

❖ J. G. Ballard · Author

James Graham Ballard wrote *Crash* in 1973. He is widely acknowledged as one of science fiction's pre-eminent writers, and one of modern literature's most distinctive voices.

Few people have had the kind of experiences that Ballard had. He was born on November 15, 1930 in Shanghai, China where his father was the manager of a subsidiary of a British textile manufacturer. Shanghai was, as Ballard put it in a 1982 interview, “one of the most extraordinary and bizarre places on earth, a place where anything went, completely without restraints.” The city's large population of foreign nationals lived in luxury, in American-style houses with air-conditioning, refrigerators and approximately 10 English language radio stations to choose from. Ballard himself lived in a house with nine servants and a chauffeur-driven Packard. All of the Chinese servants spoke English.

His family was interned in a Japanese prison camp in 1942, returning to England in 1946. Ballard studied medicine at Cambridge (at one time he considered becoming a psychiatrist), but never practiced. While at Cambridge, he entered a story in the university's crime story competition; it won. After Cambridge, he studied English for a year at London University, but was kicked out. Ultimately, he ended up joining the Royal Air Force out of a desire to learn how to fly. When he was sent to the RAF training base in Canada, Ballard discovered racks of science fiction magazines in the airbase cafeteria: “*I've never looked back!*”



JG Ballard

His first short story was published in 1956. This and many other short stories were published in science fiction magazines and were heavily influenced by the surrealist movement. Many critics see the short story as central to Ballard's work, originating and developing themes and obsessions that progress through into his novels. The dislocated sense of time and space in these stories is located in his childhood experience of war and provides many of the images that have become associated with Ballard's fiction: wrecked machinery, deserted beaches, crashed cars, abandoned buildings and empty, desolate landscapes.

His early novels include **The Wind from Nowhere** (1962), **The Drought** (1965) and **The Crystal World** (1966). His 1962 novel **The Drowned World** brought Ballard commercial success and critical recognition, which was confirmed by the reception of the short story titled **The Terminal Beach** in 1964. Ballard's semi-autobiographical and best-selling novel **Empire of the Sun** (1984) brought him to wider public attention and was made into an Academy Award nominated film by Steven Spielberg, starring John Malkovich and Miranda Richardson. The novel drew directly on his childhood wartime experiences and won many prizes.

Ballard's other novels include: *High-Rise*, *Concrete Island*, *Hello America*, *The Day of Creation*, *Running Wild* and many more. In addition to his novels, Ballard has published several collections of short stories. Among them: *The Voices of Time*, *War Fever*, *Low-Flying Aircraft*, *The Overloaded Man* and *Passport to Eternity*.

1) CYBERPUNK

In the late 1970's and early '80's a new type of writing style came about that relied on many of the traditional criteria to be called science fiction, but had a certain something else that had many people agreeing that it was not just science fiction. This new style of writing was so different and so many people started writing in this style that the general public decided that it was time this genre of writing deserved a label: *cyberpunk*. Cyberpunk is a literary movement in which the authors are working toward the goal of writing fiction that focuses on the actual or projected technological nature of society and that utilizes sexual imagery as a representation of the importance of sex in our culture. Cyberpunk itself as a linguistic unit consists of two words: cybernetics and punk. Punk is probably the most important part of this compound, because a lot of authors who are representatives of the cyberpunk movement actually played in punk bands as for example John Shirley and Bruce Sterling. Punk in general, as a music genre is considered to be a major influence on the cyberpunk writers. The expression "cyberpunk" is firstly mentioned in the title of a short story written by Bruce Bethke published in the magazine *Amazing Stories* in 1983. However, the official entrance of the phrase into the everyday language took place in 1984, when Gardner Dozois wrote an article "SF in the Eighties" which was published in *Washington Post*. *The Movement's* (the previous title for what we know now as cyberpunk) most significant representative is William Gibson and his successful novel entitled Neuromancer. William Gibson's novel was the first major work to get recognized from this category, it seemed to set the norm of what cyberpunk included, and what a piece of writing needed to have to get labeled cyberpunk. Cyberpunk does not define the works that are in it; rather, the works define what cyberpunk consists of.

One of the most distinctive features of cyberpunk is **the technological aspect**. Traditional science fiction dealt with things that were possible, but not probable. Cyberpunk not only deals possible, not just the probable, but technology that man already has. The elements that make up the technological nature of our society include nuclear science, fusion of organic and inorganic matter, computers, artificial organs, genetic engineering, the Internet and virtual reality. Cyberpunks are talking about technology that if it were to be developed, it would be within the writer's lifetime or so. The other difference in the technology that is described in cyberpunk is how it is used. Almost every person has access to the technology. More importantly, the technology involved normally allows for extreme human inter-action with it. The writer will make computers and humans connect, and allow the computer to alter the mind, human social behaviors, and/or society itself. This aspect is the main plot in Gibson's novel. His main character, Chase, needs to find a way to reverse the damage in a chip in his head for him to do the type of work he wanted to do. Before cyberpunk, humans had control over their technology, and it was a separate entity, but now the distinction over how much a person is human and how much of them are machine is not so clear. Now humans have lost the ability to control their technology.

The subject of sex is used in cyberpunk prose because it is so pervasive in society. Sex is everywhere; it is present in advertising, film and television. The cyberpunk authors create futuristic societies that contain sex in an amount equivalent to present day society to add a realistic feel to their view of the future.

Another important feature of cyberpunk is **the integration of everyday events and items** that affect people the most. In Neuromancer, Gibson allows Chase to go in to a bar and have a beer. This may not be an overly exciting event, one that many people do every day, but the type of event that cyberpunks write about. People have been going into bars for centuries, and

will probably do so for many years into the future, cyberpunks allow this to happen. Other writers will incorporate music as a main motive in their stories. Almost everybody hears some sort of music everyday; it is a common event that these writers incorporate to make the stories seem more real. Other forms of science fiction adopt these ideas, but make them seem that they are not a part of everyday life. Take Star Trek, for instance. This show is what most people view as a typical science fiction story line. Hardly ever in these shows do they do leisurely things, such as listen to music, without it being a big deal.

The uniqueness of cyberpunk may be of question to the reader because many contemporary authors write about sex and technology, but those authors do not predict the consequences of technology. Cyberpunk writers use the current level of technology to consider the possible consequences of their use. People may disagree with the claim that all cyberpunk writers have the goal of writing science fiction about the technological and sexual aspects of society. However, given the majority of sexual and technological material in the stories, it may be construed that, on the whole, prose in the cyberpunk genre possesses these elements.

Most styles of writing are hard to define because there is no exact definition of what the style is; the writing always defines the genre. One can only group works with certain similarities to make classifications easier. Cyberpunk is relatively easy to group, but it is even harder to define since it is considered to be within the larger group of science fiction. The label itself grows and changes with every work that is added, making cyberpunk a broader, more open category and harder to define.

The difference between science fiction and cyberpunk

Probably the most significant difference between cyberpunk and science fiction is the view the writers take. Almost all of the "traditional" science fiction had an extroverted writing style. Those writers have the world met by other phenomena; such as men going out and finding aliens or having the aliens come and invade the earth. Cyberpunk writers are much more introverted. They write from the point of view that the world creates the main conflict in the story, not that the world encounters the conflict. Cyberpunks manifest their work to describe what the world will become, not what the world will encounter. Gibson's novel set forth this idea having the plot center on the earth, and no where else.

Ballard's view (taken from the introduction to *Crash*)

He firmly believes that science fiction, far from being an unimportant minor genre, in fact represents the main literary tradition of the 20th century, and certainly its oldest. From the very start, when he first turned to science fiction, he was convinced that the future was a better key to the present than the past. At the time, however, he was dissatisfied with science fiction's obsession with its two principal themes - outer space and the far future. Primarily he wanted to write a fiction about the present day. To take this crucial step, it required completely different techniques from those available to the 19th century novelist.

The writer's role, his authority and license to act, has changed radically. In a sense, the writer knows nothing any longer. He has no moral standpoint. He offers the reader the contents of his own head; he offers a set of options and imaginative alternatives. His role is that of the scientist, whether on safari or in his laboratory, faced with a completely unknown terrain or subject.

The balance between fiction and reality has changed significantly in the past decade [1960s]. Increasingly their roles are reversed. We live in a world ruled by fictions of every kind - mass merchandising, advertising, the instant translation of science and technology into popular imagery. We live inside an enormous novel. For the writer in particular it is less and less necessary for him to invent the fictional content of his novel. The fiction is already there. The writer's task is to invent the reality.

In the past we have always assumed that the external world around us represented reality, however confusing or uncertain, and that the inner world of our minds, its dreams, hopes, ambitions, represented the realm of fantasy and the imagination. These roles, too, it seems to Ballard, have been reversed. The most effective method of dealing with the world around us is to assume that it is a complete fiction - conversely, what's left of reality is inside our own heads.

Throughout *Crash* Ballard has used the car not only as a sexual image, but also as a total metaphor for man's life in today's society. As such the novel has a political role quite apart from its sexual content, but Ballard would still like to think that *Crash* is the first pornographic novel based on technology. In a sense, pornography is the most political form of fiction, dealing with how we use and exploit each other in the most urgent and ruthless way.

2) SUMMARY

A middle class couple - James and Catherine Ballard - seems bored and alienated. A serious car accident shakes James out of his routine. He chooses to assign it some erotic significance. Through the widow of a man killed in the crash, he comes into contact with a group, headed by Robert Vaughan that derives sexual pleasure from car collisions. Its members specialize in reenacting famous auto accidents; those of James Dean, Jayne Mansfield, etc. James, Catherine, Robert and the latter's disciples proceed to explore the various sexual possibilities of the automobile, including some that involve risking their lives in highway traffic.

The main characters

James Ballard – The author and also the narrator of the novel. He is a producer of TV commercials and has a wife, named Catherine. He leads quite “a normal life” until he causes a car crash, in which he kills a man. This presents a turning point for him and basically forces him to change the perception of his own body:

“The week after the accident had been a maze of pain and insane fantasies. After the commonplaces of everyday life, with their muffled dramas, all my organic expertise for dealing with physical injury had long been blunted or forgotten. The crash was the only real experience I had been through for years. For the first time I was in physical confrontation with my own body, an inexhaustible encyclopedia of pains and discharges.” (39)

After the accident, he begins to have an affair with a wife of the deceased who was also involved in the crash, a doctor Helen Remington. James is not true to his wife; he also has sex with his secretary, Renata and many other women, even hookers. But this does not present a problem in their marriage. In fact, polygamy actually serves as a material for their own sex life.

When James meets Vaughan, he is instantly fascinated with his appearance and his unusual interest in car crashes. Throughout the novel, James becomes infatuated with him, which eventually results in sex between them under the influence of LSD:

“Together we showed our wounds to each other, exposing the scars on our chests and hands to the beckoning injury sites on the interior of the car, to the pointed sills of the chromium ashtrays, to the lights of a distant intersection. In our wounds we celebrated the re-birth of the traffic-slain dead, the deaths and injuries of those we had seen dying by the roadside and the imaginary wounds and postures of the millions yet to die.” (203)

Robert Vaughan – The sinister hero of Crash. He derives sexual pleasure out of car collisions. For Vaughan “the motor-car was the sexual act's greatest and only true locus” (171). He takes photographs of victims involved in car crashes and observes their wounded body parts, especially genitals. From its first sentence (“Vaughan died yesterday in his last car-crash” [1]) to its last, Crash pursues the image of Vaughan. He is an “ugly golden creature, made beautiful by its scars and wounds” (201).

What is special about Vaughan is also his obsession with a real-life actress Elizabeth Taylor. He wants to see her die in a car crash; moreover, he even wishes to be involved when the accident happens. That is why he spends a lot of his time planing her death and consequently also his own. Eventually, he fulfills his dream, although Liz Taylor survives the tragic accident. As Ballard comments on Vaughan’s “death”:

"I thought of Vaughan, covered with flies like a resurrected corpse, watching me with a mixture of irony and affection. I knew that Vaughan could never really die in a car-crash, but would in some way be re-born through those twisted radiator grilles and cascading windshield glass" (210).

Catherine Ballard – Like her husband, she also has affairs with other men and is sexually attracted to women, one of them being her secretary Karen. Catherine is taking a course in piloting and becomes quite concerned about James's health after the accident. The car crash was not cathartic only for James but also for Catherine. She becomes more relaxed and begins to understand her own life and sexuality. The car crash brings the couple back together and relights the fire in their relationship. Witness Ballard's lust for Catherine:

"Every aspect of Catherine at this time seemed a model of something else, endlessly extending the possibilities of her body and personality. As she stepped naked across the floor of the bathroom, pushing past me with a look of nervous distraction; as she masturbated in the bed beside me in the mornings, thighs splayed symmetrically, fingers groveling at her pubis as if rolling to death some small venereal snot; as she sprayed deodorant into her armpits, those tender fossas like mysterious universes; as she walked with me to my car, fingers playing amiably across my left shoulder--all these acts and emotions were ciphers searching for their meaning among the hard, chromium furniture of our minds. A car-crash in which she would die was the one event which would release the codes waiting within her." (180)

What is fascinating about Catherine is her perfectibility and cleanness. She always looks good – her make-up is perfected to details, there is no single evidence of any kind of dirtiness on her body; she looks like a doll. Her unusual beauty is thus questionable to James – he believes that her whole identity is a mystery.

Helen Remington – A widow, with whom James gets sexually involved after the accident. Ballard starts to feel an amazing connection between him and Helen at the scene of the accident. Their sexual acts take place in cars only, none of them cannot perform in places other than the automobile. Every single sexual intercourse between them is a reconstruction of death of Helen's deceased husband and in some weird sense also a way for Helen to revenge her husband's death. Helen has multiple affairs with many other men. The car crash and the death of her husband have become the key to a new form of sexuality. It seems that Helen tries to bring her dead husband to life, like all of the sperm that is mixing in her uterus will refresh the fading image of her dead man.

3) ANALYSIS

THEMES & MOTIVES

SEX - Sexual acts themselves, and *Crash* is full of them - genital, oral, anal, confirm no intimacy, communicate no love, produce pleasures that are purely formal. As it is seen in the following extract, the entire erotic vocabulary is technical: not ass, prick, or cunt, but anus, rectum, penis, vulva. No slang, no intimacy in the sexual violence, only functional language:

“As the car traveled for the first time at twenty miles an hour Vaughan drew his fingers from the girl's vulva and anus, rotated his hips and inserted his penis in her vagina. Headlamps flared above us as the stream of cars moved up the slope of the overpass. In the rear-view mirror I could still see Vaughan and the girl, their bodies lit by the car behind, reflected in the black trunk of the Lincoln and a hundred points of the interior trim. In the chromium ashtray I saw the girl's left breast and erect nipple. In the vinyl window gutter I saw deformed sections of Vaughan's thighs and her abdomen forming a bizarre anatomical junction. Vaughan lifted the young woman astride him, his penis entering her vagina again. In a triptych of images reflected in the speedometer, the clock and the revolution counter, the sexual act between Vaughan and this young woman took place in the hooded grottoes of these luminescent dials, moderated by the surging needle of the speedometer.... As I propelled the car at fifty miles an hour along the open deck of the overpass Vaughan arched his back and lifted the young woman into the full glare of the headlamps behind us. Her sharp breasts flashed within the chromium and glass cage of the speeding car. Vaughan's strong pelvic spasms coincided with the thudding passage of the lamp standards anchored in the overpass at hundred-yard intervals. As each one approached his hips kicked into the girl, driving his penis into her vagina, his hands splaying her buttocks to reveal her anus as the yellow light filled the car”. (§15:143)

Liberated from the organic body, sexual acts become “conceptualized acts abstracted from all feeling”. The autoeroticism of *Crash* is thus thoroughly disembodied. Ballard documents the rise of “a new sexuality divorced from any possible physical expression”; a disembodied eroticism that lacks passion even as it multiplies sexual possibilities. The sexuality that Ballard describes in such dispassionate detail recapitulates what he elsewhere calls the “death of affect” characteristic of late industrial culture. Witness the sexual intercourse between Ballard's wife Catherine and his friend Vaughan in the back seat:

“This act was a ritual devoid of ordinary sexuality, a stylized encounter between two bodies which recapitulated their sense of motion and collision. Vaughan's postures, the way in which he held his arms as he moved my wife across the seat, lifting her left knee so that his body was in the fork between her thighs, reminded me of the driver of a complex vehicle, a gymnastic ballet celebrating a new technology. His hands explored the back of her thighs in a slow rhythm, holding her buttocks and lifting her exposed pubis towards his scarred mouth without touching it. He was arranging her body in a series of positions, carefully searching the codes of her limbs and musculature. Catherine seemed still only half aware of Vaughan, holding his penis in her left hand and sliding her fingers towards his anus as if performing an act divorced from all feeling.” (161)

Sexuality is liberated from the life of the organism, so completely a semiotic function that it includes even postures of violent death. So observes Ballard observing Vaughan:

“Often I watched him lingering over the photographs of crash fatalities, gazing at their burnt faces with a terrifying concern, as he calculated the most elegant parameters of their injuries, the junctions of their wounded bodies with the fractured windshield and instrument assemblies. He would mimic these injuries in his own driving postures, turning the same dispassionate eyes on the young women he picked up near the airport. Using their bodies, he recapitulated the deformed anatomies of vehicle crash victims, gently bending the arms of these girls against their shoulders, pressing their knees against his own chest, always curious to see their reactions.” (145)

Such is the new sexuality that *Crash* documents: a disembodied ritual without affect, a semiotics without meaning.

However, there exists another dimension in *Crash*, which is inseparable from those mixing the technical and the sexual: the dimension of **PHOTOGRAPHY AND CINEMA**. The surface of traffic patterns and accidents is without depth, but it always takes on depth in the lens of Vaughan's movie camera. He collects and classifies stills of accidents, like ID cards. The continual rehearsal of the crucial event that he is plotting (his automotive death and the simulated death of the movie star Elizabeth Taylor in a crash involving her, a crash precisely simulated and perfected during the course of months) takes place within the focus of the cinematographic. This universe would be nothing without this hyper-realistic detached long-shot viewing angle. Ballard's prose is that of the camera - flat, mechanical, “hyperreal” - and shows that to write in a technological culture is to represent its technologies of perception. The hyper-reality of Ballard's style is the representational effect of photography. Vaughan is defined by the technologies of photography that condition his perception, as in the following moment of recognition:

“The tall man with the camera sauntered across the roof. I looked through the rear window of his car. The passenger seat was loaded with photographic equipment--cameras, a tripod, a carton packed with flashbulbs. A cine-camera was fastened to a dashboard clamp. He walked back to his car, camera held like a weapon by its pistol grip. As he reached the balcony his face was lit by the headlamps of the police car. I realized that I had seen his pock-marked face many times before, projected from a dozen forgotten magazine profiles--this was Vaughan, Dr Robert Vaughan.” (63)

Technologies of photography become the condition of all that Vaughan does and is. Identity is an effect of the photographic image, which is always already a technological representation, capable of being reproduced and disseminated.

Where a boundary once ruled, as between humanity and machine, a blur now occurs, creating unprecedented relations and new possibilities:

“His photographs of sexual acts, of sections of automobile radiator grilles and instrument panels, conjunctions between elbow and chromium window sill, vulva and instrument binnacle, summed up the possibilities of a new logic created by these multiplying artifacts, the codes of a new marriage of sensation and possibility.” (106)

Boundaries that would assert substantive differences, as between metal and flesh, fall to new associations through the intervention of the lens. On page 112, when Helen tells James that she does not want to have sex on the roof of the parking lot in Northolt anymore, he is instantly disappointed because this means that Vaughan can no longer take photos of their sexual acts; without Robert's camera, James's orgasms would be completely meaningless.

THE BODY - J. G. Ballard's *Crash* reveals the destiny of the human body in a world of automotive disaster. For a body without depth ceases to be an organism in the traditional sense. If to have a body means to inhabit a suit of flesh, then organic substance sets the terms for life. But in Ballard's world, the technological world of late industrial culture, the vital, active organism gives way to the conceptual, abstract image. So it is for Elizabeth Taylor, "real-life" film actress, appearing in Vaughan's apartment and on the novel's opening page in image only:

"The walls of his apartment near the film studios at Shepperton were covered with the photographs he had taken through his zoom lens each morning as she left her hotel in London, from the pedestrian bridges above the westbound motorways, and from the roof of the multi-storey car-park at the studios. The magnified details of her knees and hands, of the inner surface of her thighs and the left apex of her mouth, I uneasily prepared for Vaughan on the copying machine in my office, handing him the packages of prints as if they were the installments of a death warrant. At his apartment I watched him matching the details of her body with the photographs of grotesque wounds in a textbook of plastic surgery." (7-8)

The body becomes conceptualized and is no longer an organic entity. Technologies of photographic representation (re)produce images that wrongfully seize its priority and reconfigure its integrity. The resulting body conceptual can be endlessly manipulated: enlarged, reduced, bisected, rearranged, etc. Once conceptualized, the body is transposable to any corresponding geometry. Elizabeth Taylor's conceptually assimilates the textbook wounds of other anonymous bodies.

In the context of late industrial culture, the old organic model of the body is only a trace of an earlier age, a moment in cultural history when nature could serve as a metaphor for life at its most general. All that has changed. The body has become a conceptual phenomenon. Its image reconfigures those old organic oppositions to represent the new form of life characteristic of late industrial culture.

Ballard's crash disturbs him out of the organic world and into the conceptual. His body ceases to be a vital organism and becomes, in its most physical experience, a conceptual lexicon, an inexhaustible encyclopedia of pains. For it is only when something breaks - a tool, a car, a body - that its function is fully revealed.

THE CAR - *Crash* plots the remarkable logic of an unremarkable observation: that the car sets the terms for life, as we know it. Life has ceased to be an exclusively organic phenomenon, and the automobile, as "a total metaphor for man's life in today's society" (Introduction) plays a decisive role in its transformation.

The car materializes the body conceptual. The photographic image may disseminate that body, but the automobile produces it. A body in a car becomes the prosthesis of a speed machine. As organism, it dies into the life of motor oil and steel, losing human substance and yet life and even passion persist. Witness Ballard's increasing sense of connection with the car he drives, superseding even passion for his young lover:

"The aggressive stylization of this mass-produced cockpit, the exaggerated mouldings of the instrument binnacles emphasized my growing sense of a new junction between my own body and the automobile, closer than my feelings for Renata's broad hips and strong legs stowed out of sight beneath her red plastic raincoat. I leaned forward, feeling the rim of the steering

wheel against the scars on my chest, pressing my knees against the ignition switch and handbrake.” (55)

The impact of the automobile upon the organic body is thus to transform it. Literally. The body in vehicle loses its organic substantiality. Once inside, the body unfolds, becoming a surface without vital depth. The boundary between interior and exterior disappears as body and machine unite conceptually and materially on this surface. It is in this sense that Ballard can describe an automobile with the tender phrase “my own metal body” (113). The lesson of his violent confrontation with a car's interior is that his body shares its life, not as organic substance but as conceptual surface:

“As I looked down at myself I realized that the precise make and model-year of my car could have been reconstructed by an automobile engineer from the pattern of my wounds. The layout of the instrument panel, like the profile of the steering wheel bruised into my chest, was inset on my knees and shinbones.” (28)

Only when reconstructed conceptually by the interior of an automobile does Vaughan's body seem appealing as it is seen in the following extract:

"His attraction lay not so much in a complex of familiar anatomical triggers... but in the stylization of posture achieved between Vaughan and the car. Detached from his automobile, particularly his own emblem-filled highway cruiser, Vaughan ceased to hold any interest" (117).

The automobile is more a sexual signifier than object, condition of conceptual equivalence between body and technology that breeds a new form of life. Witness the encounter between Ballard and Helen Remington, wife of the man killed in a crash with his car:

“The volumes of Helen's thighs pressing against my hips, her left fist buried in my shoulder, her mouth grasping at my own, the shape and moisture of her anus as I stroked it with my ring finger, were each overlaid by the inventories of a benevolent technology--the moulded binnacle of the instrument dials, the jutting carapace of the steering column shroud, the extravagant pistol grip of the handbrake. I felt the warm vinyl of the seat beside me, and then stroked the damp aisle of Helen's perineum. Her hand pressed against my right testicle. The plastic laminates around me, the colour of washed anthracite, were the same tones as her pubic hairs parted at the vestibule of her vulva. The passenger compartment enclosed us like a machine generating from our sexual act an homunculus of blood, semen and engine coolant.” (80-81)

4) CONCLUSION

According to Baudrillard, “Crash constitutes without doubt the contemporary model for this SF which is no longer SF. Crash is our world, nothing is really “invented” therein, everything is hyper-functional: traffic and accidents, technology and death, sex and the camera eye.” (<http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/55/ baudrillard55art.htm>) Crash is not primarily about technology or even sex; it is about catastrophe, a sudden and violent shock to the system that interrupts and illuminates its function. Or as Ballard explained in his Introduction to *Crash*: “The ultimate role of *Crash* is cautionary, a warning against that brutal, erotic realm that beckons more and more persuasively to us from the margins of technological landscapes.”

Cyberpunk literature is undoubtedly a case of Baudrillard’s third order of simulacra, which is “based on information, the model, cybernetic play. Their aim is maximum operationality, hyper-reality, total control.” (<http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/55/ baudrillard55art.htm>) Cyberpunk is a literature about the present moment, the literature of society, which is governed by the media, science and technology. “Options multiply around us, we live in an almost infantile world where any demand, any possibility, whether for lifestyles, travel, sexual roles and identities, can be satisfied instantly.” (Introduction to *Crash*)

Postmodernism has, until now, been considered as the last literary era, but cyberpunk seizes to succeed it. Cyberpunk has already exceeded the possibilities offered by postmodernism, so it is only a matter of time when cyberpunk is going to develop itself to a degree equal to a literary period.

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