

SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

Nuclear weapons, existentialism, and International Relations: Anders, Ballard, and the human condition in the age of extinction

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Abstract

IR scholars increasingly turn to the writings of Existentialists to make sense of the multiple and entangled planetary crises that characterise the twenty-first century. In this article, I argue that two postwar intellectuals, Günther Anders (1902–1992) and J. G. Ballard (1930–2009), offer a rich intellectual ancestry and inspiration to such scholarship. Both authors critically and creatively reworked central Existentialist ideas in the context of postwar technological acceleration and the development of nuclear weapons. To Anders and Ballard, nuclear weapons symbolised, and were the most extreme manifestation of, the pathologies they associated with technological modernity: mass consumption, spectacular violence, a deadening of affect, and an increased inability of humans to psychologically process and grasp the destructive capacities of science and technology. To counter these trends, they both firmly relied on Surrealism to bolster the human imagination as a catalysator for personal and social transformation. I argue that their work offers an opportunity to reconnect the study of nuclear weapons in IR to broader existentialist questions and suggest that their respective attempts to foreground human being in the nuclear age as ‘being-towards-extinction’ holds important lessons for recent attempts to recentre the study of IR around planetary imaginaries of extinction.

Keywords: Günther Anders; J.G. Ballard; Existentialism; extinction; nuclear weapons; technology

Introduction

Your first thought upon awakening be: ‘Atom’. For you should not begin your day with the illusion that what surrounds you is a stable world. Already tomorrow it can be ‘something that only *has been*’.

Günther Anders¹

Goodbye, Hiroshima. Goodbye, Alamagordo. ‘Goodbye, Moscow, London, Paris, New York ...’ He stopped, realizing the futility of this megathlon farewell. Such a leave-taking required him to fix his signature upon every one of the particles of the universe.

J. G. Ballard²

¹Günther Anders, ‘Commandments in the atomic age’, in Günther Anders, *Burning Conscience: The Case of the Hiroshima Pilot, Claude Eatherly Told in His Letters to Günther Anders, Preface by Bertrand Russell* (London, UK: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1962), pp. 11–20 (p. 11).

²J. G. Ballard, ‘The terminal beach’, in J. G. Ballard (2001), *The Complete Stories of J. G. Ballard* (London, UK and New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1964), pp. 589–604 (p. 601).

Existentialism is back in vogue. Today, intellectuals and commentators again turn to the writings of Hannah Arendt, Albert Camus, and Jean-Paul Sartre to make sense of human life in the twenty-first century, a period characterised by multiple and entangled planetary crises, including the ongoing threat of nuclear war, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic.³ The discipline of International Relations (IR) is no exception to this general trend. Over the past decade, scholars within this field have returned to Existentialism in their attempts to understand or confront elementary dynamics of world politics.⁴ Central Existentialist ideas about anxiety, insecurity, and responsibility are now being reapplied in response to the ‘unsettling conditions of existence today’ and to ‘think through the implications of the deeply ambiguous international-global situation’.⁵ In short, the disciplinary turn towards Existentialism, a tradition of thought that foregrounds the absurdity and finality of human existence, ‘can help us better understand and hopefully teach us how to live with the ever-growing dizziness stemming from our perpetually accelerating age of anxiety’.⁶

In this article, I argue that the writings of Günther Anders (1902–1992), an original but somewhat overlooked German philosopher of technology, and J. G. Ballard (1930–2009), one of the most notorious and culturally influential writers to emerge out of postwar Britain, offer a rich intellectual ancestry and inspiration to this revival. Most notably, their work brings into focus how technology, and especially nuclear weapons technology, shaped and transformed the character and meaning of postwar human existence. While the development of nuclear weapons was a key concern to many mid-twentieth-century Existentialists,⁷ IR theorists have so far largely ignored the historical relevance of the nuclear revolution to central Existentialist concepts upon which they draw.⁸ Given that Existentialism is a concrete philosophy focused on lived experience, the conspicuous absence of the nuclear setting means that IR theory risks ending up with a decontextualised, and hence impoverished, understanding of the Existentialist ideas they import.

The general neglect of the nuclear context in which Existentialist philosophy developed also means that Existentialism-inspired IR scholarship risks passing up an obvious chance to initiate a dialogue between Existentialism and IR on a theme that is clearly central to both traditions. I suggest that the intellectual legacies of Anders and Ballard can provide important inspiration to

³Examples of Existentialism’s recent surge in popularity include Robert Zaretsky, ‘Make America Existentialist again’, *Foreign Policy* (20 August 2019), available at: {<https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/08/20/make-america-existentialist-again/>} accessed 7 December 2022, and Carmen Lea Dege, ‘2020’s Existentialist turn’, *Boston Review* (18 August 2020), available at: {<https://bostonreview.net/articles/carmen-dege-existentialism-redux/>} accessed 7 December 2022.

⁴See, for example, the symposium on ‘Exploring Existentialism and International Political theory’, *Journal of International Political Theory*, 9:2 (2013), pp. 155–219, and the symposium on ‘anxiety’, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 24:4 (2021), pp. 1014–63.

⁵Patrick Hayden, ‘Exploring Existentialism and International Political theory: Introduction’, *Journal of International Political Theory*, 9:2 (2013), pp. 155–7 (p. 156).

⁶Jelena Subotić and Filip Ejdus, ‘Towards the existentialist turn in IR: Introduction to the symposium on anxiety’, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 24 (2021), pp. 1014–19 (p. 1019).

⁷See, for example, Albert Camus, ‘After Hiroshima: Between Hell and reason’, trans. Ronald Santoni, *Philosophy Today*, 32:1 (1988 [orig. pub. 1945]), pp. 77–8; David Lethbridge, ‘Constructing peace by freedom: Jean-Paul Sartre, four short speeches on the peace movement, 1952–1955’, *Sartre Studies International*, 18:2 (2012), pp. 1–18; Karl Jaspers, *The Future of Mankind* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1961); Paul Tillich, ‘The hydrogen bomb’, in Paul Tillich, *Theology of Peace*, ed. and intro. Ronald H. Stone (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1954), pp. 158–9; Ronald H. Stone, ‘On the boundary of utopia and politics’, in Russell Re Manning (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Paul Tillich* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 208–20; W. E. B. Du Bois, a prominent representative of ‘Black Existentialism’, was also deeply preoccupied with the nuclear question. See Vincent J. Intondi, *African Americans Against the Bomb: Nuclear Weapons, Colonialism, and the Black Freedom Movement* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015). On the influence of Existentialism on Japanese ‘bomb literature’, see John Whittier Treat, ‘Hiroshima Nōto and Ōe Kenzaburō’s Existentialist Other’, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 47:1 (1987), pp. 97–136.

⁸For an exception, see Benjamin Zala, ‘“No one around to shut the dead eyes of the human race”: Sartre, Aron, and the limits of Existentialism in the Nuclear Age’, *Review of International Studies* (forthcoming).

such a dialogue. Both explicitly foregrounded the unprecedented destructive capacities of science and technology in their characterisations of the human condition and, as such, their writings can help restore the study of human existence at the heart of IR nuclear weapons scholarship. The meaning of human existence in the nuclear age was a core concern for prominent IR theorists writing during the mid-twentieth century,⁹ but present-day studies of nuclear weapons in IR rarely venture beyond narrowly conceived questions of strategy and deterrence.¹⁰ Anders and Ballard's view of nuclear weapons as deeply entrenched in broader trends such as everyday technological acceleration, mass consumption, and the development of new mass communications technologies, offers a compelling argument for again broadening this specialised research agenda.

My joint reading of Anders and Ballard serves two additional purposes. First, it is an important reminder to Existentialist scholarship in IR that it must strive to keep a broad purview. The recent uptake in IR of prominent Existentialist thinkers has been a worthwhile and intellectually rewarding enterprise; yet there is a risk that relevant but lesser-known contributions may inadvertently remain out of view. Anders and Ballard are a case in point. Both are fringe figures in conventional histories of Existentialism, but their bold dissections of the fraught intersections between nuclear weapons and everyday technological acceleration pushed well beyond what most renowned Existentialists had to say on such matters.

Second, by pairing the work of Anders with that of Ballard I also want to stress that Existentialism does not easily translate into a single political or normative position about nuclear weapons. In fact, Anders and Ballard occupied opposite ends in debates about the necessity and desirability of nuclear weapons. Despite their political differences, however, they arrived at a similar diagnosis: the human condition was profoundly transformed by the nuclear revolution. The distinctive contribution that emerges from their thought, I suggest, is the shared realisation that nuclear weapons symbolised, and were the most potent manifestation of, a dangerously absurd – and absurdly dangerous – modernity, characterised by unfreedom, a deadening of affect, and an increased inability of humans to psychologically process and grasp the destructive nature of modern technology.

This article is organised into three sections. I begin with a brief outline of the central place of Existentialism in the work of Anders and Ballard. I also highlight how their work problematised central Existentialist insights as insufficiently attuned to the pervasive presence of technology and its far-reaching implications for the character and meaning of freedom and agency in postwar modernity. Focusing on the emergence of new mass communication technologies, both figures critically appropriated Existentialist notions of individual freedom and responsibility to develop an original account of human existence as worldlessness. The following section zooms in on the centrality of nuclear weapons in their bleak analyses of technological modernity. It argues that nuclear modernity, to Anders and Ballard, represented the uncanny climax of technological rule and was best understood through metaphors of insanity – an argument they both developed with reference to Claude E. Eatherly, a reconnaissance pilot for the Hiroshima A-bomb mission. Finally, I turn to the question of the imagination, which Anders and Ballard considered a vital bulwark against the pathological conditions of reality – worldlessness, the death of affect, and a loss of the future – symbolised by the threat of nuclear extinction. They both firmly relied on Surrealist methods – exaggeration, juxtaposition, and fragmented narrative – to bolster the human imagination as a catalysator for personal and social transformation. The article concludes with a few critical reflections on the value and limits of their approach.

⁹See Campbell Craig, *Glimmer of a New Leviathan: Total War in the Realism of Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and Waltz* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2003); Daniel H. Deudney, *Bounding Power: Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); William E. Scheuerman, *The Realist Case for Global Reform* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2009).

¹⁰Benoit Pelopidas, 'Nuclear weapons scholarship as a case of self-censorship in security studies', *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 1:4 (2016), pp. 326–36; Kjølv Egeland, Thomas Fraise, and Hebatalla Taha, 'Casting the atomic canon: "(R)evolving nuclear strategy"', *European Journal of International Security*, online first (2021).

1. Existentialism, technology, and worldlessness

Twentieth-century Existentialism, which was conceived in the emerging context of totalitarianism, industrialisation, and total warfare, rose to global prominence in the atomic age. Prominent Existentialists, including Camus, Sartre, and Jaspers, commented publicly on the bomb's arrival and its wide-ranging implications for human existence,¹¹ leading one recent observer to conclude that 'Existentialism in many ways was an open door for the post-1945 reckoning with the meaning of the bomb.'¹² This assessment was shared by William Barret, the philosopher who was instrumental in introducing Existentialism to postwar American audiences at the height of Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. Heralding Existentialism as 'the philosophy of the atomic age', he concluded that the bomb, more than anything else, revealed 'the dreadful and total contingency of human existence'.¹³

Existentialism was also an important influence on the work of Anders and Ballard and critically informed their understanding of human existence. Of the two, Anders, who had studied under both Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger (and unsuccessfully applied for a doctoral position with Paul Tillich, whom he befriended later in life), was most directly associated with Existentialism. During the late 1920s and 1930s, he actively contributed his own insights to Heidegger's philosophical project and, largely as a result of historical fate and personal tragedy, became an important interlocutor of Heideggerian philosophy for the intelligentsia in Paris, where he, following the Nazi usurpation of power in Germany, had fled to with his first wife, Hannah Arendt.¹⁴ In his contributions, Anders took issue with Heidegger's view of existence (*Dasein*) as being-thrown-into-the world and instead claimed that the condition of human being was defined by distance (*Weltfremdheit*) or the ability to withdraw oneself from the world.¹⁵ Distance or estrangement, Anders argued, was the quintessential condition for freedom. Because human beings, unlike other animals, were 'not cut out for any [specific] mode of existence', they did not encounter the world as something imposed upon them but as something they had to, or were free to, make their own.¹⁶ Anders' conclusion that freedom was a 'pathological condition', a byproduct of not being at home in the world, pre-empted Sartre's later but similar claim that 'existence precedes essence' and human beings, therefore, are 'condemned to freedom'.¹⁷

¹¹See fn. 6. Other prominent Existentialists that commented on or wrote about the bomb include Rollo May, 'The problem of evil: An open letter to Carl Rogers', *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 22:3 (1982), pp. 10–21; Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982).

¹²Zala, "No one".

¹³William Barret, *Irrational Man: A Study in Existentialist Philosophy* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1962 [orig. pub. 1958]), p. 69.

¹⁴On Anders' influence on French intellectuals such as Frantz Fanon, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Gilles Deleuze, see Jason Dawsey, 'The Limits of the Human in the Age of Technological Revolution: Günther Anders, Post-Marxism, and the Emergency of Technology Critique' (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, 2013), ch. 2. Arendt would of course go on to develop her own distinct brand of Existentialism. See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (2nd edn, Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1998 [orig. pub. 1958]). For Arendt's views on Existentialism, see also Hannah Arendt, 'What is *Existenz Philosophie*?', *Partisan Review*, 8:1 (1946), pp. 34–56.

¹⁵Günther Anders, *Über Heidegger* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2001), pp. 62–7, 81–8, and 128–32. See also Christian Dries, *Günther Anders* (Paderborn, Germany: W. Fink, 2012), pp. 34–49; and Dawsey, 'Limits', ch. 2.

¹⁶Günther Anders, 'The pathology of freedom: An essay on non-identification', *Deleuze Studies*, 3:2 (2009), pp. 278–310 (pp. 282, 284).

¹⁷Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007 [orig. pub. 1946]). In private correspondence, Anders frowned at the similarities between his work and that of Sartre. Anders would later claim that Sartre, with whom he served on Bertrand Russell's Vietnam Tribunal, had privately admitted that his work had been inspired by that of Anders. Dawsey, 'Limits'; Günther Anders, 'Wenn Ich verzweifelt bin, was geht's mich an' (1979), in Günther Anders, *Die Zerstörung unserer Zukunft: Ein Lesebuch* (Zurich: Diogenes, 2011 [orig. pub. 1984]), pp. 287–328. See also Günther Anders, 'Die Antiquiertheit der philosophischen Anthropologie' (1980), in Günther Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen 2: Über die Zerstörung des Lebens im Zeitalter der dritten industriellen Revolution* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1980), pp. 128–30 (pp. 129–30).

Ballard's connection to Existentialist philosophy and ideas was more tangential. He regularly expressed a deep admiration for the writings of Camus and Sartre, as well as a range of other literary figures and artists whose work has been closely linked to Existentialism, including Marquis de Sade, Franz Kafka, Jean Genet, Graham Greene, and Eduardo Paolozzi,¹⁸ but he did not explicitly count Existentialism among his main sources of inspiration.¹⁹ Several studies, however, have pointed out that Existentialism nonetheless left deep traces on Ballard's work, and several of his texts, including *The Drought* (1964) and *Concrete Island* (1974), have been interpreted through the prism of Existentialist philosophy.²⁰ Most notably, perhaps, an Existentialist concern with the 'limit' runs as a red thread through Ballard's fiction. Originally theorised by Karl Jaspers, the limit situation refers to a set of circumstances that are experienced as unsettling and which can compel an individual to confront and break free from everyday conformism and radically change their attitude towards life.²¹ Although nothing suggests that Ballard read Jaspers, his summarisation of his own fiction as concerned with 'the attempt by a rather wounded character ... to make something positive out of the chaos that surrounds him, to create some sort of positive mythology that can sustain one's confidence in the world' is strikingly similar to Jaspers' idea of the limit.²² As Andrzej Gasiorek notes, Ballard's early novels appear almost 'near obsessed with themes of metamorphosis', their 'post-apocalyptic worlds ... are all in limbo, awaiting rebirth to a radically new dispensation'.²³ Gasiorek focuses mainly on Ballard's writings during the early 1960s, but also Ballard's later work remains committed to exploring freedom as a process of individual self-fashioning, a route that the characters of his novels and short stories often embark on in confrontation with their own mortality. Set in confined spaces such as the (traffic) island, the high-rise, the car, the space station, or seaside resort, Ballard's stories construe these landscapes as existential and experimental transit zones where individuals fashion new understandings of themselves and the world they live in. Although most Existentialists would most likely disapprove of Ballard's reliance on the unconscious in his description of these limit landscapes, the view that spaces of imprisonment also offer the possibility of radical freedom was a familiar trope in Existentialist literature.²⁴

¹⁸Ballard's short essays and reviews, many of which have been collected in *A User's Guide to the Millennium* (1996), offer important clues on his literary views and sources of inspiration. See, for example, J. G. Ballard, 'The divine marquis' (1993), in J. G. Ballard, *A User's Guide to the Millennium: Essays and Reviews* (London, UK: Flamingo, 1996), pp. 124–5; J. G. Ballard, 'Memories of Greenland' (1978), in Ballard, *User's Guide*, pp. 137–9; J. G. Ballard, 'The pleasures of reading' (1992), in Ballard, *User's Guide*, pp. 178–82; J. G. Ballard, 'Kafka in the present day' (1993), in Ballard, *User's Guide*, p. 146; J. G. Ballard, 'The innocent as paranoid' (1969), in Ballard, *User's Guide*, pp. 92–8; J. G. Ballard, 'Fictions of every kind' (1971), in Ballard, *User's Guide*, pp. 205–07.

¹⁹In his autobiography, Ballard acknowledges that at boarding school he 'was prone to backing up an argument about existentialism with a raised fist', a statement that suggests a youthful and short-lived flirt rather than an enduring and intellectually rewarding relationship. J. G. Ballard, *Miracles of Life: Shanghai to Shepperton: An Autobiography* (New York, NY: Fourth Estate, 2008), p. 135.

²⁰Roger Luckhurst, 'The Angle Between Two Walls': *The Fiction of J. G. Ballard* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 1997); Laura Colombino, 'The house as SKIN: J. G. Ballard, Existentialism, and Archigram's mini-environments', *European Journal of English Studies*, 16:1 (2012), pp. 21–31; Alan Bradshaw and Stephen Brown, 'Up rising: Rehabilitating J. G. Ballard's *High-Rise* with R. D. Laing and Lauren Berlant', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 36:2 (2018), pp. 331–49.

²¹Karl Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (6th edn, Berlin: Springer, 1971 [orig. pub. 1919]).

²²J. G. Ballard, 'Rattling other people's cages (interview with Simon Sellars)' (2006), in J. G. Ballard, *Extreme Metaphors: Selected Interviews with J. G. Ballard, 1967–2008*, eds Simon Sellars and Dan O'Hara (London, UK: Fourth Estate, 2012), pp. 431–42 (p. 438).

²³Andrzej Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 11.

²⁴See, for example, Chris Falzon, 'Sartre: Freedom as imprisonment', *Philosophy Today*, 47:2 (2003), pp. 126–37. To Ballard, the connection between imprisonment and freedom also had clear biographical roots. Reflecting on his time as prisoner in a Japanese internment camp, he writes that 'Lunghua camp may have been a prison of a kind, but it was a prison where I found my freedom.' Ballard, *Miracles*, p. 80. Ballard also reflected on the dialectic between imprisonment and freedom in his non-fiction. See, for example, J. G. Ballard, 'Closed doors' (1977), in Ballard, *User's Guide*, pp. 47–8; J. G. Ballard, 'Myths of the near future (interview with Rosetta Brooks)' (1988), in Ballard, *Metaphors*, pp. 241–7 (pp. 242–3).

Despite these affinities with Existentialism, the writings of Anders and Ballard also bring into view some of its limits as a framework for understanding human experience in postwar modernity. The question of technological acceleration was at the heart of their critique. Anders, who claimed that the world had entered a 'second industrial revolution', critically observed that almost all of Heidegger's examples in *Being and Time* were taken from the pre-industrial age. His ontology, Anders argued, was a 'cobbler's ontology',²⁵ hopelessly outdated and unable to grasp technological artefacts for what they were: 'pre-decisions' framing basic human experiences.²⁶ The automobile, for instance, had to be understood not as a single object but as an assemblage of artefacts that also included roads, motorways, tank stations, and fossil fuel infrastructures. Jointly, these vast and dispersed technological systems increasingly enveloped human existence.²⁷ When Heidegger, in the 1950s, adopted a more substantive understanding of technology as a network that framed and increasingly colonised human life, Anders nonetheless remained critical.²⁸ Heidegger's understanding of technology was too metaphysical and inattentive to concrete, historical variations of technology, he argued. Nuclear weapons occupied a central place in this critique, and Anders castigated Heidegger for his blunt refusal to accord any specific significance to this novel technology. 'How', he asked, 'can we spend our life with the ontological question of Being, when we don't know whether we still exist tomorrow or not?'²⁹

Ballard agreed with Anders that the industrial revolution had entered a new technological phase that required new frameworks of understanding. He, too, recognised the automobile as paradigmatic of postwar modernity and his (in)famous novel *Crash* (1973) coolly dissected how the car mediates individual experiences and configures social relations, penetrating even individuals' most intimate desires. 'I think that the twentieth century reaches almost its purest expression on the highway', he argued. The automobile offered a privileged vantage point on modern society, its 'sense of speed and aggression, the worlds of advertising and consumer goods, engineering and mass manufacture, and the shared experience of moving together through an elaborately signalled landscape'.³⁰ Like Anders, Ballard also expressed a deep suspicion about earlier frameworks for understanding this *Autobahn Existenz*, but – unlike Anders – this did not take the form of an explicit reckoning with Existentialist philosophy. Instead, he turned his attention to the modern novel and the belief, shared by many prominent mid-twentieth-century Existentialists, that narrative imagination was an appropriate medium for cultivating critical reflection on human existence.³¹ Although the themes of estrangement, isolation, and disillusionment remained relevant topics, he argued that the social novel was unable to give expression to their twentieth-century form, 'for the simple reason that social relationships are no longer as important as the individual's relationship with the technological landscape of the twentieth century'.³² The technological realities of the twentieth century, including the car crash, nuclear war, ecological collapse, and mass communication technologies, had yet to find their way into the mainstream novel. To him, only science fiction – by which he meant the kind of fiction that focuses on science and technology as the dominant frame for human existence – allowed for a way of capturing the unprecedented social and technological transformations of the postwar period.

²⁵ Anders, 'Verzweifelt',

²⁶ Günther Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen 1: Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1956), p. 2.

²⁷ Günther Anders, 'Die Antiquiertheit der Maschinen II' (1969), in Anders, *Antiquiertheit 2*, pp. 117–27 (p. 124).

²⁸ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, trans. and intro. William Lovitt (New York, NY: Garland, 1977 [orig. pub. 1954]).

²⁹ Anders, 'Verzweifelt', p. 319.

³⁰ J. G. Ballard, 'The car, the future' (1971), in Ballard, *User's Guide*, pp. 262–7 (pp. 262, 263).

³¹ On the centrality of narrative imagination in Existentialism, see, for example, Maša Mrovlje, 'Beyond Nussbaum's ethics of reading: Camus, Arendt and the political significance of narrative imagination', *The European Legacy*, 24:2 (2019), pp. 162–80.

³² Ballard, 'Fictions', p. 205.

The development of new mass communications technologies, most notably radio, television, and video, occupied a central place in their respective analyses of postwar technological modernity and the fractured, non-linear nature of human existence. With the invention of television, Anders argued, 'the world comes to us only as an image, it is half-present and half-absent, in other words, phantom-like.' Because we are unable to respond in any meaningful way to the pre-fabricated realities shown on television, Anders concluded that 'we too are like phantoms', 'deprived of our speech and hence condemned to be unfree'.³³ The language in which Anders put forward such claims were directly aimed at Existentialism. In the technological age of television, he argued, humans no longer 'take' the world or 'make it their own', but passively receive the world in the form of reproduced images and soundbites. Humans are reduced to 'a kind of Peeping Tom ruling over a phantom world', he concluded.³⁴ Anders argued that television created a 'pseudo-familiarity' – symbolised, for instance, by the surrogate cosiness of television hosts or the frequent use of first names for celebrities – which impressed itself as a false reality. Both Anders and Ballard considered advertising at the heart of the issue. To them, it undermined the autonomy of subjects by recoding their identity as a consumer of products and images. Referring to the world's 'most refreshing burp', Ballard spoke of this process as 'Coca-colonization' and claimed that the popularity of the drink was best understood for the image it sold; 'the dream of American cheerfulness, not to everyone's liking but hard to resist'.³⁵ Anders also singled out the carbonated soda as an example of this artificially created circuit linking mass production to consumption and individual desire. 'My thirst for Coca Cola is by no means "mine"', he analysed, 'but something the Coca Cola producer specifically creates within me, turning me into as much of a product as the brew itself – that is, I'm a device whose sole purpose and performance consists in satisfying the thirst for profit'.³⁶ In short, human beings were now the products of their products.

Given the global avalanche of images, past and present, which were beamed into living rooms synchronously from all corners of the world, Anders argued that humans no longer possessed a world to make their own. They now inhabited 'too many worlds at once', assembling their identities from multiple and even conflicting cultural sources.³⁷ In short, the problem was no longer that of *Weltfremdheit* but *Weltlosigkeit* – the absence of a world. As a myriad of actors, including multinationals, advertisement agencies, broadcasters, politicians, and the entertainment industry, imposed their respective fictions upon reality, the latter turned into hyperreality:³⁸ '[W]hen the actual event is socially important only in its reproduced form, i.e., as a spectacle, the difference between being and appearance, between reality and image of reality, is abolished.' The original event had been reduced to the status of 'master copy': 'The real world is forfeited'.³⁹ One of the main effects of this *Weltlosigkeit* was 'the death of affect', which Ballard described as 'the most sinister casualty of the century'.⁴⁰ Anders similarly mused that the constant bombardment with images should lead us to ponder the meaning of the 'supra-liminal', the stimulus too big to provoke a reaction. Like Ballard, he feared that mass communication reduced humans to voyeurs and undermined any possibility of genuine or autonomous action. The inability to respond to or

³³Günther Anders, 'The world as phantom and as matrix', *Dissent*, 3:1 (1956), pp. 14–24 (p. 20).

³⁴Anders, 'The world', p. 22.

³⁵J. G. Ballard, 'Coca-colonization' (1971), in Ballard, *User's Guide*, pp. 213–15 (p. 214).

³⁶Günther Anders, 'Die Antiquiertheit der Ideologien' (1978), in Anders, *Antiquiertheit 2*, pp. 188–92 (p. 188, fn. 1), my translation.

³⁷Anders, *Antiquiertheit 1*, p. 3.

³⁸The term 'hyperreality' was popularised by Baudrillard, who heralded *Crash* as 'the first great novel of the age of simulation'. In 1992, Ballard mentioned Baudrillard's *America* (1988) among the five books he most often returned to. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1981), p. 181; Ballard, 'Pleasures', p. 182. Ballard also shared Baudrillard's reading of the Gulf War as a media spectacle. J. G. Ballard, 'The artist at war' (1991), in Ballard, *User's Guide*, pp. 73–5.

³⁹Anders, 'The world', p. 20.

⁴⁰Ballard, 'The innocent', p. 91.

speak back to the mediated reality created unfree subjects who, increasingly detached from their own emotions, were unable to recognise their situation as one of unfreedom. At a time when humans increasingly performed their actions as parts of larger technological circuits and infrastructures that appeared to run through them, Existentialist notions of autonomous agency or authentic freedom seemed outdated. Individuals were no longer autonomous agents, but commodified subjects reduced to spectators caught in an endless feedback loop where the psychically numbed mind demanded ever more spectacle for its arousal.

2. Nuclear modernity, insanity, and the Hiroshima pilot

Recent engagements with Existentialism in IR generally note its value as a philosophy of crisis or anxiety, but so far scholars have mainly appropriated Existentialism more narrowly as a framework for understanding state practices of ontological security.⁴¹ Although such accounts have nuanced our understanding of security dynamics between states, they largely bracket broader Existentialist concerns with the character of modern life and the conditions for individual freedom. The work of Anders and Ballard, by contrast, squarely places the international issue of nuclear war within a broader analysis of the increased pervasiveness of technology in postwar everyday life. To them, the postwar pathologies of *Weltlosigkeit* – technological acceleration, consumerism, and the death of affect – were intimately linked to the development of nuclear weapons. To them, the invention of the hydrogen bomb offered a key to understanding technological estrangement and unfreedom in postwar modernity.

This did not mean, however, that Anders and Ballard saw eye to eye on the desirability or necessity of nuclear weapons. Anders, who was a self-declared radical and activist-philosopher, was an early and fervent opponent of nuclear weapons, which he considered totalitarian and genocidal. To him, they represented the most dangerous and extreme manifestation of a thoroughly disenchanting modernity, an argument he would develop over the course of several books, articles, and diaries, including both volumes of *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen* (1956 and 1980), *Burning Conscience* (1962), and *Visit Beautiful Vietnam* (1968). If the Holocaust had made clear that anyone could be killed for no reason, the invention of nuclear weapons revealed to him that the fate of extermination now hung over the human species in its entirety.⁴² Given the urgency of this wholly new condition, he had little patience with Existentialist philosophy. At a time when *Weltlosigkeit* had taken on a literal character, he considered the concern with abstract ontology and metaphysics outright irresponsible. The preoccupation with ‘human beings without a world’ was now superseded by a far more pressing problem: ‘a world without human beings’.⁴³

Ballard, who eschewed activism and described his own political beliefs as ‘middle of the road’, subscribed to a more permissive view on nuclear weapons.⁴⁴ He staunchly defended the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, expressed faith in the political management of the nuclear arms race, and maintained that deterrence contributed to peace and stability.⁴⁵ To a considerable

⁴¹See, for example, Karl Gustafsson and Nina C. Krickel-Choi, ‘Returning to the roots of ontological security: Insights from the Existentialist anxiety literature’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 26:3 (2020), pp. 875–95; Bahar Rumelili, ‘Integrating anxiety into International Relations theory: Hobbes, Existentialism, and ontological security’, *International Theory*, 12:2 (2020), pp. 257–72. See also the symposium on ‘anxiety’, *Journal of International Relations and Development* (2021).

⁴²Günther Anders, ‘Reflections on the H bomb’, *Dissent*, 3:2 (1956), pp. 146–55 (p. 148).

⁴³Günther Anders, *Mensch ohne Welt: Schriften zur Kunst und Literatur* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1984), p. XXIV; Anders, *Heidegger*, pp. 363–5.

⁴⁴For a discussion of Ballard’s ambivalent relation to nuclear weapons, see Dominika Oramus, ‘The art of un-making: Nagasaki, Eniwetok, Mururoa, and J. G. Ballard’, *Open Cultural Studies*, 3 (2019), pp. 553–62.

⁴⁵J. G. Ballard, ‘The end of my war’ (1996), in Ballard, *User’s Guide*, pp. 283–94 (p. 293); J. G. Ballard, ‘How to face Doomsday without really trying (interview with Carol Orr)’ (1974), in Ballard, *Metaphors*, pp. 56–71 (p. 69, also pp. 58, 64); J. G. Ballard, ‘The past tense of Ballard’ (1985), in Ballard, *Extreme Metaphors*, pp. 211–23 (p. 221).

extent, Ballard's view on the bomb was based on his personal experiences during the Second World War. Born and raised in Shanghai, he spent the final two years of the war in Lunghua, a Japanese internment camp for British civilians on the outskirts of Shanghai. He firmly believed that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had shortened the war, prevented unnecessary suffering, and almost certainly saved his life and that of his family.⁴⁶ Still, like Anders, Ballard considered nuclear weapons central to grasping human existence in postwar modernity, and in several of his novels, including *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), *Empire of the Sun* (1984), and *Rushing to Paradise* (1994), their presence is directly felt.⁴⁷ In *The Atrocity Exhibition*, arguably his most notorious and experimental novel,⁴⁸ Ballard hypothesised that the development of nuclear weapons transferred private, lunatic fantasies of world-ending violence to the collective level. On several occasions, Ballard approvingly cites Edward Glover's psychoanalytical analysis of nuclear war as directly linked to insanity as rooted in the unconscious economy of desire:

The actual and potential destructiveness of the atomic bomb plays straight in the hand of the Unconscious. The most cursory study of the dream-life and fantasies of the insane shows that ideas of world-destruction are latent in the unconscious mind ... Nagasaki destroyed by the magic of science is the nearest man has yet approached to the realization of dreams that even during the safe immobility of his sleep are accustomed to develop into nightmares of anxiety.⁴⁹

Anders agreed that the fractured nature of human existence in the nuclear age was best captured through psychological tropes of madness or insanity, and he couched his main contribution to philosophy – the theorisation of the ever-widening gap between production (*Herstellen*) and imagination (*Vorstellen*) in the age of technological acceleration⁵⁰ – in terms of schizophrenia. He argued that human beings were schizophrenic in the sense that they were incapable of imagining the effects of the artefacts they produced. The modern subject was attached to and concerned with the execution of small, specialised tasks yet unaware of their larger social totality. As the activity of work was increasingly rationalised, routinised, and automatised, factory workers experienced a double alienation: from work as a meaningful activity and from the purpose and qualities of the final product that emerged from the assembly line. This, Anders argued, is 'the raging schizophrenia of our days; that is: the fact that our diverse faculties work independently of each other, like isolated and uncoordinated beings, who have lost all contact with each other'.⁵¹ In his writings on television he had already characterised *Weltlosigkeit* as an artificially produced form of schizophrenia,⁵² but he associated the most extreme manifestation of this schizophrenic discrepancy with the manufacturing of nuclear weapons – devices, he argued, that served no other end than the end itself.

⁴⁶See, for example, Ballard, 'The end'.

⁴⁷In some of his other stories, nuclear weapons are more indirectly present in the form of a catastrophe looming in the background. In *Crash* (1973), for example, the deliberate staging of car crashes is a microcosm linked to a much broader destructive desire for Autogeddon (a term that was already introduced in Ballard, *The Atrocity Exhibition* (London, UK: Fourth Estate, 2014 [orig. pub. 1969]), p. 41) or what Ballard in a positive review of the post-apocalyptic movie *Mad Max 2* (1981) described as 'the end of the world as demolition derby'. J. G. Ballard, 'A user's guide to the millennium' (1987), in Ballard, *User's Guide*, pp. 17–22 (p. 22).

⁴⁸The book was pulped just before publication by the publisher who considered its content morally corrupt. The publication of ch. 14, 'Why I want to fuck Ronald Reagan', as a separate booklet also generated a moral outcry, and its publication in Britain was successfully halted in a court of law. See J. G. Ballard, *Atrocity*, pp. 151, 169.

⁴⁹Edward Glover, *War, Sadism and Pacifism: Further Essays on Group Psychology and War* (London, UK: George Allen & Unwin, 1946). Cited in Ballard, 'Terminal beach', pp. 590–1, and J. G. Ballard, 'Cataclysm and doom' (1977), in Ballard, *User's Guide*, pp. 208–09.

⁵⁰Anders, *Antiquiertheit 1*, p. 16; Anders, 'Verzweifelt', p. 318.

⁵¹Anders, 'Commandments', p. 12.

⁵²Anders, *Antiquiertheit 1*, p. 39.

Anders concretely elaborated on this view in his discussion of Claude E. Eatherly, a reconnaissance pilot for the Hiroshima mission who was said to stage absurd drug store robberies (using toy guns and running off without the money) out of a desire to be punished by society as a replacement for the one crime he could not be convicted for: the destruction of Hiroshima. Having been repeatedly admitted to a military mental hospital – Eatherly received sixty hours of insulin shock therapy to ‘cure’ his anxiety neurosis⁵³ – he was finally diagnosed with schizophrenia in 1962. Anders, who learnt of Eatherly’s story from a *Newsweek* publication, initiated a correspondence with the pilot, which was published as *Burning Conscience*.⁵⁴ In the book, he describes Eatherly’s predicament as representative of the schizophrenic split at the heart of technological modernity, an argument he summed up in a support letter addressed to the county judge in Waco, who was to rule on Eatherly’s insanity:

Eatherly’s condition is not an isolated and unique case. I consider it rather a first and unprecedented and prophetic example which indicates to us how man in the technological age is bound to react after being entangled in actions which, in the most ambiguous way, are his and not his. In short: make him *guiltlessly guilty*. The decision about the Eatherly case is, in my opinion, not the decision about an individual crank, but about ‘man in the technological age’.⁵⁵

Anders’ philosophical statement about ‘guiltless guilt’ may not have been the kind of support Eatherly’s legal representatives were hoping for, but the broader message was clear. Today, Anders argued, we are all virtual Claudes.⁵⁶ What distinguished Eatherly from others, however, was his ability to recognise the banality of his actions for their complicity in the production of evil. Eatherly’s subsequent actions, therefore, were not pathological but moral and, at least to Anders, offered a glimmer of hope that humans could overcome the schizophrenic condition of their age – if only at a high personal cost of being declared insane.⁵⁷

Ballard had also taken note of the Eatherly case, which, partly because of Anders’ book, became a matter of debate during the early 1960s. Ballard, who most likely learned of Eatherly’s predicament through British media reporting, incorporated Eatherly as a fictional character in his short story ‘The Terminal Beach’ (1964), as well as in his later novel *The Atrocity Exhibition*. In ‘The Terminal Beach’, which is situated on Enewetak, one of the Pacific atolls used for nuclear testing by the United States, Ballard refers to Eatherly as ‘the prototypical’ subject of the atomic age ‘carrying a full load of cosmic guilt’ and contrasts him to the main protagonist, Traven, for whom the hydrogen bomb instead is a ‘symbol of absolute *freedom*’ giving him ‘the right – the obligation, even – to ‘do anything’ he wants.’⁵⁸ *The Atrocity Exhibition*, which was published five years later, revolved around a similar theme in its exploration of the burdened terrain between nuclear death and the political and cultural landscape of the 1960s, a framing the book’s opening page vividly captures as a ‘fusion of Eniwetok and Luna Park’.⁵⁹ To Ballard, the deliberate juxtaposition of a nuclear test site with an amusement park aptly captured the

⁵³William Bradford Huie, *The Hiroshima Pilot* (London, UK: Heinemann, 1964), p. 102.

⁵⁴The book, which contained a foreword by Bertrand Russell and an introduction by Robert Jungk, was originally published in German as *Off Limits für das Gewissen* (1961).

⁵⁵Cited in Huie, *Hiroshima*, p. 222.

⁵⁶Günther Anders, *Hiroshima ist überall* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1982), p. XXVI.

⁵⁷Anders always remained convinced of the sincerity of Eatherly’s guilt, but critics have pointed out that Eatherly only began cultivating his image as guilt-ridden Hiroshima bomber *after* Anders had suggested this interpretation to him in their correspondence. Moreover, as his popularity grew, Eatherly also started to adopt fictionalised and dramatised accounts of his person as his own. Living in too many worlds at once, Eatherly’s life seems a product of a world where reality and fiction had become blurred to the point of indistinction. Anders, *Hiroshima*, p. XXIII; Huie, *Hiroshima*.

⁵⁸Ballard, ‘Terminal beach’, p. 599.

⁵⁹Ballard, *Atrocity*, p. 1.

prevailing mood of the 1960s, when ‘the endless newsreel clips of nuclear explosions’ broadcast on television seemed ‘a powerful incitement to the psychotic imagination, sanctioning everything’.⁶⁰ To Ballard, the constant circulation of images of atomic explosions signalled that violence had become an integral and acceptable part of everyday life during the 1960s. In *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Ballard explores this tension through his protagonist, Travis, a psychiatrist who is suffering a psychological breakdown. Confronted with fragmented images of nuclear explosions, newsreels from the Vietnam War, and the televised celebrity deaths of John F. Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe, Travis seeks to create meaning in a world that appears violently out of joint. In a 2006 interview with Jonathan Weiss, the director of the book’s filmed version, Ballard recalls the 1960s as ‘living in a kind of madhouse’, where ‘the world had become a sort of deranged psychiatric institute’.⁶¹

Like Anders, Ballard thus juxtaposed Eatherly’s insanity with that of his protagonists. The Freudian idea of the Death Drive, a concept coined by Freud to explain the human predisposition towards death and destruction, underpinned such views. Unless humans would find a way to tame the Death Drive, Freud warned, the future of the species was at stake. With the invention of nuclear weapons, Freud’s speculations had entered the realm of the possible. Unlike Anders, however, Ballard did not just use metaphors of insanity in a pejorative sense. He believed that experiences of madness could be transformative episodes from which the traveller could return with important insights. In *The Atrocity Exhibition*, as well as elsewhere, Ballard appropriates the discourse of the madman as the assertion of the self in a world that refuses to make sense. His views on madness were closely affiliated with those of R. D. Laing, a controversial Scottish psychiatrist associated with the development of Existential Psychology. Laing’s global best-seller, *The Divided Self* (1960), criticised the often coercive and violent methods with which psychiatry treated schizophrenia and argued, controversially, that attempts to reorder reality in one’s own categories were a sensible response to a reality that increasingly appeared as irrational and insane.⁶² Insanity, upon this view, could be a self-healing journey.

In retrospect, it is easy to denounce Anders and Ballard’s reliance on metaphors such as ‘insanity’, ‘madness’, ‘schizophrenia’, and ‘derangement’ as discursive instances of ableism. Anders’ depreciatory use of schizophrenia, as well as Ballard’s romanticisation of madness as a liberating state of mind, both risk discounting real, embodied experiences that may contribute to the further stigmatisation of neurodiversity.⁶³ Yet, during the early and mid-twentieth century, the question of ‘madness and civilization’⁶⁴ preoccupied many intellectuals and was at the heart of debates about individual pathology, normalcy, and conformism to the social and cultural conventions of (bourgeois) society. It was also at a time, when many began to question the validity of traditional psychiatric treatment and critically interrogated the function of the asylum – a mood that was captured by Ken Kesey’s highly popular novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* from 1962.⁶⁵

⁶⁰Ballard, *Atrocity*, p. 14.

⁶¹J. G. Ballard, ‘Not entirely a journey without maps: J. G. Ballard on *The Atrocity Exhibition* (interview with Jonathan Weiss)’ (2006), in Ballard, *Metaphors*, pp. 447–62 (p. 448).

⁶²On the affinities between Laing and Ballard, see Samuel Francis, *The Psychological Fictions of J. G. Ballard* (London, UK: Continuum, 2011); Luckhurst, *The Angle*; Dan O’Hara, ‘Reading posture and gesture in Ballard’s novels’, in Jeannette Baxter and Rowland Wymer (eds), *J. G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 105–20; Bradshaw and Brown, ‘Up rising’.

⁶³On ‘ableism’ in IR, see Stephen Michael Christian, ‘Autism in International Relations: A critical assessment of International Relations’ autism metaphors’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 24:2 (2018), pp. 464–88. For a broader discussion on the problematic uses of ableist metaphors, see Vivian M. May and Beth A. Ferry, ‘Fixated on ability: Questioning ableist metaphors in feminist theories of resistance’, *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism*, 27:1–2 (2005), pp. 120–40.

⁶⁴Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London, UK: Routledge, 1967).

⁶⁵See, for example, Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1961); Thomas Szasz, *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1974 [orig. pub. 1961]).

Against this broader background, Surrealists and Existentialists both wondered to what extent madness was pathological or, instead, a sign of authentic being. André Breton, the founder of the Surrealist movement, conceived of the lunatic as someone who was no longer limited by social rules or conventions, finally free to fully focus on their own subjectivity and creativity. As a result, he strongly rejected a clear division between a sane society and mentally ill people. Sartre, who had a profound personal and philosophical interest in madness, similarly explored to what extent madness could be said to offer an authentic alternative to bourgeois conformity.⁶⁶ In their own ways, Anders and Ballard contributed to these debates.

With the invention of nuclear weapons, moreover, such questions seemed to take on an additional urgency. In 1957, Erich Fromm, a famous psychoanalyst, published *The Sane Society*, which asked the provocative question whether society could be sick. While he counted capitalist alienation, commercialisation, and social conformism among the main symptoms of the pathological condition of normalcy, his later book, *May Man Prevail?* (1961), zoomed in on the nuclear policies of the United States and the Soviet Union as the most dangerous example of insanity's reign. Laing, who had long argued for the normalisation of mental illness, specifically argued that the possibility of nuclear destruction meant that in no way could society be said to represent a baseline for normality or a desirable status quo to which individuals should adapt: 'The statesmen of the world who boast and threaten that they have Doomsday weapons are far more dangerous, and far more "estranged" from reality than many of the people on whom the label "psychotic" is affixed.'⁶⁷ Like Anders, critics of nuclear strategy and the national security state often fell back on ableist metaphors to denounce the self-proclaimed realism and rationality of their political adversaries. In 1946, Lewis Mumford, a prominent historian of technology and anti-nuclear intellectual, argued that '[w]e in America are living among madmen' whose 'fatal symptom' is to '[carry] through a series of acts which may lead eventually to the destruction of mankind, under the solemn conviction that they are normal, responsible people, living sane lives, and working for reasonable ends'.⁶⁸ In 1958, C. Wright Mills, the rebel sociologist, bluntly referred to nuclear strategy as the 'crackpot' ideas and actions of 'madmen and idiots'.⁶⁹ Metaphors of insanity also infused both the everyday language and acronyms: the main anti-nuclear organisation in the United States was called SANE, while the nuclear policy of mutual assured destruction is commonly referred to as MAD.

Anders and Ballard agreed that the human condition was pathological and best understood through tropes of insanity. While we today may choose to frame such issues differently, their use of such metaphors was not unreflective but critical. As their reflections on Eatherly showed, they were highly attentive to the fact that mental disability was an identity forged through relations of power, and both stressed the importance of recognising insanity as a psychological condition intimately linked to the sociopolitical and cultural demands imposed upon subjects by the nuclear age. To Anders and Ballard, the question of insanity was profoundly entangled with the radical estrangement or worldlessness humans experienced in the nuclear age.

3. Extinction, the future, and the imagination

According to Anders and Ballard, nuclear weapons were not just one among many pathological obsessions of postwar modernity. They viewed the nuclear revolution as an event that forged a qualitative break in the human condition, a view they shared with leading classical Realists, who – themselves inspired by Existentialist theory – gradually came to understand nuclear weapons as a fundamentally novel situation that negated previous conceptions of war, death, and the

⁶⁶Els Jongeneel, 'Madness in Sartre's "The Room"', *Style*, 43:3 (2009), pp. 341–56. On the use of madness as a prism in modern literature, see Shoshana Felman, *Writing and Madness* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

⁶⁷R. D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (New York, CA: Pantheon Books, 1960), pp. 11–12.

⁶⁸Lewis Mumford, 'Gentlemen, you are mad!', *Saturday Review of Literature* (2 March 1946), pp. 5–6 (p. 5). See also Lewis Mumford, *In the Name of Sanity* (New York, NY: Harcourt, 1954).

⁶⁹C. Wright Mills, *The Causes of World War Three* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1958), p. 113.

future.⁷⁰ ‘We continue to think and act’, warned Morgenthau in 1961, ‘as though the possibility of nuclear death portended only a quantitative extension of the mass destruction of the past and not a qualitative transformation of the meaning of our existence.’⁷¹ With the invention of the H-bomb human beings no longer only had to confront their own mortality, as Existentialists hitherto had argued, but the extinction of the entire human species.

Anders and Ballard agreed with classical Realists that the advent of nuclear weapons marked an epochal change, and both argued that the atomic bomb disrupted linear or progressive forms of temporality. With the bombing of Hiroshima, Anders argued, the human species had entered a new and final stage of its existence: ‘On August 6, 1945, the Day of Hiroshima, a New Age began: the age in which at any given moment we have the power to transform any given place on our planet, and even our planet itself, into a Hiroshima.’⁷² Hiroshima now signalled a ‘worldwide condition’ from which there was no escape, neither spatially nor temporally. This is “‘The Last Age’”, he concluded, ‘for there is no possibility that its “*differentia specifica*”, the possibility of our self-extinction, can ever end – but by the end itself.’⁷³ Ballard likewise referred to the postwar period as the ‘Pre-Third’, a kind of protracted purgatory where the meaning of human existence was graspable solely in terms of what would come after: World War Three.

In fact, Ballard considered the idea of the future as anything else but catastrophic deeply anachronous: ‘Probably the first casualty of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was the concept of the future. I think the future died some time in the fifties. Maybe with the explosion of the hydrogen bomb.’⁷⁴ To Ballard, the death of the future also heralded the death of the American Dream and the belief in a better tomorrow. The science-infused dreams of yesterday had mutated into today’s technological nightmares. To Anders, too, a catastrophic future was ‘already throwing a shadow on the present’ challenging the ubiquitous-but-unwarranted faith in never-ending progress, a belief that foreclosed any conception of endings.⁷⁵ We go on, he lamented, under an illusion of eternity.⁷⁶ In short, Anders and Ballard developed new temporal categories to capture human existence as suspended in time, a new condition in which previous distinctions – between present and future, peace and war, continuity and finality, utopianism and conservatism – had collapsed.

Despite their rendition of postwar being as a being-towards-extinction, neither Anders nor Ballard fully succumbed to fatalism. Although both towards the end of their lives grew increasingly pessimistic about the conditions for transformation and individual freedom, their respective

⁷⁰William E. Scheuermann has traced the influence of Karl Jaspers on Morgenthau, who was introduced to Jaspers by Hannah Arendt. See William E. Scheuermann, *Morgenthau: Realism and Beyond* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2009), pp. 146–52. John Herz also approvingly cites Jaspers. He also quotes the nineteenth-century German poet, Rainer Rilke, whose work has been closely associated with Existentialism, while his reference to the academic as ‘*l’homme revolté*’ may well have been inspired by Camus’ 1951 book-length essay of that title. John H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 334–5; John H. Herz, *The Nation-State and the Crisis of World Politics: Essays on International Politics in the Twentieth Century* (New York, NY: David McKay, 1976), pp. 53–4, 258. See also Casper Sylvest, ‘Technology and global politics: The modern experiences of Bertrand Russell and John H. Herz’, *The International History Review*, 35:1 (2013), pp. 121–42. Niebuhr, who invited Tillich to New York in 1933 and was instrumental in his appointment at Columbia University, was deeply inspired by Christian Existentialism. See, for example, Vibeke Schou Tjalve, *Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and the Politics of Patriotic Dissent: Realist Strategies of Republican Peace* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Andrew S. Finstuen, *Original Sin and Everyday Protestants: The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, Billy Graham, and Paul Tillich in an Age of Anxiety* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009). Raymond Aron, who introduced Sartre and De Beauvoir to phenomenology, developed his view of nuclear weapons partly in critical response to Sartre’s Existentialism. See Zala, ‘No one’. For an early discussion of Existentialism and International Relations, see Albert William Levi, ‘The meaning of Existentialism for International Relations’, *Ethics*, 72:4 (1962), pp. 233–51.

⁷¹Hans J. Morgenthau, ‘Death in the nuclear age’, *Commentary*, 32 (1961), pp. 231–4 (p. 234).

⁷²Anders, ‘Theses’, p. 493.

⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴Ballard, ‘Myths’, p. 243. See also Ballard, ‘Road’, p. 461.

⁷⁵Anders, ‘Commandments’, p. 13

⁷⁶Anders, *Antiquiertheit 1*, pp. 268–72.

framings of the future as the final stop on the road to nothingness remained firmly based on the hope that a different world was possible. Both men vested such hope in the transformative powers of the individual imagination.⁷⁷ Ballard, who viewed himself as a detached scientist exploring extreme hypotheses and issuing warnings, insisted that his fiction was ‘affirmative’ and ‘positive’ rather than the work of ‘a decadent, celebrating the pleasures of the evening light’.⁷⁸ He was adamant that his message should not be mixed up with the décor in which it was delivered. While often set in bleak man-made landscapes, he viewed his fiction as tales of psychic fulfillment, metamorphosis, and transcendence. While Ballard was sceptical about sociopolitical utopianism and the emancipatory potential of science and technology, he considered the ‘inner space’ as a site of ‘utopian desire’, where individuals could obtain some sense of psychic fulfillment. Anders pursued a similar analytical strategy in his writings, which he consciously categorised as philosophical exaggerations.⁷⁹ Exaggeration functioned like a microscope, he argued, and could bring into view dimensions of reality that would otherwise remain hidden. The false reality imprinted upon the world by the media landscape also framed people’s understanding of nuclear weapons and concealed their true, horrific nature. Time and again, he admonished his readers not to tolerate the application of ‘honest sounding, “keep smiling” labels’ to the H-bomb.⁸⁰ Exaggeration, Anders suggested, could instill a ‘courage to fear’ in human beings, and he implored his readers to contemplate the real possibility of the end of the world in their mind as a first step towards preventing it from happening in real life.

In the promotion of the individual imagination, the writings of Anders and Ballard also contrasted sharply with the kind of Existentialism that underpinned the nuclear writings of Morgenthau and other classical Realists. While the latter sought to secure the future by lending support to the institutional solution of the world state, Anders and Ballard instead viewed the mind and the individual imagination as the primary battleground for future transformation. Institutions were clearly important, as both Anders and Ballard recognised, but they did not consider institutional change the primary priority. To them, the main source of danger consisted in the rule of technology and the psychosocial dynamics of *Weltlosigkeit* rather than the anarchical nature of the international system. Moreover, the Second World War had taught Anders and Ballard that reality was little more than a stage set that could collapse at any moment. Institutional reform offered no guarantees, and since no great power was likely to give up their weapons, Ballard considered such discussions purely academic.⁸¹ Moreover, whereas Realists cautiously anticipated the birth of a new universal class, which would conceive of security in terms of the survival of both present and future generations, and hopefully speculated about the emergence of a world community supported by the new means of ‘global intercommunication’,⁸² neither Anders nor Ballard considered it plausible that such technologies would facilitate universal solidarity. Instead, they highlighted that such technologies were fertile ground for populists. There was little doubt in either man’s mind that in the (near) future a charismatic demagogue again would seize mass communications technologies to create a ‘new vocabulary of violence and sensation’ that tapped directly into the irrational fear, anxiety, and unease of individuals.⁸³

⁷⁷On the role and significance of the imagination in IR and political theory, see also Rens van Munster and Casper Sylvest, ‘The thermonuclear revolution and the politics of imagination: Realist radicalism in political theory and IR’, *International Relations*, 32:3 (2018), pp. 255–74; Bryan Mabee, ‘The international politics of truth: C. Wright Mills and the sociology of the international’, *Review of International Studies*, online first (2021); Bell, ‘Surrealist liberalism’.

⁷⁸Ballard, ‘Rattling’, p. 438; J. G. Ballard, ‘Against entropy (interview with Peter Rønnev-Jessen)’ (1984), in Ballard, *Metaphors*, p. 206.

⁷⁹Anders, *Antiquiertheit 1*, pp. 19–20.

⁸⁰Anders, ‘Commandments’, p. 16.

⁸¹Ballard, ‘Doomsday’, p. 64.

⁸²Herz, *International Politics*, p. 335.

⁸³J. G. Ballard, ‘Alphabets of unreason’ (1969), in Ballard, *User’s Guide*, pp. 221–3 (p. 221). The phrase ‘new alphabet of sensation and violence’ also appears in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, p. 120. They felt both confirmed in their analysis with the presidential election of Ronald Reagan, a former B-movies star, whose smooth, outer demeanor was a smoke screen for his

Given that modern technology was not about to be halted in its tracks, the imagination offered the main hope of freedom left to individuals. In their respective attempts to cultivate the imagination, both Anders and Ballard sought inspiration in Surrealism, a twentieth-century movement in art and literature that sought to release the creative potential of the unconscious mind and balance a rational vision of life with one that asserts the power of the unconscious and dreams. Surrealists sought to achieve this through a range of techniques – including the use of dream-like scenes, the use of biomorphic space and symbolic images, as well as the deployment of illogical juxtapositions or bizarre assemblages of objects – of which both Anders and Ballard made extensive use. Anders' philosophy of exaggeration relied on typically Surrealist methods, including juxtaposition and index to create new pathways and associations in a non-linear way. His fragmented use of narrative, most obviously visible in the second volume of *Antiquiertheit des Menschen* and *Visit Beautiful Vietnam*, is non-linear, yet offers a composite portrait of political violence in the postwar period.

Ballard, who counted Surrealist painters such as Max Ernst and Salvador Dalí among his main sources of inspiration, also experimented with non-linear narrative and explicitly sought to capture the visual techniques of Surrealists in textual form.⁸⁴ His psychological notion of the 'inner space', which he conceptualised as the meeting ground between the world out there and the secret engine of the unconscious, was fundamentally Surrealist in origin. Yet, Ballard also argued that the analysis of postwar modernity called for the reversal of the Surrealist juxtaposition between the unconscious and reality. The domain of fantasy was no longer a property of the unconscious, but reality had itself taken on a dream-like character: 'It's the external world, which is now the real, the paramount realm of fantasy. And it's the internal world of the mind which is the one node of reality that most of us have. The fiction is all out there.'⁸⁵ Anders agreed: 'It is not in the wide land of imagination that escapists of today like to hide, but in the ivory tower of perception.'⁸⁶ As Anders observed with horror after his visit to the Hiroshima Museum, Surrealist juxtapositions – of the organic with the inorganic, humans and artefacts, or dreams and reality – were no longer projections of the unconscious but part of empirical reality. Recalling, among others, a picture of a man whose arm had been smelted together with a glass bottle, he characterised the exhibition as essentially Surrealist.⁸⁷ Coming to terms with the monstrous hybridity of the nuclear age was the first step towards transforming it. Distinguishing between real, realistic fear of the future catastrophe and the kind of fake anxieties conjured up by the proponents of the nuclear weapons complex, he believed that fear could be helpful in recovering the emotional abilities of human beings.⁸⁸

Scholars have also pointed out that Ballard's stories can be described as a form of Surrealist historiography that retrieves and works through the violent traumas of the mid-twentieth century. Jeannette Baxter, for instance, notes that Surrealism enables Ballard to gauge the 'historical unconscious' of the twentieth century as 'a way of assessing way of reassessing and rupturing the flat, homogeneous and ideologically contrived surface of official narratives of post-war history and culture'.⁸⁹ Duncan Bell, too, has argued that Ballard's *oeuvre* offers 'a unique counter-history

deeply conservative policies and dangerous nuclear bravado. Ballard had presciently predicted the Reagan Presidency in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, while Anders wrote that Reagan was a dangerous confirmation of his thesis on television. Günther Anders, "Denn Sie wissen nicht, was sie tun": Philosophischen Überlegungen zu Reagan, SDI und Wissenschaft und Business' (1986), *Frankfurter Rundschau* (15 May 1986).

⁸⁴J. G. Ballard, 'Speculative illustrations: Eduardo Paolozzi in conversation with J. G. Ballard (interview with Frank Whitford)' (1971), *Metaphors*, pp. 36–47; J. G. Ballard, 'Empire of the surreal' (1995), in Ballard, *Metaphors*, pp. 291–8; J. G. Ballard, 'The coming of the unconscious' (1966), in Ballard, *User's Guide*, pp. 84–8; J. G. Ballard, 'Innocent'. On Ballard and surrealism, see especially Jeannette Baxter, *J. G. Ballard's Surrealist Imagination: Spectacular Authorship* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2009).

⁸⁵Ballard, 'Speculative', p. 38.

⁸⁶Anders, 'Theses', p. 497.

⁸⁷Günther Anders, *Tagesnotizen. Aufzeichnungen 1941–1979* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2006), pp. 131–5.

⁸⁸Anders, *Antiquiertheit 1*, pp. 271–5.

⁸⁹Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 7.

of the twentieth century written in terms of its pathological obsessions'.⁹⁰ The invention of the hydrogen bomb, however, also led Ballard to project his Surrealist gaze into the future. The 'Pre-Third' was haunted by the atomic past as much as by a thermonuclear future. The relevance of Enewetak, for example, concerns less its traumatic past than its future presence.

The series of nuclear weapons testing had fused the sand in layers, and the pseudo-geological strata condensed the brief epochs, microseconds in duration, of thermonuclear time. Typically, the island inverted the geologist's maxim, 'The key to the past lies in the present.' Here, the key to the present lay in the future. This island was a fossil of time future.⁹¹

Ballard made a similar claim about the relevance of Eatherly: 'I suspect Eatherly really is a messenger of the apocalypse come to warn us – not a bringer of guilt about WWII, but a dark angel from the coming holocaust.'⁹²

Whereas Ballard's landscapes are often read as projections of the unconscious, they thus also index a possible future of catastrophe that needs to be confronted. For both Anders and Ballard, Surrealism offered a useful vehicle for unmasking false realities and was key in defamiliarising readers with destructive tendencies in the world. Their inverted or flipped Surrealism offered an important antidote to *Weltlosigkeit* and the absence of a recognisable world of experience.⁹³ Its creation of a 'visionary present' from elements of visions, dreams, memories, and psychological or pathological distortions were building blocks for imagining other ways of life and alternative futures.

Conclusion

In this article, I have offered a reading of human existence in the nuclear age through the work of Anders and Ballard. I have argued that while their work developed out of, and shared important resemblances with, Existentialism, it was also critical of the latter's ability to adequately capture the forms of technological unfreedom that characterised postwar modernity. Existentialism may have provided an answer to the philosophical problem of estrangement (*Weltfremdheit*), but it was insufficiently attentive to the concrete problem that most concerned Anders and Ballard: worldlessness (*Weltlosigkeit*). Technological acceleration had robbed human beings of their world in a double sense. On the one hand, reality had become a false reality or hyperreality in which the consumption of prepackaged media truths took the place of genuine human experience. On the other, the development of nuclear weapons and the risk of nuclear war threatened *Weltlosigkeit* or 'no world' in a literal sense. I argued that Anders and Ballard fused these two dimensions of worldlessness in an original examination of the complex entanglements between nuclear weapons, consumer culture, technological acceleration, and mass communication technologies.

By highlighting their work, I hope to have shown that the relevance of Existentialism for IR extends beyond the writings of card-carrying Existentialists. Although the latter left visible traces on especially mid-twentieth century Realism, few analyses – except for, possibly, John Herz, who was familiar with and largely shared Anders' reading of (nuclear weapons) technology⁹⁴ – match

⁹⁰Bell, 'Surrealist liberalism', p. 1. Within IR, there have been a few attempts to appropriate Surrealism as a critical vehicle for theorising. See Kyle Grayson, 'Persistence of memory? The (new) Surrealism of American security policy', in Elizabeth Dauphinee and Cristina (eds), *The Logics of Biopower and the War on Terror: Living, Dying, Surviving* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 83–107; Marysia Zalewski, *Feminist International Relations: Exquisite Corpse* (London, UK: Routledge, 2013).

⁹¹Ballard 'Terminal beach', pp. 591–2.

⁹²Christopher Priest, 'When J. G. Ballard Met Keith Roberts', available at: {<https://christopher-priest.co.uk/when-j-g-ballard-met-keith-roberts>} accessed on 16 November 2021.

⁹³Günther Anders, 'Die Antiquiertheit der Phantasie', in Anders, *Antiquiertheit 2* (1955), pp. 316–33.

⁹⁴See Herz, *International Politics*, p. 280; Herz, *The Nation-State*, pp. 226–52.

Anders and Ballard's prescient analysis of nuclear weapons and their standing in a postwar age of technological acceleration. While different in tone and directed at different audiences, the writings of Anders and Ballard offer a platform for thinking about the existential dimensions of technology and nuclear weapons. For this reason alone, a return to these intellectuals is warranted. Moreover, the argument by Anders and Ballard that nuclear weapons were at the heart of a pathological normalcy offers an important provocation to nuclear weapons scholarship in IR, which continues to emphasise the rationality of nuclear weapons and nuclear strategy.

Anders and Ballard also grasped the importance of the future catastrophe for understanding the present and combined a cautious or pessimistic view on human progress in the face of Hiroshima and the hydrogen bomb with an unwavering commitment to the ideals of individual freedom and diversity. In the nuclear age, the distance between hope and desolation was short, but Anders and Ballard – despite their oppositional views on nuclear weapons – agreed that the prospect of total nuclear destruction required a more modest form of politics, one that was less concerned with delivering the good than with preventing the worst: human extinction. Such concerns remain highly pertinent to our age. Not only do nuclear weapons continue to threaten the possibility of a (human) future, but also the current climate crisis is increasingly understood through the prism of a sixth global extinction event.⁹⁵ We continue to live in the final age, as Anders argued.

The only way, Anders and Ballard agreed, for individuals to fully grasp, come to terms with or confront the madness of the nuclear predicament was by cultivating the imagination. They both considered Surrealism vital to this task. Any attempt to be realistic had to begin from the assumption that reality itself had become a dangerous illusion. Realism now required a healthy dose of surrealism: the pathological condition of postwar modernity could only be transcended through the imagination, which was the *sine qua non* of freedom and social reform. Their emphasis on the individual imagination, I argued, provided an important alternative to the institutional focus present in the Existentialism-informed analyses of mid-twentieth-century Realists. Whereas the latter debated the necessity of a world state to contain the risk of nuclear war and secure the conditions of freedom, Anders and Ballard's writings show that such debates risk appearing slightly stale without a broader examination of technological rule and its detrimental effects on human agency and autonomy.⁹⁶

Anders and Ballard's foregrounding of the imagination was not without limitations, however. Though it was anchored in a rich exploration of the cultural, social, and political meaning of the H-bomb for human existence, its political efficacy was less than straightforward. For instance, Duncan Bell has persuasively argued that Ballard's celebration of human creativity and inner space also implied a retreat from collective action. Especially Ballard's later fiction bleakly projects a world in thrall of the ever-tightening grip of aggressive and violent phantasmagorias.⁹⁷ Personal satisfaction was still worth striving for, but the Death Drive refused to be halted in its destructive tracks. Anders, who was more outspoken about the need for collective action, also grew increasingly despondent. Given the dire prospects for the imagination in the technological age, at the end of his life he increasingly resembled a modern-day Cassandra, who met the continued apathy of people towards nuclear weapons not just with increasing disbelief but also, as he himself recognised, biting cynicism and outright desperation. The latter reached a low point in the late 1980s, when he briefly entertained the possibility of violence against technological infrastructures that served no other end than indiscriminate violence.⁹⁸ Tragically, this call to fight fire with fire fell prey to exactly the kind of (an)nihilism Anders had indefatigably opposed his entire life.

⁹⁵Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2014).

⁹⁶See, for example, Alexander Wendt, 'Why a world state is inevitable', *European Journal of International Relations*, 9:4 (2003), pp. 491–542. For an overview of world state debates, see Luis Cabrera, 'World government: Renewed debate, persistent challenges', *European Journal of International Relations*, 16:3 (2010), pp. 511–30.

⁹⁷Bell, 'Surrealist liberalism'.

⁹⁸Günther Anders, *Gewalt – ja oder nein: Eine notwendige Diskussion* (Munich: Knauer, 1987).

Despite these shortcomings, the *oeuvres* of Anders and Ballard remain a relevant resource for Existentialist theorising in IR. To the extent that Existentialism is indeed a type of thinking concerned with ‘concrete existence’, the ‘here and now’, or the ‘human situation, *as it is lived*’,⁹⁹ the social and cultural characteristics that Anders and Ballard identified as central to the nuclear age – technological acceleration, mass mediatization, the deadening of affect, and the introduction of extinction as a novel horizon in politics – remain the hallmarks of our time. Especially their rendition of human being as being-towards-extinction continues to resonate strongly with current attempts in IR to formulate new vocabularies of planet politics in the Anthropocene. Given that the period of fervent nuclear testing during the early decades of the Cold War – events that crucially shaped the writings of Anders and Ballard – is now increasingly viewed as a primary marker of the Anthropocene, Anders and Ballard’s analyses offer important historical nuance to IR theorising about existential crisis and extinction.¹⁰⁰ Their work constitutes an early attempt to grasp the theoretical and political relevance of extinction as a *sui generis* category rather than a reference to mass death *in extremis*, that is, not just ‘in the ontic terms of life and death, but rather in the ontological context of be(com)ing and negation’.¹⁰¹

Moreover, the arrival of cable television, the Internet, mobile phones, social media, and platform capitalism seem to only have further intensified the pathologies Anders and Ballard associated with worldlessness. Fake news, conspiracy theories, populism, and affective polarisation all underline the enduring significance of their perspectives on technology, mass communication, and violence. Although neither Anders nor Ballard lived to see the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States in 2016, they would have had little problem recognising how his mobilisation of the disenfranchised masses fundamentally relied on technologically mediated feedback loops of fabricated anger and outrage. Already a decade prior to Trump’s election, Ballard speculated that today’s ‘cable channel chat show host’ might well be to the early twenty-first century what the ‘ranting führer’ was to the previous one. He was convinced that the next populist demagogue would emerge from the ‘vast desert’ of consumerism, its ‘shopping malls’ and ‘retail places’, a proposition he worked out in his last novel before his death, *Kingdom Come* (2006).¹⁰²

I also suspect that neither of them would have been much surprised to learn that twenty-first-century doomsday men continue to rely on the threat of nuclear war as a prominent spectacle in global politics. In fact, almost eight decades after the bombing of Hiroshima, the main question Anders and Ballard asked about their age remains eerily relevant: What does it mean to be, remain, or again become human in a world that wagers on its own destruction?

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⁹⁹Thomas R. Flynn, ‘Toward the concrete’, *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 26:2 (2012), pp. 247–67; Alvie Kohn, ‘Existentialism here and now’, *The Georgia Review*, 38:2 (1984), pp. 381–97; Kevin Aho, *Existentialism: An Introduction* (2nd edn, Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2020), p. XI.

¹⁰⁰See, for example, Anthony Burke, Stefanie Fishel, Audra Mitchell, Simon Dalby, and Daniel J. Levine, ‘Planet politics: A manifesto from the end of IR’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 44:3 (2016), pp. 499–523; Cameron Harrington, ‘The ends of the world: International Relations and the Anthropocene’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 44:3 (2016), pp. 478–98; Rens van Munster and Casper Sylvest (eds), *The Politics of Globality since 1945: Assembling the Planet* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016); Madelaine Fagan, ‘Security in the Anthropocene: Environment, ecology, escape’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 23:2 (2017), pp. 292–314; Alison McQueen, ‘Salutary fear? Hans Morgenthau and the politics of existential crisis’, *American Political Thought*, 6:1 (2017), pp. 78–105; Mitchell, ‘Extinct’; Jairus Grove, *Savage Ecology: War and Geopolitics at the End of the World* (Durham, UK: Duke University Press, 2019); Rens van Munster and Casper Sylvest, ‘Nuclear weapons, extinction, and the Anthropocene: Reappraising Jonathan Schell’, *Review of International Studies*, online first (2021).

¹⁰¹Audra Mitchell, ‘Is IR going extinct?’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 23:1 (2017), pp. 3–25 (p. 3).

¹⁰²J. G. Ballard, ‘Dangerous bends ahead. Slow down: J. G. Ballard on *Kingdom Come* (interview with Toby Litt)’ (2006), in Ballard, *Metaphors*, pp. 415–30 (p. 417).

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