



## International Journal of Social Sciences

ISSN: 2587-2591

DOI Number: <http://dx.doi.org/10.30830/tobider.sayi.9.3>

Volume 5/2 Fall

2021 p. 39-58

### LAND ETHIC AND ANTHROPOCENTRISM IN J. G. BALLARD'S *THE CRYSTAL WORLD*

### J. G. BALLARD'IN *THE CRYSTAL WORLD* ROMANINDA TOPRAK ETİĞİ VE İNSANMERKEZCİLİK

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#### ABSTRACT

James Graham Ballard was a contemporary British author mostly known for his dystopian works dealing with climatic disasters, uncanny catastrophes and the negative effects of technological modernity. Ballard's fourth novel, *The Crystal World* (1966) tells the unusual story of Edward Sanders, a medical doctor treating leprosy patients in Cameroon. Together with his friends, Sanders encounters a strange phenomenon in the African jungle that slowly turns everything into crystal. This study aims to interpret Ballard's *The Crystal World* through the viewpoint of Aldo Leopold's land ethic and the notion of anthropocentrism. The theoretical section of the article gives a detailed account of Aldo Leopold's land ethic referring to various texts and sources. The land ethic proposes a formulation for the preservation of land from the perspective of environmental ethics whereas anthropocentrism insists on the central position of humans in the universe. Specifically, the article argues that through the allegorical narrative, Ballard deconstructs anthropocentric thought and reveals the immediate necessity for a land ethic by revealing the exploitation of land and the exaltation of human speciesism/chauvinism. To this end, the article examines how

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Ballard deconstructs anthropocentrism in *The Crystal World* and exposes the necessity for a land ethic, combined with an ecological conscience.

**Key Words:** J.G. Ballard, *The Crystal World*, Aldo Leopold, Land Ethic, Anthropocentrism.

## ÖZ

James Graham Ballard, iklimsel ve esrarengiz felaketler ile teknolojik modernitenin olumsuz etkilerini konu alan eserleri ile tanınan çağdaş İngiliz bir romancıdır. Ballard'ın dördüncü romanı, *The Crystal World* (1966) Kamerun'da cüzzam hastalarını tedavi eden bir tıp doktoru olan Edward Sanders'ın sıra dışı öyküsünü anlatmaktadır. Sanders, arkadaşlarıyla birlikte Afrika'nın ormanlarında çevrede bulunan her şeyi yavaşça kristale döndüren tuhaf bir olay ile karşılaşır. Bu araştırma, Ballard'ın *The Crystal World* romanını Aldo Leopold'un toprak etiği ve insanmerkezcilik kavramı penceresinden irdelemektedir. Makalenin teorik bölümü, Aldo Leopold'un toprak etiği kavramını çeşitli metin ve kaynaklara yapılan göndermelerle etraflıca ele almaktadır. Toprak etiği kavramı, doğal alanların çevre etiğine dayanarak korunmasının formülasyonunu önerirken, insanmerkezcilik ise insanın evrendeki merkezi konumunu ısrarla savunmaktadır. Özel anlamda makale, Ballard'ın alegorik anlatısı aracılığı ile toprak sömürüsü, insan türçülüğü ile şovenizmi yücelterek, insanmerkezci düşüncüyü yapısökümüne uğrattığını ve toprak etiğinin acil gerekliliğini çeşitli imalarla ortaya koyduğunu tartışmaktadır. Bu bağlamda makale, Ballard'ın *The Crystal World* romanında insanmerkezciliği nasıl alaşağı ettiğini ve ekolojik bilinçle toprak etiğine yönelik ihtiyacı yansıttığını açığa çıkarmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** J.G. Ballard, *The Crystal World*, Aldo Leopold, Toprak Etiği, İnsanmerkezcilik.

## Introduction

James Graham Ballard (1930–2009) was a contemporary British novelist acclaimed for his novels of transgressive and science fiction. Ballard published his first novels in the early 1960s when he delivered his trilogy of climate fiction with *The Wind from Nowhere* (1961), *The Drowned World* (1962) and *The Drought* (1964). Often mentioned together with

this trilogy is his fourth novel, *The Crystal World* (1966) which is based on the story of supernatural events taking place in the jungles of Africa. Specifically, *The Crystal World* follows the quest of Edward Sanders, a medical doctor treating patients' leprosy in Cameroon, western Africa. While on duty, Sanders and his team encounter a bizarre phenomenon where jungles begin to crystallise together with their living population due to unknown reasons.

This article's purpose is to interpret Ballard's *The Crystal World* in light of Aldo Leopold's land ethic and anthropocentrism. In a specific context, the article argues that anthropocentrism is deconstructed through the author's narrative which displays the urgent need for a land ethic. In *The Crystal World*, Ballard makes use of an allegorical story to convey particular covert messages to the society in his period. Moreover, it ought to be highlighted that Ballard mostly relies on a metaphorical and allegorical writing style and for this reason it is vital to understand Ballard as one of a varied group of twentieth-century authors and thinkers who thought that myths were indispensable frameworks for understanding reality, as well as essential instruments for living with and critiquing modernity (Sternberg, 2013, p. 258). The critique of modernity and its components, such as consumerism and the effects of capitalism belong to Ballard's indispensable themes. To that end, the study will focus on how the writer reflects issues concerning land, human speciesism and exploitation of the natural environment via the narrative of *The Crystal World*.

### **Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic**

Scholar and environmental philosopher Aldo Leopold (1887-1948) proposed and advocated the need for a "land ethic" in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Leopold's land ethic is mentioned in the last essay of his book, *A Sand County Almanac* originally published in 1949. In a nutshell, the land ethic is a formulation for "the development of an ethic of environmental protection" (Blackburn, 1994). Leopold puts forward a supplement to traditional ethics to establish an all-inclusive understanding of the biotic sphere (Meine, 2013, p. 297). The thinker formulates the land ethic and in it he differentiates the following: "man the conqueror *versus* man the biotic citizen; science the sharpener of his sword *versus* science the search-light on his universe; land the slave and servant *versus* land the collective

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organism” (Leopold, 1989, p. 223). With the use of these differentiations, Leopold clearly expresses the binary oppositions in three domains he deemed essential: humans, science and land. The author defines two types of humans; those who conquer and those who live in peace. In addition, he outlines two forms of science; one in service of human’s selfish quest and the other one serving to understand the universe. Finally, he envisions two kinds of lands; one that is enslaved and the other one shared by all living organisms. Leopold made his point clear in the draft foreword by claiming that: “Science is, or should be, much more than a lever for easier livings. Scientific discovery is nutriment for our sense of wonder, a much more important matter than thicker steaks or bigger bathtubs” (Leopold, 1987, pp. 281-282). Leopold thus highlights the significance of scientific discovery for the purpose of shedding light to humanity’s destiny.

In a speech he delivered at the Conservation Committee of the Garden Club of America in 1947, Leopold argued for the necessity of what he entitled, ecological conscience: “I need a short name for what is lacking; I call it the ecological conscience. Ecology is the science of communities, and the ecological conscience is therefore the ethics of community life” (Leopold, 1991b, pp. 339-340). The ecological conscience established a basis for the land ethic. Curt Meine avers that Leopold was “attempting to fuse large spheres in human knowledge, in the human experience, and in the changing relationship of humans and nature” (2013, p. 181). In other words, the philosopher was striving to put forward a fundamental framework that would help to change humans’ view on nature and their actions towards the environment. Since its publication, the land ethic has been a prominent model for ethical and environmental reasoning (Steele, 2011, p. 297). In *A Sand County Almanac*, the land ethic is presented as the final stage of humanity’s ethical development and for the progress of this new ethical understanding, Leopold stressed the importance of ecology education (Özdağ, 2019, p. 210). According to Leopold, the basic requirement for the existence of ecologic conscience is the constitution of land ethic in the society. If there exists land ethic in a society, there also exists ecological conscience (Özdağ, 2019, p. 211). To this end, Leopold’s land ethic is independent from all pragmatic concerns and solely concentrates on the value of land assuming an intrinsic and holistic approach. According to this intrinsic approach, all lands are of great value to the ecosystem and the holistic approach maintains that every single element of nature is interconnected with the ecosystem as a whole. In other

words, “every component of the system, large or small, plays a role in preserving and maintaining the integrity of an ecosystem” (Knight and Riedel, 2002, p. 143). Furthermore, in relation to the land ethic, Ufuk Özdağ expresses that this ethical understanding:

States that the land cannot be seen only in terms of economic value in the rural and urban areas of the future; the complexity of the soil; that the ecosystem is as valuable as the individuals that make up the whole; the value of wild areas; that biodiversity should be protected; and demonstrates the importance of ecological restoration; nature conservation aesthetics; nature conservation movement focusing on local people; and learning environmental history. (2019, p. 210)

In this respect, the scholar affirms that natural areas cannot be measured by their economic value and for this reason, humans ought to stop viewing the natural environment as a commodity. According to Leopold, instead of dominating and exploiting nature, people should regard themselves as mere members of the biotic community (Özdağ, 2005, p. 33). As a result, man has no authority to damage “the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community” for economic gain, assuming nature exists for human benefit (Özdağ, 2002, p. 48). Leopold begins *A Sand County Almanac* with a reference to Homer’s *Odyssey* and mentions that after turning back from the wars of Troy, Odysseus “hanged all on one rope a dozen slave-girls of his household whom he suspected of misbehaving during his absence” (1989, p. 201). Leopold emphasises that if people are regarded as mere property, as it was in ancient Greece, no ethical concerns are maintained as “the girls were property and the disposal of property was then, as now, a matter of expediency, not of right and wrong” In this context, Leopold expresses that humans have the capacity to develop a sense of ethical concern. Hence, a comprehensive change of mentality and a new type of understanding is imperative. Özdağ also posits that: “basing nature conservation on economic grounds may preserve economically beneficial species and soils, but does not provide the necessary change for the emergence of a new ethical system that will protect the entire ecosystem” (2005, p. 37). The scholar thus highlights the essential mission of the ecosystem’s conservation as a whole.

Moreover, in the 1930s, Leopold considered ecology as a new science that was newly flourishing and attributed to himself the vital mission of conveying his ecological ideas to the public (Newton and Warren, 2006, p. 180). In a lecture delivered in 1938, he expressed the following:

We end, I think, at what might be called the standard paradox of the twentieth century: our tools are better than we are, and grow better faster than we do. They suffice to crack the atom, to command the tides. But they do not suffice for the oldest task in human history: to live on a piece of land without spoiling it. (Leopold, 1991a, p. 254)

With this statement, Leopold emphasises the fact that humans have developed themselves in a variety of aspects including technology, agriculture and physics. We have mastered all of the sciences, yet while we are doing this, we cannot help ourselves from harming the environment. In the subtext of this argument lies the fact that humanity ascribes too much value on its own progress while at the same time disregarding the conservation of the areas humans live on. Furthermore, Saydam and Özdağ argue that Leopold's understanding of the land ethic is not a local notion but "an ethic that covers the entire land organism" (2020, p. 182). Thus, the land ethic is a philosophy that exceeds all boundaries and local limitations. It is established for the ecosystem as a whole and therefore cannot be classified and reduced to locality. Additionally, Leopold also pleads for "the restriction of freedom of action" in order to preserve the land's potential of self-healing (Saydam and Özdağ, 2020, p. 183). In *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold claims that "wilderness" formed an ideal model for "healthy and ecologically balanced land" (2020, p. 184). Roderick Nash adds that without wilderness "we have no way of knowing how the land mechanism functions under normal conditions" (1976, p. 21). Thus, the natural areas of the wilderness offer humans exemplary spaces concerning the functioning of the land mechanism and for this to be able to continue, it is essential for these areas to remain unspoiled. All in all, in current environmental thought, Leopold's grandeur is seen in his efforts to go above traditional utilitarian western ethics and in his shattering of the established rules of meaning about man/land connections (Özdağ, 2002, p. 41).

Furthermore, a figure who became prominent after Leopold's era is Edward Abbey. For Abbey, the struggle for land ethic turned into radical environmentalism in the face of this destruction of the land. Abbey aims to raise awareness of people against the "techno-industrial state" by using a sharp and furious language in his works (Özdağ, 2005, p. 75). Abbey's nature writing, without thinking of offending his readers, includes a heavy critique of modern industrial culture, American society, government, politicians and big corporations (2005, p. 75). Abbey revolted against the American corporatist system which aimed to

exploit nature for its own interests. As the spokesperson of nature preservation, Abbey passed away in 1989, leaving behind nineteen works that led to today's radical environmentalism (2005, p. 75). In short, Leopold and Abbey were visionaries, who set the foundations of environmental philosophy through the establishment of ecological conscience, conservation of the ecosystem and the land ethic which proposes a holistic understanding towards the natural environment.

### **Anthropocentrism / Non-anthropocentrism**

In a nutshell, anthropocentrism is defined as human-centeredness, which puts forward that humans position themselves at the centre of the universe. In effect, anthropocentrism is a deep worldview that has its origins in the earlier stages of humanity. According to the Abrahamic perspective, the metaphysical notion that humans were made in the image of God is used to justify moral anthropocentrism (Callicott, 2014, p. 36). On the other hand, in the modern philosophical legacy, the metaphysical idea that humans are rational and independent is invoked to vindicate moral anthropocentrism (2014, p. 36). Thus, moral anthropocentrism attempts to construct a moral basis for the rationalisation of anthropocentric thought. In respect to the anthropocentric view, all non-human entities in the universe are regarded as a mere instrument for human use. Therefore, humans could freely use, abuse and manipulate every living or non-living entity in the world as anthropocentrism served as an ideological justification for this particular purpose. Sergio Bartolommei interprets anthropocentrism as the belief that nature exists separate from people, and that nothing in nature has worth unless it serves some human-serving goal, need, or desire (1995, pp. 40-41). As a result, even supposing that nature has some type of worth, a distinction between human and non-human nature would be justified on principle (Romeo and Sgarlata, 2020, p. 5).

Due to these reasons, many philosophers and scholars such as Leopold and Abbey have rejected anthropocentrism and have assumed a non-anthropocentric view. The rejection of anthropocentrism was the primary, if not essential, ethical dedication of environmental ethics and philosophy, as well as its most powerful political and philosophical rationale (Minteer, 2009, p. 4). On the other hand, what is meant by the concept of non-anthropocentrism is the necessity to establish the non-instrumental, intrinsic worth of natural

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things: only in this manner will it be feasible to construct a true environmental ethics, as opposed to an environmental abuse ethics (Romeo and Sgarlata, 2020, p. 5). Thus, as long as an anthropocentric view is hegemonic, humans will continue to dominate and oppress all non-human living entities within the ecosystem. Therefore, human beings ought to overcome anthropocentric thought. Hence, in order to overcome anthropocentrism, humans need to acknowledge that they are “a part of the natural order”, rather than being at the centre of the universe (Hayward, 1997, p. 50). Hayward purports that “according to the ethical criticism, anthropocentrism is the mistake of giving exclusive or arbitrarily preferential consideration to human interests as opposed to the interests of other beings” (1997, p. 51). In this respect, human concerns and interests are valued and prioritised above other living beings which results in the negligence and eventually, exploitation of all other entities.

The exclusion of other living beings and, the prioritisation of humans can be expressed in two headings: speciesism and human chauvinism. As a term, speciesism signifies “the arbitrary discrimination on the basis of species” (Ryder, 1992, p. 197). When humans favour the interests of their own species over the interests of members of other species for morally arbitrary reasons, they are rightfully accused of speciesism (Hayward, 1997, p. 52). Thus, in all aspects of life, the degradation and exploitation of non-human living entities such as land and animals are thereby justified as their physical suffering is either taken for granted or commonly treated as acceptable. Hayward disputes that this type of understanding could be classified as speciesist and this is why solely instrumental examination of non-humans comes into this category: as long as they are examined in terms of their instrumental worth to humans, they are not viewed “for their own sake” (Hayward, 1997, p. 53). Another concept closely related to speciesism is human chauvinism and what qualifies as ‘deserving of respect’ might be defined in ways that always prioritise humans: therefore, a human chauvinist could accept that the moral arbitrariness of speciesism is always wrong while continuing to dismiss claims of important similarities between humans and other species (1997, p. 53). Thus, from the perspective of human chauvinists, animals and the environment are not worthy of respect in moral terms. As a natural consequence, in order to overthrow anthropocentrism, overthrowing speciesism and human chauvinism is a primary requirement.



Environmental philosopher and faithful follower of Aldo Leopold, John Baird Callicott has provided immense contributions to Leopold's works. Firstly, Callicott embraces the land ethic and dismisses Cartesian dualist thought which makes sharp distinctions between humans and non-humans, the environment and civilisation (Collomb, 2017, p. 2). Additionally, Callicott's main objective is to deliver a philosophical justification to Leopold's land ethic and for this purpose, he calls upon the views of David Hume and Adam Smith (2017, p. 3). David Hume maintains that:

Man has an inherent ability to discern if an activity is morally repugnant or not. His moral sense is thus influenced by his emotions and instincts rather than by reason (Hume 297-298). Sympathy and benevolence are essentially human rather than societal creations, allowing that man is not exclusively selfish. (Hume, 1998, p. 305)

The philosopher thus asserts that humans are not selfish beings but are capable of empathy and altruism. Based on the framework of David Hume, Callicott brings forward his own ecocentric philosophy which proposes that humans share an equal value and position with all other living beings on this planet. Callicott believes that a human being represents much more than a physical body and the urge for self-preservation. The self can only be adequately understood in the context of the many communities to which it belongs – family, region, nation, party, philosophy, and biotic community, to mention a few (Collomb, 2017, p. 4). To that end, Callicott also anticipates that for his contemporaries to overcome the enormous environmental difficulties of the twenty-first century, a profound shift in mentality is necessary (2017, p. 4). The thinker highlights that unless this shift takes place, no resolution shall be established for environmental matters and Callicott believes that this shift is currently in progress (2017, p. 5). All in all, Callicott contends that modernity is the major responsible factor for issues such as climate change, the damage inflicted upon the environment and the extermination of species around the globe (2017, p. 8). Therefore, a shift to an ecocentric understanding is not only inevitable, but also imperative and needs to take place as soon as possible.

Lastly, what it signifies to be human lies at the very core of anthropocentrism. In other words, to study the role of the category 'human' in the organizational processes that characterise modernity (Nimmo, 2011, p. 59). For this peculiar reason, the position of humanity in the universe is what constitutes anthropocentrism. To this end, being modern is

associated with being anthropocentric. According to Richie Nimmo, “human beings are hailed as the source of all meaning and value, the agents in all action, the eye in the storm of existence itself” (2011, p. 60). In this context, humanism is also connected with anthropocentrism as it is also human-centred and ignores the importance of non-human beings (2011, p. 60). As a doctrine which locates humans at the centre of value and attention, humanism cannot be separated from anthropocentrism. Finally anthropocentrism is also associated with other types of centrism such as sexism and racism. According to Val Plumwood, people who are under the influence of anthropocentrism generate ideas about themselves as belonging to a superior realm apart, a logical world of entirely human ethics, technology, and culture divorced from nature and environment (2002, p. 99). Anthropocentrism, like sexism and racism, displays itself at various levels: at the human level through individual ideas and acts, at the level of identity, through institutions and knowledge systems (Plumwood, 2002, p. 133). Thus, anthropocentrism is regarded alongside the negative notions of sexism and racism. As a result, it ought to be acknowledged that anthropocentric thought is as harmful and belligerent as other forms of –isms that are known in the society.

### ***The Crystal World as a Deconstructive Narrative***

J.G. Ballard's *The Crystal World* deals with a variety of issues. As the fourth novel of Ballard's apocalyptic quadrilogy, *The Crystal World* mainly deals with earth's and humans' destruction by earth. Despite being classified as a weird type of fantasy, the novel is often considered a forerunner of climate fiction (Klonowska, 2018, p. 74). However, rather than an overt categorisation of climate fiction, it should be asserted that *The Crystal World* requires an allegorical and thus metaphorical interpretation as the author's style of writing is often characterised by covert implications and allegorical allusions. Klonowska claims that Ballard's novels are metaphorical representations rather than accounts of the future (2018, pp. 74-75). In this respect, *The Crystal World* represents Ballard's response against the anthropocentric nature of humans and their troublesome relation with the land.

Port Matarre is the fictional city where Dr. Sanders works to treat his patients' leprosy. During Sanders' quest, a high level of land exploitation takes place on behalf of the western colonizers operating on the African continent. In this narrative, the men assume the

role of the conquerors/masters whereas the land takes on the position of the servant/slave. Thus, the binary oppositions in terms of humans, science and land come to surface in Ballard's novel. Humans belong to those who conquer, exploit and abuse for their own, selfish interests. In addition, the science humans produce does not exist to enlighten humanity or to understand the universe but to serve the interests of the greedy exploiters. Finally, the land is what lies at the centre of *The Crystal World*. Throughout the novel, the African lands are enslaved by their western conquerors. The western colonisers exploit, abuse and dominate the land to the fullest extent as western mining expeditions are visible from the beginning till the end of the narrative. The westerners exploit African soil for their precious stones, especially diamonds and gems:

It didn't matter with the costume jewellery, but some of the native miners started using the same technique on the small diamonds they smuggled out. As you know, the diamond mines here don't produce gem stones, and everyone was naturally surprised when these huge rocks began to reach the market. The share prices on the Paris Bourse climbed to fantastic heights. That's how it all started. (Ballard, 2014, p. 52)

The westerners not only smuggle and steal all valuable assets they encounter, but they also possess an insatiable mentality towards the land's invaluable resources. The accounts related to the massive smuggling of natural resources openly reflect the merciless attitude of the western colonisers against the land. This troubled relationship exposes that the western humans consider the land as a mere commodity, something to be possessed and sold for its market value. Those who assign to themselves the role of masters of Earth do not once reconsider the fragility of nature and of all its living non-human beings. Due to the lack of the land ethic and an ecological conscience, humans tend to regard nature only for its exchange value rather than its actual intrinsic value. Only through the establishment of a land ethic may humans accept and acknowledge an ecological conscience that will lead to a better relationship between humans and the land. In *The Crystal World*, however, characters display a pragmatic and highly materialistic relationship with the land, disregarding and ignoring all components of the ecosystem and treating them as goods that ought to be taken in possession.

The characters in *The Crystal World*, including Dr. Sanders, exhibit ironical conduct throughout the narrative. In the early pages of the novel, Sanders questions his

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presence in Africa: "For some time he had suspected that his reasons for serving at the leper hospital were not altogether humanitarian, and that he might be more attracted by the idea of leprosy, and whatever it unconsciously represented, than he imagined" (Ballard, 2014, p. 17). After the crystallisation phenomenon occurs, Sanders and many other characters display a bizarre jealousy towards those who are "so lucky" to become crystallised (Orr, 2000, p. 488). Ballard conveys a metaphorical criticism against colonialism in general and the western presence in Africa, in particular. After almost being crystallised himself, Sanders writes the following to his hospital supervisor:

I quickly came to understand it, knowing that its hazards were a small price to pay for its illumination of my life. Indeed, the rest of the world seemed drab and inert by contrast, faded reflection of this bright image, forming a gray penumbral zone, like some half-abandoned purgatory. (Ballard, 2014, p. 93)

Sanders' statement reveals the ironical outcome of his presence in Africa. Although he is there to treat patients, the doctor virtually becomes a part of the exploitative system. The characters' longing for crystals and their mysterious attraction to the phenomenon of crystallisation is a symbolic metaphor referring to the author's criticism of humanity, in specific, those embracing modernity. In other words, Ballard's oeuvre should be viewed as a literature of ambiguous critique and study of modernity, rather than a literature of protest against it (Sternberg, 2013, p. 272).

Later, in the story, the people head to the forests not to grab some crystals or stones but to become crystals. This is the case for some leper patients, the ill and the dying people that seem to rejoice from this phenomenon. In the end, father Balthus is seen playing his organ in the crystallising church: "In this forest we see the final celebration of the Eucharist of Christ's body. Here everything is transfigured and illuminated, joined together in the last marriage of space and time" (Ballard, 2014, p. 194). As the book ends, Sanders finds out that one third of the world's surface will be covered in crystal in the near future (Orr, 2000, p. 488). Upon this, he decides to face his destiny and returns to the forest. In addition, there are also several references to the notions of holism and wilderness in the novel. As the crystallisation process spreads to other parts of the world, an emphasis of holism of land/Earth is made in the subtext of the novel. Moreover, human colonisers especially spoil the wilderness, disrupting the harmony of nature and providing permanent damage to the

ecosystem. Thus, *The Crystal World* displays the urgent need for a land ethic, in a unique, Ballardian manner. While critiquing modernity, the author deconstructs anthropocentrism via this allegorical narrative.

In *The Crystal World*, the deconstruction of anthropocentrism occurs in two ways: with the colonisation of the lands and through the unknown phenomenon of crystallisation. The exploitation of the lands deconstructs anthropocentric human spirit within the context of the white presence in Africa. In other words, exploitation forms a means for the deconstruction of anthropocentrism in *The Crystal World*. The actual reason of their presence is implied by the author several times in the story via the following keywords: “mining, gold, jewels, diamonds, rubies” etc. Hence, precious stones and natural resources constitute the most significant motive of the white man’s presence in Africa. Towards the end of the novel, Sanders fully comprehends and comes to terms with the actual reason of his quest in Africa:

Believe me, I recognize now that my motives for working at the leproserie weren’t altogether humanitarian, but merely accepting that doesn’t help me. Of course there’s a dark side of the psyche, and I suppose all one can do is find the other face and try to reconcile the two. (Ballard, 2014, p. 105)

On the other hand, this acknowledgment does not save Sanders from becoming an accomplice in the quest for exploitation. He is a mere collaborator in the systematic abuse of western Africa’s natural sources. In this respect, İsmail Serdar Altaç discusses that the influence of surrealism, which brings the subconscious to the fore, cannot be denied, and in Ballard’s works, the primitiveness and violent tendencies of the characters constitute an important theme (Altaç, 2018, p. 25). On the other hand, David Ian Paddy, in *The Empires of J.G. Ballard*, argues that this approach is related to the empire narratives of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and especially associates it with Joseph Conrad. According to Paddy, “Ballard’s idea of ‘inner space’ and his belief that ‘the only alien planet to us is Earth’ guided colonial narratives inward and made the characters confront the ‘primitive’ within them” (2015, p. 9).

Moreover, despite being aware of the dangers that await them, Sanders and his western companions do not refrain from their exploitative activities and give in to the temptation of obtaining precious jewels: “Still, of one thing I’m sure, there’s no actual

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physical danger from this process, or Ventress would have warned me. If anything, he was encouraging me to go to Mont Royal (Ballard, 2014, p. 49). Sanders' ironic statement openly reflects their imperialist intentions and acts as a foreshadowing of the catastrophic fate they will eventually suffer from. It could be argued that the novel is a story of imperialism and exploitation as from the beginning until the end, there are various mentions of smuggling and the possession of precious resources: "I'm sure it is. What do you use it for? Diamond-smuggling?" [...] He shrugged sadly. 'So I hoped, Doctor, but too late now'" (Ballard, 2014, p. 54). It becomes obvious from these dialogues that the smuggling and looting of precious stones are considered regular activities that are taken for granted by the westerners.

The second type of deconstruction in the novel is represented through the crystallisation process. It is ironic and highly symbolical that the humans who engage in looting and plundering to gain possession of precious jewels become crystallised in the end. In other words, those who victimise become the victims themselves despite being unaware of its destructive effects. The crystallised nature appears to be breathtakingly beautiful and fatally attractive to humans. The extreme beauty of the "new forest" is described in a lyrical style: "Embedded at various points were the almost motionless forms of birds with outstretched wings, golden orioles and scarlet macaws, shedding brilliant pools of light. [...] The reflections of the melting plumage enveloping them in endless concentric patterns" (Ballard, 2014, p. 162). Ballard's descriptions are so vivid that it seems as if he ascribes positive value to the otherwise lethal phenomenon of crystallisation.

At the heart of *The Crystal World* lies the land (Earth). Most action revolves around the land and its natural resources. The land is the ultimate entity being exploited without any mercy. Nevertheless, despite the central position of the land, all characters easily disregard land and its non-human living beings because humans conduct all their activities with the sole purpose of taking possession of Earth's precious commodities. At the end of the novel, humans face an apocalypse delivered by none other than that which they came to possess. Thus, apocalypse is also brought forward by the land in Ballard's uncanny narrative. Interesting as it is, the phenomenon turns all organic beings into crystals, equalising them to the same level: "Finally, the crystallisation brings the characters together and reunites them with nature: it treats them just like birds, trees or crocodiles, making them one of the elements of the universe that is freezing and stopping" (Klonowska, 2018, p. 81). Hence, humans that

considered themselves superior to the land and to other beings are now completely equal via Ballard's allegorical deconstruction of anthropocentrism.

Another perspective discusses that *The Crystal World* defies the 'antinomial conflict of nature and civilization' and portrays the unsettling prospect of a life-view that does not prioritize the organic (Knowles, 2018, p. 350). Ballard restores "harmony" by equalising humans, animals and land with the supernatural occurrence of crystallisation and brings down human hubris by freezing them together with time and space. In this respect, Ballard also deconstructs speciesism and human chauvinism. Humans think of themselves as a privileged species that exist to dominate the world and every living non-human being. In the end, Ballard establishes that this is not the case as humans share the exact same fate as all other beings. The author thus tears down human chauvinism and hubris through an apocalypse executed by the land.

Throughout the text, there are various examples of the degradation of the land, as well as that of animals. As "the masters of the land" humans can freely abuse, dominate and exterminate every living creature they wish: "'What were you shooting at?' she asked after an interval. 'There was a gun going off, it gave me a headache.' 'Just a crocodile, Serena. There are some smart crocodiles around here, I have to watch them'" (Ballard, 2014, pp. 82-83). The phrase, "just a crocodile" openly reveals the attitude of the whites towards animals and other non-human living beings. Animals are just as disposable as anything else and their worth is defined by their use and commodity value to the humans: "The three suitcases, Ventress's expensive one in polished crocodile skin, and his own scuffed workaday bags, were already packed and waiting beside the door" (Ballard, 2014, p. 14). In *The Crystal World*, the exploitation of the non-human beings is taken for granted and viewed as the norm. The land and animals are not seen worthy of respect which is an indication of human chauvinism. In a dialogue between Sanders and the clerk, Sanders asks: "'Tell me, why is it so dark in Port Matarre? It's not overcast, and yet one can hardly see the sun.' 'It's not dark, Doctor, it's the leaves. They're taking minerals from the ground, it makes everything look dark'" (Ballard, 2014, p. 20). Hence, the degradation of nature is visible throughout the narrative.

Moreover, in direct connection with anthropocentrism is the concept of colonialism/imperialism. Jeanette Baxter disputes that *The Crystal World* explores the historical and imagined collapse of European imperialism in Africa following World War II. The swift nationalist uprising in Africa after World War II resulted in the independence of Cameroon from France in 1960, and twelve former British colonies became independent African republics between 1960 and 1966 (Baxter, 2016, p. 38). The notions of colonialism/imperialism are not only discriminatory, racist and politically incorrect in many aspects, but also anthropocentric. As a consequence of imperialist activities, colonisers have inflicted serious harm to the lands and to all non-human living beings as the sole purpose of colonialism was to grab the natural resources of colonised lands in order to make use of them in industry and for other purposes. Thus, Ballard's *The Crystal World* stands out as a novel that incorporates severe criticism against modernity, anthropocentrism and exploitation of land through colonial activity.

### **Conclusion**

J. G. Ballard is a contemporary author who presents more problems rather than solutions. As a writer who makes prolific use of allusions and allegories, Ballard's writing style is often characterised by a dark symbolism with no clear-cut resolutions. *The Crystal World* tells the story of the western men becoming the victims of an unknown phenomenon that turns everything into crystal in Africa. The novel's open ending with men returning to the forest to be crystallised marks an ambiguous closure that is full of question marks.

This article has demonstrated that Ballard's *The Crystal World* deconstructs the western anthropocentric thought and emphasises the urgent need for a land ethic that will ensure the protection and preservation of the land through the existence of an ecological conscience. Aldo Leopold's land ethic, which was put forward during the 1940s, is relevant in this novel which presumably takes place and was published in the 1960s. In conclusion, Ballard creates an ironical story where men systematically destroy the land but are eventually destroyed by the same land. Through this ironical and symbolical narrative, Ballard deconstructs western, anthropocentric tendencies and exposes the necessity for a land ethic that will protect the land from humanity's harmful intentions. As a striking critique of modernity, *The Crystal World* depicts a mesmerizing, allegorical narrative that ought to be

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interpreted not only as a criticism of modernity, but also as the criticism of humanity itself. Thus, in an ironical and symbolical manner, Ballard emphasises the power of nature by deconstructing anthropocentrism. *The Crystal World* is a novel that begins and ends with the land, restoring Earth's precedence over humans.

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