a "table laid out like an altar with dozens of far-right magazines, pathological hate-sheets and heaven knew what other nonsense printed on home presses" (Ballard 1992: 157). Both Forbis and Mannock subscribe to a somewhat nostalgic view of the social, that of the inclusive society of modernity where social remainders are assimilated in a brutal and uncompromising fashion.5 This nostalgia for the social is exhibited in Mannock putting his old uniform back on before the coming battle: "he had planned this small gesture— a pointless piece of sentimentality, he well knew— as a private goodbye to himself and the town, but the faded metal badges had about the same relevance to reality as the rusty hubcap lying in a gutter a few feet away" (Ballard 1992: 160). The Marxist Hathaway possibly has more in common with more contemporary exclusive societies, where social diversity is encouraged as an enrichment of the social. However, Hathaway is something of an extremist, taking shots at Mannock, convincing himself "that he was a martyr to the capitalist conspiracy" (Ballard 1992: 162). As a Marxist, Hathaway subscribes to the notion of sociality, a chimerical trapping of Marxist eschatology, and therefore has much invested in the idea of the social. His somewhat warped version of class struggle, influenced more by ressentiment than critical thinking, is a means of ushering in his conception of the social. Ballard is making the point that these political interests and convictions that ostensibly serve important causes, in fact disclose very private, covert interests, in this case the survival of the social. The problem with the older forms of assimilation was that via a return of the repressed, social remainders tended to return; the exclusive society, through its rhetoric of social

inclusion, promises a purer conception of the social.

The invaders carry slogans and party literature, along with pictures of political leaders, but the lack of violent means suggests a repudiation of the dialectical finalities of the political. The invaders do not fire upon the trio of stragglers, nor even acknowledge their presence — it is a curiously muted conquest. Ballard writes "a troupe of young women surrounded Mannock, staring up at him without any curiosity as they chanted their slogans. Most of them were little more than children, with earnest mannequin-like faces under close-cropped hair" (Ballard 1992: 164). This invasion is a play of signs subverting the political via its own methods; there is no secret, nothing behind the chanted slogans. From the point-of-view of this invasion, the discourses of the social are a retrograde ideology catering to a postmodern preoccupation with the "real". Of course, to the representatives of the social the "fatal strategy" of the invaders is a total obscenity and beyond their comprehension. Mannock states incredulously "'Can't you understand?…They're not interested in us! They're not interested at all!'" (Ballard 1992: 164). What is at stake in both inclusive and exclusive forms of the social is recognition at one level or another; inclusive forms reach their apotheosis in the ghetto or the Panopticon, while the exclusive form of the social is predicated upon differentialist forms of inclusion.6 But as Baudrillard has pointed out, in some symbolic societies colonists were ignored by the indigenous population as if they did not exist. In symbolic societies the social does not exist; in a society of total reciprocity there can be no such thing as social remainders. There exists in these societies an almost total empiricism which means that any notion of the "real" or reality is worthless, so that there is nothing to be conjured into existence, hallucinated or feel nostalgic for. Symbolic societies are "always already" there, so the survival strategy of the social is meaningless. Baudrillard says "banality, inertia, apoliticism used to be fascist; they are in the process of becoming revolutionary— without changing meaning, without ceasing to have meaning" (Baudrillard 1983: 40). For Baudrillard, the new revolt will be one of an inertial, ironic objectivity, and it is for this reason that Mannock, Forbis and Hathaway are denied the opportunity to become martyrs of the social.

In the story "The Enormous Space" the central protagonist Geoffrey Ballantyne draws a perverse strength from his dreams of nothing; hisneighbour Mrs.Johnson copes with the boredom of everyday life through culture industry opium dreams of Martinique or Mauritius. Ballard writes:

> My decision to dream that dream may have been made this morning, but I assume that its secret logic begun to run through my life many months ago. Some unknown source of strength sustained me through the unhappy period of my car accident, convalescence and divorce, and the unending problems that faced me at the merchant bank on my return (Ballard 1991: 118).

Mr.Ballantyne proceeds to reject his friends and colleagues, the representatives of the social such as doctors and solicitors, even his ex-wife. These people represent the various facets of the social, and through rejecting contact with other people he is unconsciously rejecting the social. Upon ripping out the phone he thinks, "I feel tremendously buoyant, almost lightheaded, nothing matters any more. Think only of essentials: the physics of the gyroscope, the flux of photons, the architecture of very large structures" (Ballard 1991: 119). Through contemplating things over which he has no control, he accedes to an inertial, ironic objectivity. This constitutes a total reversal of the conventional Marxist response to the culture industry; conventionally mass culture is critiqued on the basis that it denies participation, but here this lack of input is actively encouraged and seen as a more valid response to cultural manipulation. By burning all forms of personal identification he precludes the possibility of any potential participation in the social, since to participate merely affirms its existence. Mr.Ballantyne remarks:

> In every way I am marooned, but a reductive Crusoe paring away exactly those elements of bourgeois life which the original Robinson so dutifully reconstituted. Crusoe wished to bring the Croydons of his own day to life again on his island. I want to expel them, and find in their place a far

> richer realm formed from the elements of light, time and space (Ballard 1991: 120).

Mr.Ballantyne also resists any form of acculturation, recognizing that behind its blandishments lies a commitmentto the social. Through taking an active role in society one helps the social to survive, and ironically may be doing you more harm than good. Mr.Ballantyne comments:

> I am no longer dependent on myself. I feel no obligation to that person who fed and groomed me, who provided me with expensive clothes, who drove me about in his motor-car, who furnished my mind with intelligent books and exposed me to interesting films and art exhibitions. Wanting none of these, I owe that person, myself, no debts (Ballard 1991: 121).

However, too open a struggle is dangerous and he soon attracts the attention of a policeman. He then vows to keep his "internal migration" hidden behind a façade of bourgeois respectability, employing a far more seductive strategy. One is reminded of Ballard's remark "Actually go for the complete bourgeois life— do it without ever smiling; do it without ever winking. In a way, that may be the late 20th century's equivalent of Gauguin going off to Tahiti" (Juno and Vale 1984: 9). Through a hyperconformist stance one can achieve more than a blatantly contestatory gesture. He is "condemned to the despair of a womenless world" (Ballard 1991: 123) by his rejection of his ex-wife Margaret and Mrs.Johnson, but he is not concerned because it means he leaves the circuit of sexual production to which he was formerly committed. He both rejects the transcendent possibilities of "everyday life" and any attempt to escape the tedium of the "everyday"— instead there is no escape to be envisioned, only the hyperconformism of a grinding inertia. Mr.Ballantyne remarks "Margaret has remained in a more limited world, one of a huge cast of repertory players in that everlasting provincial melodrama called ordinary life" (Ballard 1991: 124). He can extract no redeeming qualities from "everyday life" because it is too closely imbricated within the notion of the social, so the solution is to deny himself any form of identity. Under

this self-imposed exile the dimensions of his house expand enormously, releasing possibilities of existence that the social has closed off.

When the surrogate social of the *Zeus* collapses, the authorities desperately seek explanations in order to try and dispel the troubling material they have unleashed. Upon arrival on Earth the crew resolutely refuse to leave their craft. Ballard writes "after six months the NASA psychiatrists concluded that the crew of the Zeus IV had suffered a traumatic mental collapse, probably brought on by oxygen starvation, and were now in a vegetative state" (Ballard 1997b: 40). But the problem has been that in a sense this attempt to fabricate the social in miniature was too successful, and has regressed like every other past attempt to construct the social. Eventually the ship is just abandoned as the hull cannot be breached, but the enigma continues so explanations must be sought.7 A deranged security officer lights a fire under the ship, while a Hollywood telepathist claims that the astronauts had met God and were sworn to silence. Later it becomes a haven for hippies and a tourist site. The social must be made to utter more signs, to attest to the existence of the social— if the Zeus is now the social, it has to survive as a replacement reality principle. But these attempts to solicit some sort of response are met with total silence and disinterest from the entombed crew. Through scientific analysis the hull is eventually breached, and the following is discovered:

> An aged couple, Commander John Merritt and Dr. Valentina Tsarev, now in their late eighties, sat in their small cabins, hands folded on their laps. There were no books or ornaments beside their simple beds. Despite their extreme age they were clearly alert, tidy and reasonably well nourished. Most mysteriously, across their eyes moved the continuous play of a keen and amused intelligence (Ballard 1997b: 43).

Clearly the survivors are in no way insane, and have weaned themselves off the culture industry fodder that they were given to prepare their roles as the surrogate social. By refusing to "play the game", the crew had carried out a symbolic protest that could not be interpreted or recuperated by the apologists for the social. This is

an esoteric form of symbolic violence that turns the logic of the system against itself— Baudrillard explains, "it answers the systematic exclusion our society practices by even more exclusion, cutting itself off from the social world by indifference or hatred. For it may be aggravated or apathetic: it may take the form of an active terrorism or that of the inertia and irrepressible conformism of the masses" (Baudrillard 1998a: 66). But the violent protest is more easily co-opted—for example, we have become complicit in the prostitution of the violent image found in the cinema. The hyperconformist strategy is too enigmatic to be hijacked by the social, since through this stance the social can be made to tear itself apart through an unremitting legitimation crisis.

Endnotes

1 This paper often employs the term "the masses", but in the non-pejorative sense employed by Baudrillard; the strength of the masses is located in its black-hole style capacity to absorb messages.

2 See Zygmunt Bauman, Postmodernity and its Discontents (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998) 14. The flawed consumer is the outcast from the postmodern orgy who either consumes too badly or too well. Examples could be ethnic minorities, criminals and the poor.

3 See Jenny Wolmark, Aliens and Others: Science Fiction, Feminism and Postmodernism (Iowa: Iowa University Press, 1994).

4 For more on teletraditional values see Timothy W.Luke, Screens of Power (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989) 73.

5 For the differences between the inclusive society of modernity and the exclusive society of postmodernity see Jock Young, The Exclusive Society (London: Sage Publications, 1999) 28.

6 And also new forms of differentialist prejudice. See Zygmunt Bauman, Postmodernity and its Discontents (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998) 14.

7 Cf. Joan Lindsay, Picnic at Hanging Rock (London: Penguin, 1970). In this novel the disappearance of the students remains an unexplainable problem,

setting in play a chain of events stemming from the desperate need to resolve this enigma.

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First Response

Although this essay is weakened by an uncritical adoption of Baudrillard's ideas, it nevertheless presents an intelligent response to Ballard's fiction. This is admirable. And, as the importance of Ballard's work is likely to be even more widely recognised in future, this kind of attempt to analyse his thought is very welcome.