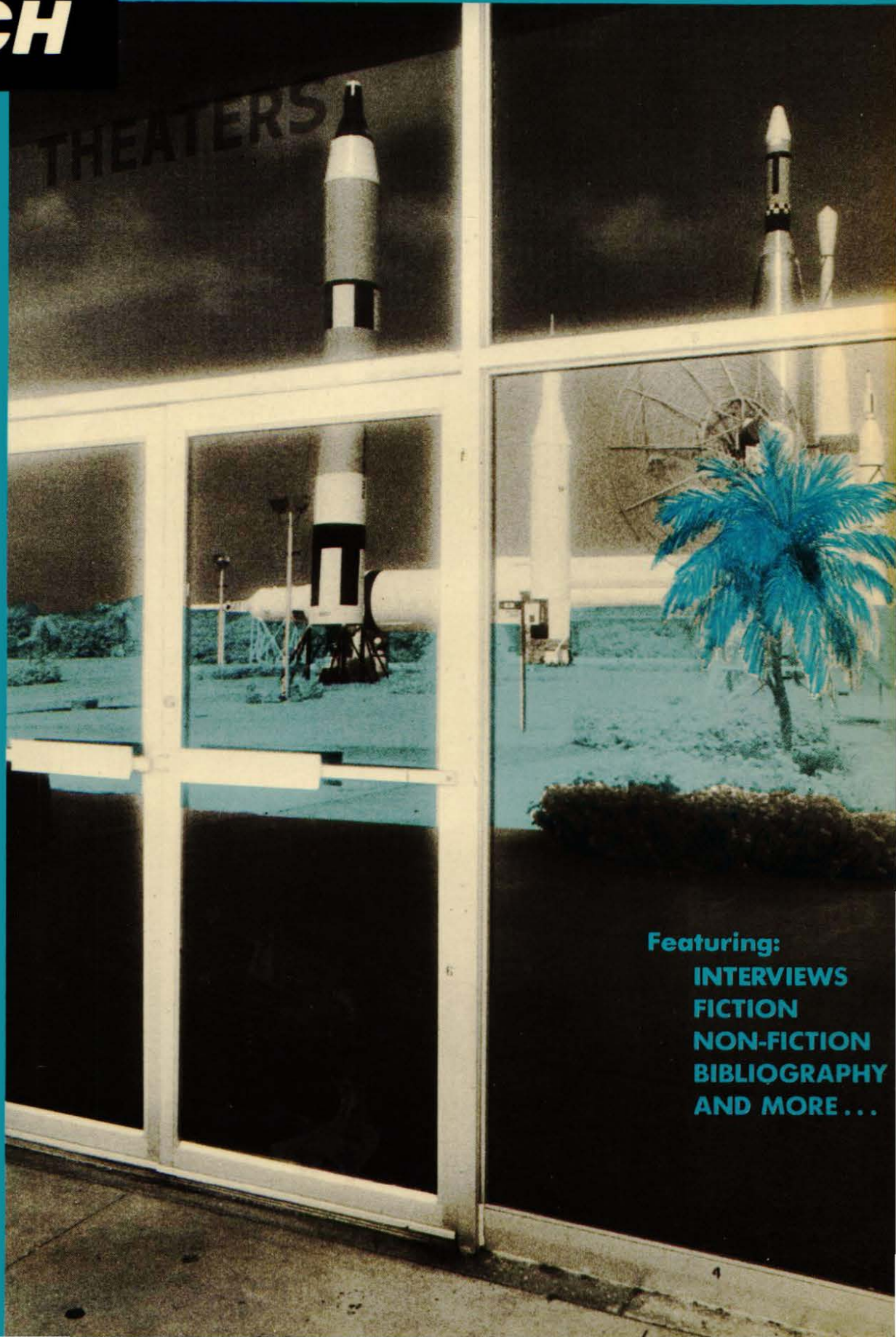


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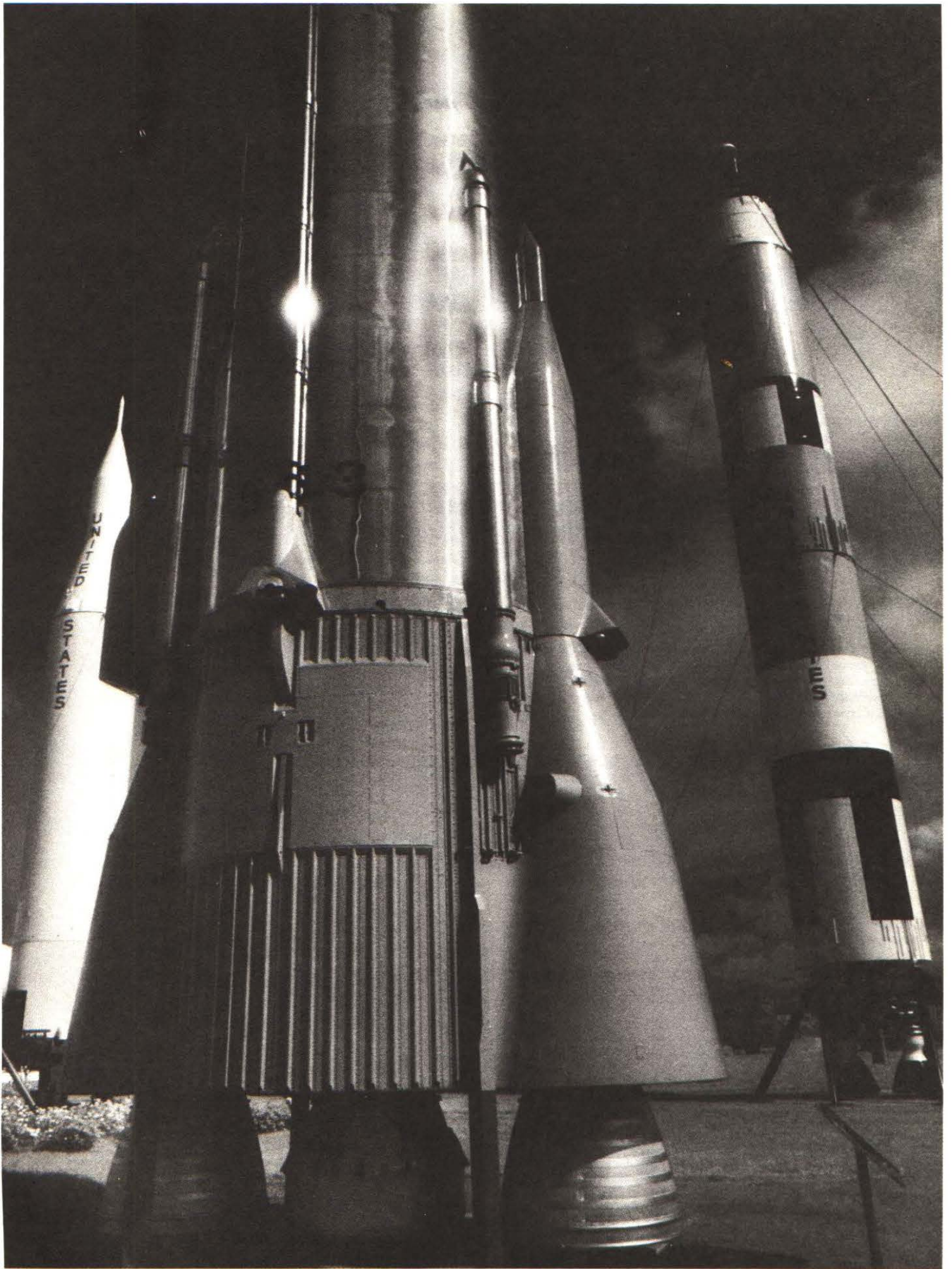
No 8/9

J.
G.
BALLARD



Featuring:

INTERVIEWS
FICTION
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INTRODUCTION

J. G. Ballard has initiated a dazzling scope of clearly relevant attitudes, analyses, ideas and scenarios. His forward-looking philosophy embodies a comprehensive understanding of how the instant mass media (with their stylized fabrications of "news events," "news figures," and "lifestyles") have changed everything that signifies "meaning" in our lives. He has extrapolated upon the effects of widespread home computers and video recorders on our identities and personal histories. He is concerned with how we are going to change.

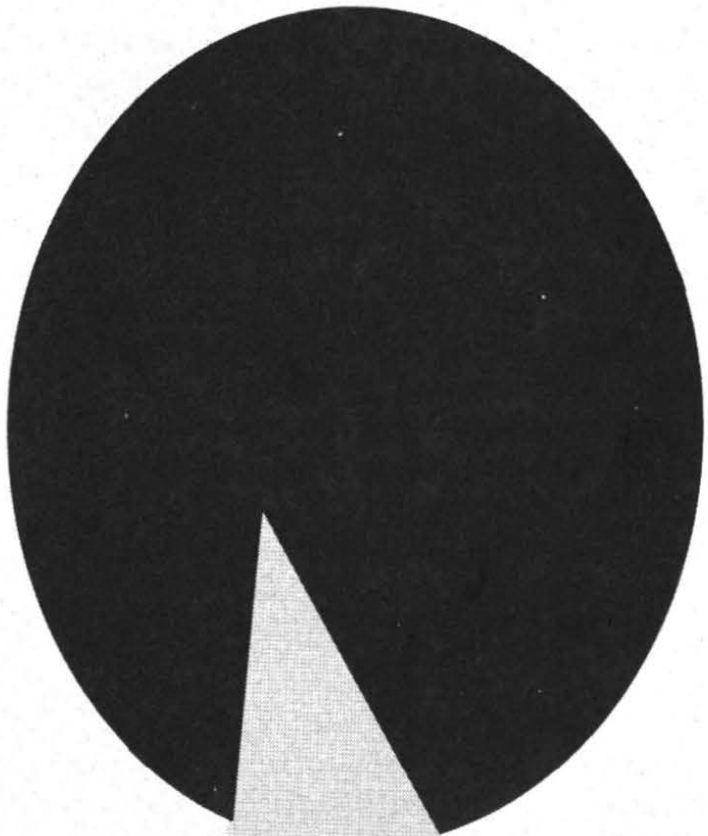
■ J. G. Ballard's work destroys the barriers between science and art; advertising and literature; politics and pop culture; ecological catastrophe and the Space Age; television and the new styles of sociopathic conformism; *et al.* He has identified and imaginatively expanded upon the new mythologies and symbolisms of the imminent future. Sex, technology, advertising, this dying planet, increasingly innovative pathological behavior, the parallel world of the lives and deaths of famous celebrities—all intermingle in Ballard's cool explications of *what is really going on.*

■ The characters in Ballard's scenarios exemplify the problems of achieving a unique identity in a mass culture world—often through madness or crime, always through the elaboration of obsession. In an age of clichéd cynicism, these characters possess *ideals* which they strive to fulfill, however strangely. Consistently, Ballard's writing reflects one central investigation: of *the meaning of freedom* in a world obsessed with control and obedience to the past

■ Freedom, for Ballard, is synonymous with the *imagination.* And it is no accident that he acknowledges Surrealism, with its emphasis on the unconscious and the importance of dreams, as a major influence: "I am interested in the Surrealists altogether, because I am a great believer in the need of imagination to transform everything, otherwise we'll have to take the world as we find it, and I don't think we should. We should re-make the world."

■ At a time when nobody believes that the future will be "better," it's definitely time to understand *why* . . . and how we got that way.

—Vale, San Francisco, 1984



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10-29-82. Camouflaged in an innocuous suburb, an hour's train ride from London, J. G. Ballard welcomed us to his study, furnished with a silver-foil palm tree, lawn chair, overflowing bookcase, desk and typewriter, a big fat cat, and a view of a very green, shady backyard through French windowpanes. Shepperton is famous for its movie studios and proximity to Heathrow airport, but they seemed far away—the two-block walk from the train station to his house revealed merely streets of two-storey houses surrounded by lawns, on a grey day. Upon arriving we immediately began recording the conversation and didn't stop until nine hours later—just in time for the last train back to London. Ballard's recall and correlation of oblique data transformed the seemingly commonplace into sudden revelation; virtually any subject provided opportunity for illuminated analysis. Like a Duchamp perpetual motion machine he synthesized apparently illogical elements into creative statements. It was an exhilarating experience; a living illustration of the spontaneous generation of insights made possible by long-sustained exercise of the imaginative faculty . . . What follows is a transcript of that conversation.

THE NEW PURITANISM

JGB: Do you smoke?

R/S: No thanks; we come from "healthy California"—

JGB: Oh yes—everything is forbidden—it's the *New Puritanism* that's come in.

R/S: Although we don't jog—we refuse to jog.

JGB: I'd have problems if I jogged—if I did it once I'd be dead. That's all part of the *New Puritanism*—all that nonsense about "leading a healthier life." That's the most dangerous sort of attitude you can adopt! Most peoples' lives are far too healthy—that's a *problem* in the West, in Western Europe.

R/S: Particularly California.

JGB: We need more *decadence*—I don't mean in a moral sense. . .

I think in the '70s, the *middle-brow* in all things in the arts made a big comeback; I don't know why that is. Are you young enough to remember the '60s? There's a folk or a race memory of the '60s. They were incredibly lively over here, and of course a reaction *had* to set in. And all those *middle-brow* writers like John Le Carre (who writes terrible

thrillers) and John Fowles have made a big comeback, and the *original* writers, like Burroughs, have been rather dashed from view. But that's life.

W. S. BURROUGHS

R/S: In the last few years Burroughs has had a lot of books come out; he's had a kind of *pop resurgence*, giving concerts at rock venues with sold-out crowds and—

JGB: Well, you can't keep a genius down! I think without a doubt he's the greatest American writer since WWII. There are very, very few writers in his class; I think Genet is about the only one whom I'd put in the same category. All the other British and American writers so heavily touted—the Styrons and Mailers and their English equivalents—it's just not necessary to read anybody except William Burroughs and Genet. Though I admire Lawrence Durrell—he's a great stylist but he's in a different category altogether; he's *also* a genuine original talent. Burroughs is good fun to read—dour comedy.

R/S: Live, he really is a comedian.

JGB: He acts out his books—he's good at that, isn't he? It's hard to believe—he looks so like a retired—what do you

call them in America—a retired *mortician*. He has that sort of dignified demeanor, that sort of sepulchral look. He is very American in a provincial American way, isn't he? In the way that we have provincial Britishers who are impenetrable. He's very impenetrable to Europeans and to the British.

R/S: *He shocks people at parties with his pro-gun attitude—*

JGB: That outrages all that English Puritanism. It deeply offends them—*toting guns*. That shocks the British. We can run a little caper like the Falklands War, but *actually to handle a firearm*—that's practically like molesting a child!

R/S: *The idea of carrying guns around makes people get morally righteous.*

JGB: Actually it's probably a good thing people don't—half the population would be dead, because they're *bound* to antagonize somebody in this society. There's a powerful class antagonism here far deeper than in the 'States. You saw the reports on TV about a year ago—riots in Brixton and Liverpool; large sections of London and Manchester burning. If those rioting mobs had guns, the whole thing would be like Northern Ireland probably all the time!

According to that *Time Out* article, [Sept. 24-30, 1982] Burroughs looked in very good form. I met him the first time about '67 or '68. About 10 years ago, *Esquire* magazine asked me to write a profile of Burroughs, and I went to his St. James's flat. I found him impenetrable. He knew I'd written some very complimentary articles about him; I was one of his leading champions or certainly *one* of his champions, at a time when he was coming under a lot of attack. But I couldn't get through to him—he's so strange! I think he thought *I* was peculiar. . . I admire the man enormously—so much. I'm just sorry I wasn't able to become a closer friend of his.

R/S: *Maybe you should read up on guns—*

THE REPLICA CONCEPT

JGB: Maybe I'd better *buy* a gun. What you can buy over here are *replicas*—that concept is so bizarre. These replicas are in appearance *identical* to the real thing—you can buy replica Thompson submachine guns, for example, which have all the bolt mechanisms, everything—it's just that they're made of soft metal, and with solid barrels, so you can't really fire them. They are simply for ornamental purposes. There used to be a shop in Shepperton which sold these guns; the window was full of these magnificent weapons, beautiful things, which are incredibly useless, of course. But they are extremely expensive to buy; the replica of the Smith & Wesson .38 costs almost as much as the real thing.

R/S: *People just put them in display cases—*

JGB: Yes, they hang them on their walls, along with their Nazi banners which you could also buy there; the shop eventually closed. But—the young man who fired some blank shots at the Queen a year ago; don't suppose you heard about that—

R/S: *It was in the newspaper—*

JGB: She was sitting on her horse with a whole column of mounted calvary riding through London on some ceremonial trooping of the cavalry, whatever they call it, and as she rounded a corner, while vast crowds were watching, a young man fired six shots at her from one of these replica pistols—they fire blanks. He was arrested. I thought it was a wonderful conceptual act actually, to fire a replica pistol at a figurehead—the guy could have been working for Andy Warhol! Everybody got very indignant about this.

R/S: *In America he would have been massacred instantly—*

JGB: He practically was. He was locked up for about two years. I felt this was theater, actually. There's the Queen of England dressed up; she wears a skirt, but from the waist up she wears the full dress uniform of a colonel of the Coldstream Guards—red tunic with the whole bag of tricks, all the insignia, with a military-style hat. She was dressed up as a soldier at the head of a column of cavalry—life guards who were founded by King Charles II about 1670. These life guards are real soldiers who dress up in silver breastplates with plumed hats. (Did you see the film of Princess Di's wedding? She left the church in her open carriage with sort of jogging horsemen around her—they were life guards in these great plumes, the authentic 17th-century costume.) Anyway, there was the Queen in a fantasy/fancy dress uniform followed by all these real soldiers dressed up in costume to look like 17th-century soldiers, being fired on by a man with a replica pistol! Wonderful piece of street theater. I mean, how could you possibly have arrested a young man for doing that? I wondered: if you held up a sign with the word "Pistol" on it, would that constitute an offense? It's the same sort of rubric; it's hard to say.

R/S: *Like Roy Lichtenstein's revolver.*

JGB: (laughs) Even the *word* might be offensive. Or a sign saying "Assassination." Does the sign itself constitute an offensive act? It's hard to say, because fantasy and reality are no longer separable, are they? . . .

DEVIANCE

How's San Francisco? It must represent the greatest concentration of college-educated deviants outside of Yale University or wherever the deviants in America go. Isn't San Francisco a place full of art cinemas, intelligent art galleries—all the cultural appurtenances within which you'd expect a magazine like *Re/Search* to flourish? Or not? There must be more intellectuals and artists and the like in San Francisco now than there were in Paris in the 1920s, for god's sake! Reviews seemed able to flourish there for years; I don't know they managed, in France in the '20s and '30s. They were probably only printing 300 copies. . .

R/S: *Like Wyndham Lewis's Blast. . .*

JGB: You espoused punk—that was your sort of key metaphor, as it were. Punk was a stronger movement over here; my impression is that American punk is not quite the same thing at all. Five years ago when the *Sex Pistols* started going, punk was in fact a genuine anarchic, political movement. [*fixes a drink*: I'm afraid I have no orange juice. Since my kids grew up I don't drink milk or orange juice. Having spent 20 years of my life forcing orange juice and milk down my children's throats, I have seen enough—white and orange liquids turn me off!]

Over here, punk was like—I don't want to push the analogy too far—part of the appeal was, say, something like bullfighting in Spain. For 150 or 200 years in Spain, certainly for this century, it's the only way a working-class lad can make it to the *big-time* with nothing except a little courage. I think punk or pop music has something of the same thing. If you're a working class kid and you've got nothing—no job, no training, no education, no background—what you can do is buy a guitar, or steal one, form a band, and you've got a chance—you may get rich. Or you can use pop music to express whatever your grievances or ambitions or dreams are. So you have these things like oi! music. *Sounds* magazine, which Jon Savage used to write for, practically invented oi!, which is National Front/skinhead music that's as politically

explicit as *Mein Kampf*. The original punk was political, too—powerful political resentments were being expressed in British punk. I don't know what you do in the 'States if you're a youngster and you want to scream—

R/S: At one time punk appealed to thinking people; you felt you were going against the grain, rebelling creatively against a boring, stupidly uncomprehending society. Now we're back to conformity and pop fashion; a lot of the original rebellious input has been channeled back into corporate control and marketing...

JGB: The United States is really a very conformist and bourgeois country, isn't it? It's a paradox. In fact, in a real sense the U.S. has presented the 20th century with its greatest excitements, dreams and possibilities—but it's done so within the format of extreme conservatism and social convention. So where will the next breakthrough come? It's impossible to say—there may not be another one! . . .

THE FUTURE IS . . . BORING

JGB: That's my big fear, actually. I was talking to my kids and some of their friends, all of whom are in their early 20s, and I was saying that if, as a science fiction writer, you ask me to

make a prediction about the future, I would sum up my fear about the future in one word: *boring*. And that's my one fear: that everything has happened; nothing exciting or new or interesting is ever going to happen again. . . the future is just going to be a vast, conforming suburb of the soul. . . nothing new will happen, no breakouts will take place. It could happen—that's what my fear is. I don't know what one does about that—opens a vein or something—I mean in the sense of suicide. . . .

Paradoxically, I have quite high hopes for the European scene over the next 20 years. It is a sort of melting pot—a lot of the partitions of Europe are beginning to melt down.

R/S: Because of the Common Market?

JGB: Yes. Youngsters travel all over the place, and a kind of European style is emerging. It's hard to put one's finger on it—it's a mix of all sorts of things. A genuine sort of motorway culture has sprung up, with all these huge roads that link Western Europe. And young people are used to traveling around in a way that was unthinkable, say, 20 or 30 years ago. Whether it's by plane or by car, you think nothing of it.

A few years ago, at the age of 18, my daughter went off with another girl to Greece. They had a wonderful time,

"...I would sum up my fear about the future in one word: boring....the future is just going to be a vast, conforming suburb of the soul." Photo by Bobby Adams



took planes all over the place in an easy way that literally wasn't possible 20 years ago, not anymore than it would at present be possible for, say, a young Indian or Pakistani girl from a middle-class family to just head for the airport and start jetting around the Far East. But this sort of thing is taken for granted in Europe now. And all these things lead on, I hope. . . .

R/S: Are your children "counter-culture"?

JGB: No. They all went to universities, so they belong more to a sort of student world than to any kind of "underground" world. The sad fact is that the recession began and the eternal bourgeois verities laid their dead hands on young people. Remember that Western Europe really isn't as rich as the 'States; you can't drop out here and then after three years get back on the corporate or executive escalator that'll sweep you ever upwards into a normal, secure economic world. That doesn't happen over here. Young kids in their late teens looking at college courses are opting for vocational training now, abandoning all those liberal arts subjects. They don't want degrees in English or sociology; they're going into computer sciences or veterinary sciences—

R/S: For pure money.

JGB: Yes, it's a fact: what job will I get, what salary will I receive? Kids of 21 are already worrying about their pensions! Now that's a sort of *death to the soul*. This is a sad fact—because if you *don't* join bourgeois society, you've got problems. And that's a shocking thing to have to say. I think part of the terrible *dullness* of the late '70s is due to that: the *crushing of the free spirit of the young*. . . .

My son took a degree in history, then found he just couldn't get a job; he was unemployed for about three years. Finally, he decided he wanted to go into computing and he took a special six-months' crash computer course. He finally got a job at a software firm as a computer programmer. He now regards his degree in history as a complete waste of time—which I think is sad. I wanted him to read mathematics, which he had a flair for, but he decided that mathematics was boring; *history* was an exciting subject. But now he regards that choice he made as a terrible error. Now he dreams of a house in the suburbs and a BMW and a boat in the drive. His soul is carpeted wall-to-wall with the best accro-pad. It's a terrible prospect! But maybe he—maybe his whole generation has got to go through this sort of bourgeois. . . .

I often think that the most radical thing one can do is to *deliberately* choose the bourgeois life—get that house in the suburbs, the job with the insurance company or the bank, wear a blue suit and a white shirt and a tie and have one's hair cut short, buy the right fabrics and furnishings, and pick one's friends according to the degree to which they fit into all the bourgeois standards. Actually *go for* the complete bourgeois life—do it without ever smiling; do it without ever winking. In a way, that may be the late 20th century's equivalent of Gauguin going off to Tahiti—it's possible!

I can remember the *Rolling Stone* in the late '60s, when it was a sort of counter-culture magazine for rebels. And gradually *that* became a huge corporation to the likes of *Time Inc.*, almost. I remember reading that in the late '70s there were no longer any clacked-up VWs parked outside their offices—just Porsches and new Mercs. . . . Curious the way that happens. . . .

R/S: Those types take lots of expensive cocaine; they wear jeans, but with designer labels—

JGB: The real freaks and people of integrity are working for *Time* magazine, probably—it's that sort of paradox! I don't know. . . .

R/S: Taking drugs now almost seems like a conservative thing to do!

JGB: Yes. I'm not sure what the professional, upper-middle-class corporate lifestyles of the 1930s were—giving the right kind of dinner parties, perhaps, belonging to the golf club, etc. . . . but sniffing coke must be today's equivalent. It's almost a badge of respectability, isn't it? And if you *don't* do that sort of thing, something must be *wrong* with you!

In my mother's day, the '30s and '40s, if you were a man and you were a bachelor, this was regarded as rather suspicious. You could have a completely ordinary life, a successful job working for a big corporation, but if you weren't *married*, there was something *odd* about you. It showed a latent streak of—not rebelliousness, but a sort of refusal to go the whole way, to accept the mores of middle-class society. Terrible, terrible! It's really difficult to be a "real rebel" anymore, isn't it? Because that rebellion immediately gets taken up—five minutes later it's being commercialized and hawked along the King's Roads or the Carnaby Streets of the world. You saw that happen to punk—it happens in all sorts of areas.

THE MENTAL LIBRARY

R/S: As far as the outward trappings of rebellion goes—you must constantly be a chameleon. One's personal interests and acts are more important than one's appearances. For instance, we and our friends collect medical books—

JGB: That's a sinister sign—that's how I began! I was a student of medicine for a couple of years.

R/S: Pathology books, particularly, are a source of interest—

JGB: Absolutely. . . .

R/S: We also have a general interest in how media control, work, and manipulate—everything we can discover on that—

JGB: Absolutely—

R/S: And the whole history of criminals—we try to find the really imaginative ones. And the history of warfare, disasters, mass murders, concentration camps, etc, with as much detail as possible—there's so much territory there, just for pure entertainment alone. . . .

JGB: I agree with you—everything you itemized, I agree with. Of course, the problem is to gain access to this sort of material. I'm now over 50, but I'm still, to some extent, relying on material that came my way when I was a student of medicine between 1949-1951, when I had the full resources of the medical school at Cambridge University.

And I still rely on the material I collected, the sort of *mental library* that I put together, assembled, while I was working on a scientific journal in London in the late '50s and early '60s. A close friend of mine, Christopher Evans—now dead, sadly—was a computer scientist. He worked at the computer laboratories of the National Physical Laboratory, which is actually about a 10-minute drive from here. I became a very close friend of his in the mid '60s.

We had an arrangement which lasted for years. He was in charge of a large computer laboratory and he sent me the contents of his wastepaper baskets. His material would come in big envelopes; about once a week his secretary would send me scientific handouts, giveaway magazines, bulletins, printouts that weren't needed anymore. . . . any sort of laboratory detritus.

They were devising programs for use in medical diagnosis:

these diagnostic machines where the patients were talking to the doctor and the doctor to the machine. These were fascinating. From the point of view of language, these first rough, unedited attempts to devise the programs were quite extraordinary. Anyway, once a week this huge envelope would arrive, *packed* with the contents of his waste paper basket. And it was a *gold mine*—I'm not kidding! It's impossible to exaggerate how exciting these strange crossovers from the communications world were: psychopathology, experimental applied psychology, commercialism (you know, the latest stuff the computer firms are trying to sell you, like a new kind of medical terminal)—all those, overlaid together, provided a wonderful sort of *compost* which my imagination could feed on. When he died, suddenly that all came to an end, and I don't mind saying that I miss him.

THE INFORMATION CHANNEL

What I hope the computer and TV revolution will bring about is a scientific information channel where you can just press a button and . . . I want a much higher throughput of information in my life than I can get my hands on—I want to know everything about *everything!* I mean I want to know the exact passenger list of that DC-10 that crashed outside Malaga two weeks ago; I want to know the latest automobile varnishes that are being used by the Pontiac division of General Motors, I want to know *exact details, hard information* about *everything*. I want to know what Charles Manson has for breakfast—*everything!* It's very difficult to get this information—*access* is the great problem.

The paradox is, we've got this enormous communications flow—satellite communications, cable TV systems, video and all the rest of it, and yet less and less of it is actually being *transmitted*. All you're getting is the umpteenth rerun of *The Omen* or *Jaws*. I'd rather watch a really *hard* documentary about sharks, lasting two hours, than watch *Jaws*. It'd be much more interesting. With no holds barred—not the sort of documentary prepared for an evening family TV audience, but the sort of documentary that might be prepared for a convention of marine biologists. It's *that* that one wants to get hold of, but—*access* is a problem. . . .

R/S: *When Reagan became president, one of his first acts was to terminate the budget for publishing those inexpensive, informative government publications that have been around since the WPA. We tried to (but couldn't) get the government Report on the Assassination of Representative Leo J. Ryan and the Jonestown, Guyana Tragedy—it had over 700 pages of hard information.*

JGB: That was the legislator who was killed?

R/S: Yes.

THE WARREN COMMISSION REPORT

JGB: A lot of people knock the original *Warren Commission Report*, which I think came out a couple of years after Johnson assumed the presidency. I think Gerry Ford was one of the senators who sat on the Warren Commission. Anyway, I bought a copy of the Warren report, and I read it often, because in its way it's remarkable—if it were a novel you'd say it was a masterpiece. And it may very well be a novel, because a lot of its conclusions have been challenged.

It's a whole series of narratives—the account of the assassination seen from different points of view, prepared by various specialists. There's a whole section, for example, on the arrangement of the cardboard boxes on the floor of the book depository from where Oswald fired his shot—where

his palmprints were pressed against which box. . . . So you've got these strange photographs, very obsessive, which in a way are reminiscent of very hardcore porn—of the type where no bodies appear—sort of strange bondage fantasies where figures are wrapped up in sacks from page one to page 101—all tied up, very bizarre. Everything is very heavily coded—all these photographs of cardboard boxes on the second floor of the book depository. Then, another great tract on the guns used; then on the windshield damage to the Continental in which Kennedy was shot. There's an obsessive concentration on little details—the particular window trim on the Lincoln. . . .

I'm amazed that you've never read the Warren Commission Report—that is a *gem*, in its way. It's an *amazing* book—absolutely amazing stuff! For political reasons it was discredited shortly after publication, probably because the findings of the report—that Oswald acted alone—did not suit the conspiracy theorists, the people who thrive on the notion that there was this vast army of people out to kill Kennedy. There may have been, but I don't suppose they were actually in Dealey Plaza at the time. . . .

CRASH INJURIES

I'll show you the other book which is my "bible," an amazing book which I recommend you get: *Crash Injuries*. This is a medical textbook on crash injuries—a book to have. I had to write to the 'States for that. That is the ultimate book—all those comparisons of facial damage in rollover, comparing '52 Buicks with '55 Buicks—bizarre connections.

Actually, one can read it without in any way being ghoulish; the way one can read the Warren report. Because one's dealing with fundamental entities like one's own musculature, one's own sort of highly conventionalized response to one's own body, one's tenancy in time and space, things we take for granted. . . . and which are really completely arbitrary. That we are all shaped the way we are is totally arbitrary—a fact we take for granted.

Something like the car crash with its various injuries to, say, the human face, shouldn't be a subject of ghoulish fascination; nor the opposite (anybody interested in these things is obviously *perverted*). One should approach the material as, say, an engineer approaches stress deformations of aircraft tailplay—as a fact of life which must be looked at, otherwise this plane may crash. The human body may crash, so let's look at it *anew*. Texts like that are a way of seeing the human self *anew*, which is very difficult to do. But, access to a book like that is not easy. For one thing, you're never told about the *existence* of the book. . . .

That book played a big part in my novel *Crash*—I don't mean that *Crash* would have been substantially different, but it provided the documentary underpinning. Otherwise it would have just been fantasy, which it wasn't. Those two books are really, in their different ways, my two "bibles."

R/S: *The presentations are so wonderful—*

JGB: Yes, the graphs, the tabular material, the photographs which are very neutral in those nice medical-photograph ways. . . .

R/S: *Some are actually paintings. . . .*

JGB: Actually what one needs to do—what I used to do myself about 15 years ago—was to subscribe to one or two specialist scientific journals. I actually subscribed to a journal of neuropsychiatry for a couple of years, in the 1960s. A very close friend of mine, the editor of a literary magazine called

Ambit, is a doctor, a pediatrician named Martin Bax, and he supplies me with a lot of interesting material, particularly in the pediatric field—the whole underlying area of child development and child neurology. I subscribed independently of him to a scientific journal, but I found this bloody problem arose in the '70s: the subscriptions to all these scientific magazines went up to the ceiling. Some of these magazines have annual subscription rates of £200 or £300! Nobody's paying those subscriptions out of their own pockets—the institution or the medical practice pays. And the publishers exploit this fact. So it's a big problem, really, to get hold of these damn magazines or publications. That book on crash injuries—I bought it in about 1969. It cost about \$50 then. . . .

R/S: Now it's probably a lot more, and very hard to find.

JGB: The problem with the general scientific journals like *Scientific American* or the British *New Scientist* is—good as they are, they're too general.

R/S: *Crash Injuries* is incredible just as an example of an attitude of "scientific method"—

JGB: That sort of scientific-based material is worth its weight in gold. It's difficult to come by. There's a sort of threshold of accessibility where, once one falls below it, one simply sees nothing. Because it's too great an effort to keep hunting. I find that one of the charms of the old-fashioned bookshop, say in London or any big provincial city in the 1940s or '50s, was the *delight of the unexpected*. You could go into a large secondhand bookshop and constantly come across extraordinary items, from literature to biographies, science, history—perhaps some strange account of a voyage to Patagonia in the 1850s. Nowadays you don't come across such delights, because a) there aren't so many secondhand bookshops around, and b) you just don't get a chance at a first edition of anything, not even something as commonplace as *Gone With the Wind*. Books like that are rare nowadays—you simply don't find this sort of thing in secondhand bookshops anymore. And prices are too high—it's a shame.

R/S: The worst trend is the rise of these overpriced "antiquarian" and "rare" bookstores.

JGB: Yes, that's all part of the craziness, particularly in the science fiction or comic book field, where the first editions of *Batman*, published in 1939, are now selling for \$2,000 each or something ludicrous. In some cases, even science fiction titles published 20 years ago have multiplied their price by a hundredfold. . . crazy!

PUBLISHING HISTORY

My publishing history in the United States is rather an unrelieved disaster.

R/S: I think it's partly because so many of your books were published in expensive hardback editions rather than in paperback. When we go to new bookstores we generally just scan the paperback sections, where we can afford things. . .

JGB: Of course. . . Some American publisher once told me there are no bookshops between something like Des Moines and San Francisco—you can just sort of skip over Montana and Wyoming and so forth. They may sell books in supermarkets. . . but there are no bookshops, in the strict sense of the term. I very much wish some paperback house in New York would bring my stuff back into print. . . . No luck so far; maybe it will happen.

R/S: Maybe the time has come for you, now. It was William Burroughs who introduced me to you—back in 1973 I wasn't a

sci-fi fan, but I saw your book had an introduction by Burroughs so I picked it up. The title was wonderful. It wasn't *The Atrocity Exhibition*—in the American Grove Press edition it was called *Love and Napalm: Export USA*.

JGB: I was opposed to using that title. The title is from one of the pieces in that book, but I thought it was a bad title to pick because it sounded anti-American. And it's not about Vietnam. . . but they insisted. The man who ran Grove Press—a very nice man—assured me it was a good title. I said, "You're wrong—the Vietnam War is over." He said, "It isn't over." In fact, I was right and he was wrong. It was over; it ended, and America just didn't want to hear about Vietnam. . . My book fell stillborn from the presses. . . .

R/S: How are your books doing?

JGB: They're around. I don't want to give you the impression that I enjoy big sales here, as opposed to America. My first novel, *The Drowned World*, published by Victor Gollancz, has gone through seven or eight hardcover editions. *Crash* in paper has done quite well.

R/S: It did really well in France—

JGB: I thought, oddly enough, that *Crash* would do very well in the 'States and badly in France, and it was quite the other way around.

R/S: *Repression through indifference*—there's not enough reviews and distribution. . . .

JGB: Yes. . . I don't know what it is. It's just one of those things that one has to live with. Some writers *don't travel*, or they travel to certain destinations and not to others. This is a fact of life.

CRASH: THE MOVIE

R/S: Isn't someone going to do a movie about *Crash* or *High Rise*?

Photo by Ken Werner



JGB: There are plans, but they've never actually exposed any celluloid to daylight. But maybe they will one day.

R/S: High Rise particularly is so filmic—it's too bad it's not a movie.

JGB: Oddly enough, there's something rather comforting about that. I'm glad, really, that *Crash* has not been filmed. Because I can see myself beginning to believe the movie version—my own imagination *deformed* by the damned thing, squeezed into somebody else's mold.

I've seen a filmscript of *Crash* by a very good English writer named Heathcoate Williams. Some film company wanted Jack Nicholson to star in it. This version was set in Los Angeles with American characters, an American landscape—obviously that's where the money is to make movies. It was a genuine translation, not just of language but of *everything*. I didn't really like it. It was almost *Disney-fied*—“Walt Disney Productions Presents *Crash!*” So anyway, I concentrate on what I'm doing now—looking at those trees. [see adjacent photo]

They were a present to me from a girl I know. I and she assumed I would have them here for about two days, then get fed up with them...but once they had been here a week, I couldn't take my eyes off them. I want to get about a hundred of them! I want them to really grow silver coconuts!

FAMILY

R/S: ...What happened to your wife?

JGB: She died a long long time ago, nearly 20 years ago. I lived here with my three children until they grew up. They were very close in age, so they left home almost simultaneously. If you'd come here three years ago you would have found a very different ambience—kids charging around with their friends, a huge golden retriever... Suddenly, this silence! If you've ever looked after small children for a weekend, and somebody takes them away for half an hour to buy them ice cream, you sit down and say, “God, what a relief!” Except that when it goes on forever, you become conscious of a slight vacuum. But it's good; I find I can get on with a lot of work...

R/S: I was amazed at the imagination at work in *Hello America*—

JGB: Yes. This is my one fear; this is why I admire Burroughs—he's 68, and his imagination shows no signs of faltering, which is wonderfully reassuring. It's not the imagination which falters, I think, but the *will*—intimations of mortality begin to crowd around one's shoulders...

R/S: I would think that age would be more of a spur.

JGB: I don't know about that—the inherent pointlessness of the whole enterprise begins to—

R/S: Oh no—succumbing to nihilism! Just look at your trees...!

JGB: That's one of the reasons I keep working hard. It's also—there's nothing else to do! One can get one's own back at a rather pointless universe by remaking at least a small part of it in one's own image...

MANSON, MOORS MURDERERS

R/S: I really liked your characterization of Charles Manson as President of the United States in *Hello America*—

JGB: Where is he, in fact? In an isolation ward of a state psychiatric hospital?

R/S: No, at a prison in Vacaville, California where he's the chapel janitor. He's in an isolation cell because if he were in the main prison population he would be killed. He's lived in prisons all



Ballard under his aluminum palm trees.
Photo by Andrea Juno

his life. There was an interview with him on the Tom Snyder Show.

JGB: I saw that on TV. Fascinating...I don't know how Manson gets along in prison, but it's curious how a lot of these criminal psychopaths are powerfully manipulative. They can begin to manipulate the quite-senior members of the prison staffs. We've had cases over here of governors who have succumbed to a very special devious kind of charm these psychopaths can turn on.

I don't know if you've ever heard of the *Moors Murders* here which were committed about 10 years ago by two psychotics—a man, Ian Brady, and a woman called Myra Hindley. They were boyfriend and girlfriend...lived near Manchester somewhere. They were killing small children and tape recording their screams. One can't help but be fascinated by the special sort of nightmare logic this case reveals.

It was an early case—must have been 15 years ago—of using a tape recorder as an integral part of the psychopathic pleasure taken in killing these children. He had a second machine (presumably) playing back that pop song, *The Little Drummer Boy*, which he overlaid with the screams of these poor kids who were being killed! He was trapped because these recordings were found and they were played in court. I gather the blood of everybody present turned to ice listening to these little studio productions in this nightmare bedroom where these kids were killed.

They're separately imprisoned. I think he's in the British Hospital for the Criminally Insane, and that he has subsided into deep depressions—totally institutionalized. She has remained very alert and very determined, one gathers, to get out of prison. And there was a scandal, a few years ago, when she actually got the governor of the women's prison where she is held to take her for a walk on Hampstead Heath. The outcries were just unbelievable in the national press. And she is well-known, this woman Myra Hindley, to be extremely skilled in manipulating people.

There is another one, Mary Bell, who was a psychopath who also strangled—

R/S: *She was a child—*

JGB: Yes, she was 12 and she was strangling small children, going to their funerals and literally dancing on their graves. A senior policeman apparently attended one of the funerals and saw her doing this—dancing on the grave, and he reported it. Looking at that child, he *knew* that she had done it. She went on to kill somebody else, and he tracked her down.

There have been recurrent scandals in the prison where she is held, because she has been widely photographed wearing kinky underwear (in the presence of the prison staff). She has grown up to be a very good-looking young woman who's got everybody under her thumb. I don't know whether Manson falls into the same category or not.

American prison rules have always seemed to be far more lax than their European counterparts. I read Mailer's book on the Gary Gilmore execution a couple of years ago. A huge media network surfaced around Gilmore. He seemed to have the complete run of the prison—TV interviews were conducted openly...the whole place was awash with agents, wheeler-dealers who sort of had instant access to the man, as if he were a star being visited in the MGM commissary. That doesn't happen over here. Journalists in America have a very easy access to convicted criminals. I mean—if you *wanted* to interview Sirhan Sirhan, you could probably do it, couldn't you?

R/S: *Maybe, if he were willing...*

JGB: I reviewed Mailer's book, *The Executioner's Song*, for the *Guardian*. And it occurred to me as I was writing my review that actually Oswald, if he had not been shot by Ruby, would have been out by now—it was only *murder*, which is common and doesn't actually attract very large sentences. I said in my review he would have been ready to play his part in the election of Teddy Kennedy, as a TV anchorman, or as a special assignment writer for *Guns And Ammo*. It's quite possible! What would have happened if he had lived?

I can just see Oswald becoming a huge international celebrity, rather like the British train robber, Ronnie Biggs, who appeared in the *Sex Pistols'* little film, *The Great Rock'n'roll Swindle*. Biggs is constantly in the press for his escapades. He was caught after the Great Train Robbery, but he escaped from jail and took a boat to Australia, ending up in Rio de Janeiro as a sort of beach bum. He lives off giving interviews to people!

He had a common-law wife, a girlfriend who was a stripper in some Rio bar, and she had a child by him. He was about to be extradited back to England when they discovered this curious little loophole in Brazilian law whereby you cannot extradite the father of a Brazilian child if the child is wholly dependent on him. So the stripper immediately went off on permanent assignment to some nightclub in Hamburg, leaving Biggs as the sole support of this infant. And he is still looking after this little boy there, living off of giving interviews. Brits go there—they'll track him down in some bar, and he'll talk to anybody; 10 minutes for \$20. People just want to be photographed with him—a weird sort of celebrity. Well...Oswald would presumably be doing something similar!

CRIME AND...

R/S: *Dan White is going to be out of jail in January, 1984.*

JGB: Who's that?

R/S: *He killed the San Francisco mayor and a gay supervisor in 1978.*

JGB: Oh yes, I remember reading about that—he was sort of a crazy policeman.

R/S: *In his trial, the defense contended that he was insane—insane because he'd eaten so many Twinkies he'd had a sugar fit.*

JGB: What are Twinkies?

R/S: *They're cream-filled golden spongecakes—sugar and chemical preservatives—*

JGB: Oh yes—so many of those he became hypoglycemic (laughs).

R/S: *The famous "Twinkies defense." Right after that, a friend of mine took some Twinkies and sealed them in a plastic container. After a year there had been no visible change or discoloration—apparently they were still fit to eat!*

JGB: Yes, they'll probably outlive the planet...

R/S: *Did you find the Yorkshire Ripper interesting?*

JGB: I found that case odd—something rather repellent about it. I don't think he was an interesting man in any way. I think he just had this obsessive hatred for prostitutes, and the impression I got was that he was simply reacting to his gut spasm of hatred. He kept a hammer in his car and every so often he would stop in a red-light district and hit one of these woman over the head in the dark. Difficult to feel any kind of sympathy for him whatsoever. Well, one shouldn't feel too much sympathy for any murderer!

In the case of somebody like Oswald, pathetic though he was, one could read his historic diary (there are extracts in the Warren Commission Report) and feel that that sad man was in a sense engaged with the largest political issues of the time, and in his own inarticulate way was trying to react responsibly to matters of enormous public concern. But...I didn't feel that about Sutcliffe, the Yorkshire Ripper. He was certainly not in the same class of fascination as Hyndley and Brady, a very odd pair.

R/S: *I saw a book yesterday on the recordings of Constantine Raudive, who claimed to have recorded, in empty rooms, voices of the dead...Burroughs had mentioned him in The Job.*

JGB: I'm sceptical about all that. The whole world of psi phenomena leaves me dead cold. It seems to be less interesting than conventional reality. I mean, the fact that if you pick up that can of beer and let go, it falls to the floor—that strikes me as incredibly mysterious, in a way. Much more mysterious than if it just stayed hovering in mid-air—that isn't very interesting. The bizarre thing is that we *can't* communicate with each other telepathically—that's much stranger than any discovery that we *might*...

I don't think Burroughs has ever been interested in psi phenomena—they don't figure in the novels at all. That's what I like about him—he's very interested in the communications landscape, the onslaught of language and thought-manipulation brought about by giant communications conglomerates like Time Inc. His theories of the linguistic basis for the manipulation of news—I think that's a fascinating side to his novels.

BOOKSTORES

R/S: *Do you think bookstores are dying out?*

JGB: I saw a figure quoted—I can't believe it's true—that in New York there are something like 300 bookshops. Does this include the supermarket categories, or are they *real* bookshops? If you take London, for example, and you don't include the Smiths chain of maybe 100 outlets in greater London (which I would not, strictly speaking, call bookshops, because they just stock popular paperbacks, coffee table books; a few of the latest commercial sort like Len

Deighton's), I wouldn't have thought there were more than 20 or 30 major bookshops in London. Not very many!

R/S: Not counting the antiquarian bookshops—

JGB: No. Leaving out the antiquarian bookshops, there aren't that many, actually. French bookshops are great. Of course they've always had it completely open—no censorship, which we had over here, you know!

R/S: Somebody said that *Naked Lunch* was recently seized in England.

JGB: It's possible, because individual customs officials have enormous powers of seizure; they can grab anything. They can seize and hold materials for a long time—they can sit on a bookseller's stock for months before a case is called, which has a deterrent effect on those booksellers who hover on the border of serious marginal literary material. There's been a few cases recently of overzealous customs officials and certain police authorities impounding vast quantities—truckloads—of materials from small booksellers' store-rooms and holding them for a year. Now the authorities here are getting stirred up about the video threat to public morality, and they may realize that, compared to hardcore porn/sadistic videos, William Burroughs and the Marquis de Sade are pretty tame stuff indeed! So the knock-on effect may be positive. . . .

R/S: Porno video is as widespread in England as in America?

JGB: I haven't got a video machine myself; I think I'm probably the only person on this street who hasn't got either a) a video recorder, or b) a word processor!

R/S: Is this a particularly progressive street?

JGB: No, I just mean that everybody has these things, for some reason. A young fellow moved in next door. He said, "Are you a science-fiction writer?" (He reads science fiction; his wife sells Ford cars.) He said, "Come up to the computer room; I'll show you my word processor." In the maze of this little back bedroom was all this electronic gear; a word processor. . . . "Do you want to borrow it to write your next novel?" And I know somebody else here who has one. I haven't got a video, but I'm thinking about getting one. So far there's been no policing or censorship at all of video material, not even by the industry—the main commercial distributors of videocassettes. . . .

R/S: Video has made a lot of obscure gore and just weird movies accessible—

JGB: There's a lot of horror material of the sadistic kind available, with people screaming in their suburban parlors—it may be doing them some good! And of course there's a lot of porn, which I'm sure is doing them good. I was looking at a display which was open to the street, so I took it to be a mild selection of their offerings. There was a certain amount of soft porn; a lot of horror—there was one called *Killer Nun*—nice title, so simple. But it didn't look very adventurous, on the whole. I daresay the "hard" material was under the counter inside, and that you need to be a regular client. . . . I don't think they display it openly in shop windows here, because the prosecution's too easy to bring on that sort of thing.

R/S: Have you ever had any trouble with your books in England?

JGB: I haven't, actually, neither here nor anywhere, so far as I know.

The last big case here involved Hubert Selby's *Last Exit to Brooklyn*. A huge trial took place in the late '60s brought against Burroughs's English publisher, Calder & Boyars. Calder was found not guilty and the case was dismissed. That was the last prosecution to be brought against a

literary work.

I think that the question of taste generally plays a much bigger role here than people realize. For example, about 10 years ago a leading English publisher—I think it was Castles—decided to bring out a new edition of *Mein Kampf*, which had never been banned, specifically; I suppose in the context of WWII and the aftermath nobody wanted to bother. But anyway—this was in the late '60s—they thought they'd bring out a new edition, and all hell broke loose! Not on political grounds (as an anti-Semitic, racist work) but simply that it wasn't very proper—the proprieties were affected, and that's a factor over here. That sort of interdiction is in a way more powerful than the force of the law—it's a very curious thing. . . .

SHEPPERTON

R/S: Do you enjoy living here in Shepperton?

JGB: I don't really live here—in a way it's just a sort of grid reference on the map. I came here 20 years ago with my wife simply because we didn't have any money. We'd had three children by then, so we moved out, down the sort of price scale which coincided, by and large, with the distance from London, and found a small house here. Suburbs are nice places to bring up kids in England. I stayed on here out of inertia once the kids went to schools and all the rest of it. It would have been difficult for me on my own to bring up my three kids in Central London. . . . introduced problems.

Also, it's a great place to work. It's isolated. In a crackpot way, I genuinely believe that I like to be where the battle is joined most fiercely. . . . and in a way a suburb like this is the real psychic battleground—it's on the wavefront of the future, rather than a city area. I keep an eye on all the social trends that develop—the whole video/word-processor thing—and it's very interesting to watch the fashions. I would almost call it an airport culture that's springing up around in suburbs like this—a very transient kind of world. It's interesting to watch.

A city like London doesn't really offer me anything—I'm not interested in it, it's much too old. Whereas the suburbs are, comparatively speaking, new. In a way they're more dangerous places—you're not going to get mugged walking down the street, but somebody might steal your soul. I mean that literally—your will to live. Your imagination might be taken from you by some passing merchandising corporation, or what have you.

FROM SUBURBS TO BAADER-MEINHOF

Ten years ago, in the early 1970s, Mercedes gave me a free trip across Germany. They were celebrating the 100th anniversary of Karl Benz's invention of the motorcar, or maybe the first car Benz made—it was a big celebration, at any rate. A huge cavalcade of antique cars set out from Bremerhaven in the North and trundled all the way down to Stuttgart in the South of Germany, where they now make VWs. These cars, because they were so slow, couldn't go on the autobahn, which is the only way I'd traveled when I'd been to Germany before. We traveled on all these side roads at about 30 miles an hour, so I had a really good look at the terrain. And suddenly I had this appalling glimpse—it suddenly struck me that if I had to put my finger on what the future was going to be like, it wasn't going to be like New York or Tokyo or Los Angeles or Rio de Janeiro. . . .

The future was going to be like a suburb of Düsseldorf; that is, one of those ultra-modern suburbs with the BMW and the boat in every drive, and the ideal sort of middle-

management house and garden. Immaculate suites—not a cigarette end anywhere, with an immaculate modern school and a shopping precinct; a consumer-goods paradise with not a leaf out of place—even a drifting leaf looks as if it has too much freedom! Very strange and chilling—superficially what everybody is aspiring to all over the world: the suburbs of Nairobi or Kyoto or probably Bangkok now.

Everywhere—all over Africa and South America, if you visit, you see these suburbs springing up. They represent the optimum of what people want. There's a certain sort of logic leading towards these immaculate suburbs. And they're terrifying, because they are *the death of the soul*. And I thought, My god, *this* is the prison this planet is being turned into . . .

At this time, the Baader-Meinhof—you know, that armed gang that came out very left politically—robbed banks, killed some American servicemen in a raid, and all the rest—was at its height. Nobody could understand these people. They were all sort of well-to-do, middle-class, well-educated kids from, comparatively speaking, rich families, who took to all this "absurd violence." Nobody could understand them. But suddenly I realized, My god, *of course* I can understand them. If you're brought up in one of these suburbs around a German city, where nothing is ever allowed out of place, where because they were so terrified

by the experiences of WWII and the Nazi epoch, that they'd gone to *any* length to make certain that *everybody* is happy, that everyone in school or kindergarten is dutifully equipped so there would be no deviance and no problems later . . . if you have a world like that, without any kind of real freedom of the spirit, the only freedom to be found is in *madness*. I mean, in a completely sane world, *madness* is the only freedom!

That's what's coming. That's why the suburbs interest me—because you see that coming. Where one's almost got to get up in the morning and make a *resolution* to perform some sort of deviant or antisocial act, some perverse act, even if it's just sort of *kicking the dog*, in order to establish one's own freedom. . . . Suburbs are very sinister places, contrary to what most people imagine.

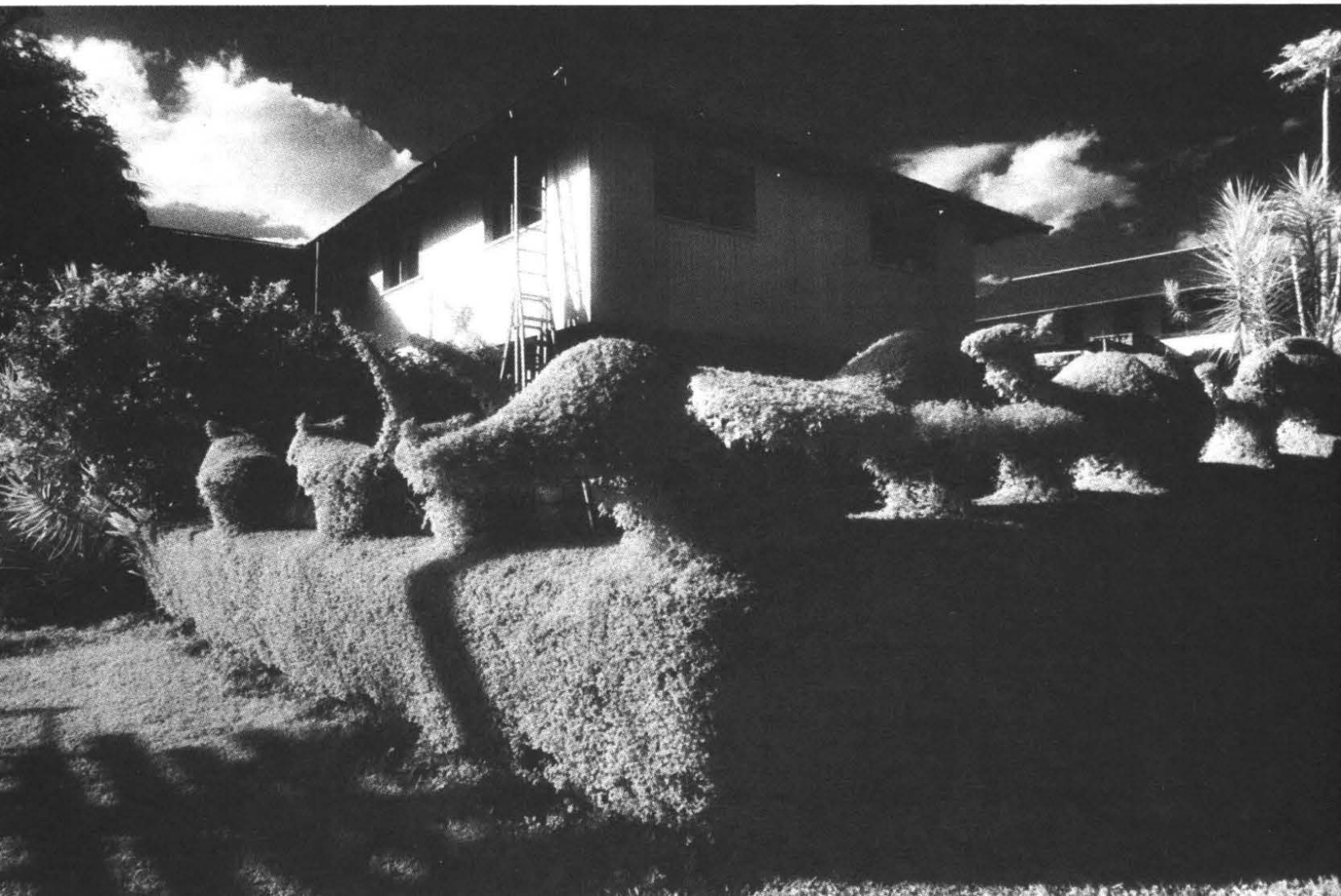
I don't know about American cities, but most British cities are depopulating—London, for example, is shrinking in size. People are leaving, forced into other areas.

R/S: *In America, sociologists for 20 years made all these projections that people would abandon the inner cities to poor blacks and minorities, but what happened was—*

JGB: *People started to go back?*

R/S: *I saw a TV program—maybe it was just propaganda, that showed young professionals moving back to the cities; the suburbs weren't "working."*

"...in the suburbs, one's almost got to get up in the morning and make a resolution to perform some sort of deviant or antisocial act, some perverse act, even if it's just sort of kicking the dog, in order to establish one's own freedom....Suburbs are very sinister places, contrary to what most people imagine." Photo by Ana Barrado



JGB: They pay higher property taxes. If you allow a neighborhood to run down, with a lot of migrants, ethnics and unemployed, you aren't going to get the taxes. What you want is young, upwardly mobile executives who don't mind paying vast amounts of their salary in local taxes. . . .

R/S: *San Francisco is experiencing the suburbanization of the city—young professionals—*

JGB: —Bijou-izing all these houses, chi-chi-ing them up—horrible!

R/S: *You're getting all these cappuccino-and-croissant places springing up. All the eccentric little dives one used to go to are getting "designer-ized"—with price rises, of course.*

JGB: Yes—if you see a cappuccino or a croissant for sale, you've got to make a stand for freedom by putting a brick through the window!

R/S: *All the areas that attracted "artists" or more bohemian people are now being wiped out by young professionals moving in. There are no places where creative people can meet. . . .*

JGB: I think that's a sinister development—I think the world's turning that way. At present people like yourselves can at least exist in the gap left between the past world and the world to come. But wait until that gap is closed. . . . I can remember areas of London like Knightsbridge or the Mayfair area, or the Bloomsbury area around the British Museum, and Soho itself—very mixed, demographically, in terms of income. You might get some sort of expensive department store next door to a row of terraced houses dating back to Victorian times, where you could rent a house for a modest amount. All that's changed. Now, the only people who live in Mayfair are millionaires or Arab sheiks in penthouse apartments that cost a million pounds each. And when that starts, that's death. . . .

What I fear for London, 10 or 15 years from now, is that everybody will be *working, virtually like on TV*. . . . Everybody will be living a sort of lifestyle that they (controlling the TV) will impose on everybody else living *outside* London. People take their cue so much from TV: lifestyles, fashions, recreations, the sort of friends one has, the way one picks one's friends, and so forth, are largely created by TV. At least the people who work in TV are still drawing a lot of inspiration from the sort of old, anarchic world, whatever it was—pigeon-fancying or bear-baiting or fox-hunting. But that'll all end, and we'll have a sort of bijou-ized, young-executive class whose idea of a stimulating intellectual experience would be playing some 15-year-old video game. . . .

VIDEO GAME NOSTALGIA

That's already begun—you're getting nostalgia books about video games! One was published last week by Kingsley Amis's son, Martin Amis, all about his addiction to the early video games. It's sort of kitsch beyond kitsch—nostalgia, but for *five minutes ago*, for god's sake! I don't know how long video games have been going in the 'States, but it's not been *that* long! These early Space Invaders games are being talked about like movie buffs talk about *Casablanca*. But at least *Casablanca* stood for something, in its way!

R/S: *Cabaret Voltaire* used to do collages on paper, but since they've gotten video equipment they do them in real time, on video, using hardcore footage of police brutality, brain surgery, CIA documentaries. . . . Psychic TV** is exploring the concept of ambient programming, trying to delve into deeper areas where subconscious decisions are made. . . .*

JGB: They're making their own programs. These home-made movies are going to have a big effect on movies, the



"Everybody will be doing it, everybody will be living inside a TV studio." Photo by Ana Barrado

novel and everything else. The future is going to be like a glorified home movie—people are getting colossal expertise at handling the editing facilities of a home video studio. You've already seen that with these promo videos of the pop music world—some of them are very imaginative.

I don't know if you've ever seen that very early David Bowie video ["Ashes to Ashes"]—it's like an extract from a surrealist movie. Bowie appears as a Pierrot—a clown, one of those circus figures with a ruffed collar. And there's a bulldozer—it sounds terrible, but it's stunning! Because purely with electronics you can suffuse the screen with a pink light, or a blue light, and then overlay something else on, pick it out—turn the whole thing into a kind of planetary landscape. Suddenly all the *real* trees look like artificial trees, just at the press of a button. You can do extraordinary things.

You're getting a whole new sort of language that doesn't depend on story line in the old sense, but on ascending scales of sensation, rather like music in a way—a sort of total abstraction. I'm sure all that's coming. Everybody will be doing it, everybody will be living inside a TV studio. That's what the domestic home aspires to these days; the home is going to be a TV studio. We're all going to be starring in our own sit-coms, and they'll be very strange sit-coms, too, like the inside of our heads. That's going to come, I'm absolutely sure of that, and it'll really shake up everything. . . .

R/S: *Just as the word processor is changing writing. . . .*

JGB: They say you can already tell the difference between a novel that is written on a word processor and a novel written on a conventional typewriter. You'll notice this particularly in commercial fiction—what you have is excellent paragraph-by-paragraph editing, grammar, structure and all the rest of it, but very loose overall chapter-by-

* *Cabaret Voltaire*: the British experimental music-and-video group, active since 1974. For further information see *Re/Search #6/7: The Industrial Culture Handbook*.

** *Psychic Television Ltd (PTV)*: a branch of *The Temple of Psychick Youth*, the British psychic research group founded by members of *Throbbing Gristle*, a recording and performance band documented in *Re/Search #4/5*. For further information write: *Psychic TV* c/o Some Bizarre, 17 St Annes Court, London W1, England.

chapter construction, and this is because you can't flip through 100 pages on a word processor the way you can with a pile of typescript. So the detailed structure is very tight and elegant, but the overall structure is weak. That is interesting!

This chap next door has only got 35,000 characters (about 7,000 words) on his computer, which creates problems. He was pounding his desk, saying, "I need more memory!" So terribly funny—I thought, "What's going on here? This world is mad!"

I find looking at a cathode screen terribly tedious.

R/S: *It's supposed to be very bad for your eyes.*

JGB: I'm sure it is. The flicker is colossal. Stand in front of an ordinary TV screen and don't look at the screen, just look about six inches to the right of the set, and you can see what's going on: a ghastly flicker (and all the rest of it) that's like another world. And that's what you're actually looking at. Thousands of little dots are being flung at your retina at an enormous speed!

R/S: *Video cameras and word processors have just begun to be commonly used for educational purposes in the school systems . . . now that nobody can afford to go to college anymore—*

SCHOOLS

JGB: I was talking a couple of weeks ago to an American academician at Wesleyan University. He was saying that the graduate departments in these universities were previously funded by the U.S. Dept. of Education. Since Reagan came in they've cut back their grants to graduate studies, and there are now droves of kids who previously would have had three happy years writing their thesis on John Donne, or the nervous system of the tapeworm, who are now wandering around trying to get into IBM. . . .

Most American kids go to state schools, do they?

R/S: *Yes, everybody goes to public high schools and many kids used to go to college as well—*

JGB: Here, a large sector of the middle class and upper middle class go to private schools, which cost a lot of money. A lot of children go to private schools from the age of five to 18, and many of these are boarding schools too, so you can imagine the bills.

R/S: *That always seemed like a sick tradition—the boarding schools—*

JGB: Yes, they're very sick. I went to a boarding school, and I vowed when I left that if I ever had any children I would never send them to a boarding school, and I never did! That's a grim institution, actually, with a sort of *institutionalized homosexuality* that's just forced on teenagers—forced to be closet heterosexuals for twenty years!

You've got middle-aged men who are never really at ease with women, because during their formative years they never met any. Mother was a revered figure, and most of the time they were at school the only woman was the matron, and the only people you had physical contact with—playing games, in the showers, and all the rest in the dormitories—were boys of your own age. So nature takes its course. . . .

I was born abroad—Shanghai—and didn't come to England until I was 16. Most of the boys I went to school with were 17- and 18-year-olds who had never met any young women other than their own sisters. If they didn't have sisters, they'd never met *anyone*. They went to university and they were paralyzed. It wasn't that they were tongue-tied in the presence of women—women were kind of *non-persons* in their universe. They were only happy in the company of

men. That's been very strong in British life—the club men's world, the preference for male company, and that's had a damaging effect. . . .

Of course, the converse happens to girls who go to girls' schools. But, I made damn sure that none of my kids went through that. My girls, at their own request, were already on the Pill at the age of 16, and that was fine—I've never worried about any damage happening to them in a bed! If anything bad was going to happen to them, it's much more likely to be in a motorcar—that was the thing to worry about! In the old days parents didn't give a damn if their daughters went screaming around the streets with some drunken young man in a sportscar, as long as they didn't actually have sex; sex was more terrifying! A crazy attitude. . . .

CHINESE

R/S: *Do you know Chinese?*

JGB: I wish I could say I did. Although I was born in China and lived there till the age of 16, I didn't learn a word, because it was an area absolutely dominated by the West—by American, British, French and European interests who ran everything, surrounded by hundreds of millions of Chinese who were desperate to find work, who had to learn English to work for the European or the American businesses, or for their households as servants or whatever. I lived in a house with nine servants, a Chinese chauffeur and all the rest of it—all spoke English. They wouldn't have got the job otherwise. I never needed to learn Chinese. I don't suppose I often heard Chinese *spoken* in the world in which I lived, even though I was living in a city with about five million Chinese—what paradox, that. But life was strange in those days. Shanghai was an incredible place to be born and brought up in. . . .

MOVIES

R/S: *The movie Blade Runner was supposed to be representative of Hong Kong—*

JGB: From Philip K. Dick's novel, directed by an Englishman, Ridley Scott, who made *Alien*, a film I also disliked. In a lot of these blockbuster SF movies that come out of Hollywood—the *Star Wars* type of movie—they leave out the *imagination*. The best SF movies (and this includes those Hollywood movies of the '40s and '50s) are stunning, because the future seized your imagination by the throat, as it were, the moment the titles started. *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, *Them*, the original *The Thing*. There was one—*The Incredible Shrinking Man*—which was a masterpiece, among the best of all time. Even *Forbidden Planet*, where they were beginning to go over the top a bit. The original *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

They were masterpieces, because they concretized the idea of a future; time suddenly starts accelerating the moment those films opened. Whereas, what you feel with *Star Wars* and movies like that, is that the moment the film begins, time *stops*. These films exist in a kind of timeless continuum that has nothing to do with the future—it could easily be in the remote past. Also, there's no sense of continuity—watching something like *Star Wars* you don't get the feeling that this is what life is going to be like tomorrow, or, for my kids, the day after tomorrow—it's a completely self-contained world.

One SF movie that *did* impress me, and colossally so—is *The Road Warrior*. (It was previously titled *Mad Max II*.) That

stunned me—I thought that was an *amazing* movie. The impact of the thing! Also, it was a *credible future*. I *believed* that. Technically and imaginatively it's a stunning movie, and judged just as SF I thought it was very impressive. [We look at a book of paintings by Stanley Spencer, visionary British painter. . . JGB serves some water.]

English tap water is very good—though not in London. London tap water is terrible. It's no good with whiskey, it's too flat. Outside London it's excellent, it's got *body* to it. It's very important to have the right water with whiskey. If you drink whiskey and water (I don't, actually—I drink whiskey and soda) the water is important. This is excellent for whiskey—good reason for living in Shepperton!

R/S: *Why don't you drink whiskey with water, then?*

JGB: I don't know, I just *like* whiskey and soda for some reason. I like to be able to read the manufacturers' warnings on the labels—if I'm not surrounded by enough brand names, I feel kind of *unloved*. . . .

R/S: *Are those fruit trees out there in your backyard?*

JGB: Yes, this was a large orchard back in the '20s and early '30s before those houses were built. Those are pear trees; that hulk lying there at the bottom of the garden is an apple tree.

R/S: *There are some blackberries as well—*

JGB: They're *voracious*. Along with the elders, they'll take over a garden. As you can see at a glance, I've never done *anything* to this garden. These elders—do you have them in America? If you go to deserted graveyards you generally see elders. They're great, they spring the lids off graves. Presumably the seeds can insinuate themselves in the cracks, and, as I said, they're incredibly voracious. I have to keep cutting them back. . . .

Shepperton Studios, the big film studios, are in Shepperton—I feel like renting out my garden for war movies. In Robert Graves' *The White Goddess*—it's quite an interesting book on poetry and mythology—he points out that the ancient Welsh bards had a secret language based on patterns of leaves of different trees. At the heart of this secret language was the elder, because of its tenacity and the fact that it sprang up from graves. Very peculiar. Most people consider it a weed. It grows fast. . . .

R/S: *Is there an airport here?*

JGB: London Airport is just up the road; we're just south of Heathrow. Luckily we're not under any air lanes right here—that's *important*, take it from me. The only planes you see here are lost!

A lot of American movies are made here in Shepperton. I think both the *Superman* movies were made in Shepperton. They have very big sound stages. The pop group *The Who* bought up part of Shepperton Studios which they lease out. . . .

TELEVISION

R/S: *We get the impression that British billboards and TV are slicker than in America—*

JGB: I'm amazed at you saying that—I thought the Americans were kings of advertising display. . . .

TV should not be *good*, in that old-fashioned sense—the biggest mistake to make is to have a *quality* TV channel. The British flatter themselves that their television is the best in the world, but television *shouldn't* be good. It's like saying you've got the best junk food in the world. Junk food should be bad, otherwise by Gresham's law (bad currency drives out good) you're not going to have any *good* food: every-

body's going to be eating those wonderful hamburgers and that wonderful chop suey from the take-away restaurant, and *real* cuisine—French, Italian, Indian, Chinese—will vanish from our culture. That process is taking place in this country.

The decline of this country, I think, is largely attributable to the fact that we have the best television in the world; our television isn't trash. Because what we think of as intelligent programs—documentaries, news background programs, arts programs—are terrible! There's *no* way of popularizing James Joyce's *Ulysses*—you just have to sit down and *read* it. A TV popularization of *Ulysses* is not better than *Kojak*. I think the best things on British TV are American programs—things like *Kojak*, *The Rockford Files*, *The Streets of San Francisco*, *Hill Street Blues*. . . .

I loathe the "cultural" side of British TV—it's sinister. It creates the impression that some of the greatest works of the human imagination in music, literature, or the visual arts can be reduced somehow to a kind of *panel game*. . . .

People in the 'States, as far as I can make out, still go to the movies. Over here nobody goes to the movies—we have tiny audiences now. In this country, cinemas have been closing literally by the thousands—something like 5,000 cinemas have closed within the last 15 years. I read an article in the *Times* that said the peak cinema audience was in 1948—in a year 1,500 million seats were sold. Last year, for the first time, the figure dipped below 100 million—that is, it's a fifteenth of what the audience was. It's a matter of simple observation—if you go, even in central London, to movie theaters, very few people in the audience will be over 35.

R/S: *That's true in America, too.*

JGB: People sit at home and watch TV. . . . If you had "first class" television like British TV, nobody would go to the movies, and nobody would read books anymore. It's the death of a culture. I want TV in this country to get *worse!*

R/S: *In France people seem to go to more movies—*

JGB: They go to the movies there. They make about 200 feature films a year in France. For a country of its size that's quite a lot; I don't know what Hollywood's output is, but these are films made for *cinema* exhibition, not Made-For-TV movies. In England we don't have a film industry; only about half a dozen films are made yearly for theater exhibition. TV has killed the whole damned culture, I think. . . .

R/S: *By the way, why aren't you drinking?*

JGB: I don't have a drink 'til seven o'clock. I used to drink heavily, so I cut back gradually—it's taken years and years, like giving up smoking.

R/S: *You gave up smoking?*

JGB: It took me about 20 years to do it, not that I was trying all that hard the whole time, but when I finally managed, it was a great achievement, I felt.

R/S: *Talk about the consumer control system, that's the perfect example—cigarette smoking.*

JGB: Yeah. . . . once you want to give up, it's dead easy. It's *wanting* to give up that's the problem. Most people who try to give up smoking don't really *want* to. As with all mild addictions, people delude themselves into thinking they want to be able to give up beating their wives, or what have you, but they *don't*, really.

Also, I find that if I drink during the day, there's nothing to look forward to in the evening. Terrible thing to say!

VIDEO

R/S: Have you seen any other new video you liked?

JGB: I haven't seen enough of the new videos. I don't know if there's a sort of *novelty factor*, which will begin to wear. . . . It's rather like when you see your first porno movies, which I suppose I did about the mid '60s.

I remember at the ICA [Institute of Contemporary Arts, London] there was a private showing of porno movies. I remember seeing about an hour and a half of these films, just screened onto a wall. It was a terribly phony evening. The then-director of the ICA invited a lot of friends and acquaintances; about 30 people were sitting in this room upstairs. He went around introducing everyone, saying, "What are you doing?" "I'm writing a book on de Chirico." "I'm writing a novel." Everybody was *doing something* in the arts, in the phoniest possible way, very '60s.

And then these porno films were projected. These were the first explicit hardcore I'd seen, and they had terrific impact—I was stunned, absolutely stunned. Rather like the first pornography I had read—*The Story of O* at the age of 19, which rocked me back on my heels; and a little bit of de Sade or something. I was stunned by the novelty of these orgies and other things—some very abstract, arty work which was only at second glance, pictures of people having sex. But I noticed that after about half an hour boredom sets in. I'd much rather watch *Kojak*, or Cocteau's *Orphée*—almost anything else.

With the resources of video, you can build up quite a large library of images, taping from your own TV set: newsreels, documentary footage—particularly the medical documentaries with very high-definition camerawork showing open-heart surgery or brain surgery or what have you. You can store all those images and use them, with collage/montage effects. Although I wonder whether, as if with watching porn, you begin to weary from a sort of *image overload*, and long to get back to something simple like a sit-com. . . .

IMAGINATION, OBSESSION

JGB: I think that unless you've got a really powerful imagination (it doesn't matter what the *form* or *medium* is), you will have *nothing*. But I can well imagine that quite accidentally, you might get some obsessive, say, who finds himself collecting footage of women's shoes whenever they're shown (it doesn't matter if it's Esther Williams walking around a swimming pool with '40s sound, or Princess Di)—he presses his button and records all this footage of women's shoes. He might do it without any thought to what he was doing, and it might be possible that, after accumulating 200 hours of shoes, you might have a bizarrely obsessive movie that's absolutely riveting.

All right, you could do it *consciously*—you could begin to, say, store films of car crashes or street executions and the like, but you might get obsessed with people walking through doors or *anything*—*you name it*. You could just start *storing* the stuff, then begin to work on it to tell some *second story*—to overlay, say, the death and disaster footage taken from war movies or Vietnam or the Falklands or riots or what have you; to use that raw play as the *starting point* for your own obsessions. I think that unless you've got some idea of your own, you'll get nowhere—you can juxtapose all the bizarre images in the world, but after awhile boredom sets in, doesn't it? Unless there's some new myth emerging. . . . nothing is more tiresome than yesterday's experimental movie or experimental fiction. . . .

R/S: Look at all the people who try to do cut-ups without any of

the thinking that Burroughs does—

JGB: There's practically only one person who can do cut-ups, and that's Burroughs.

R/S: When we saw our first autopsy film (courtesy of SPK), we definitely experienced a visceral reaction—

JGB: Films like that do have a terrific impact, don't they. . . . when they're new. When I was a medical student, the very first time I walked into the huge dissecting room of anatomy school (which was like a gymnasium—there were probably 50 cadavers stretched out)—even though I'd been through the war in China, I was jolted. Maybe it was the way they were all laid out, in a rather theatrical way. . . . Also, they were green and yellow on these glass tables, under bright lights—that stopped me in my tracks, I may say. But after about 3 or 4 days they ceased to be human remains. . . .

There's the impact of novelty which is the impact of *newness*. But I think if you intend to do anything really original you've got to go beyond it—one's own imagination has got to come into play on some level, to begin to reshape and remake the material. It's very difficult, actually, using scientific material (even of a pretty horrific, frightening kind) in prose, producing fiction. You can't just leave the stuff on the page without doing something to it. Very few texts stand up, particularly on their own.

R/S: We're interested in the problem of image thresholds building up in ourselves, because we have been exposing ourselves to more and more images of a horrific kind. I wouldn't call it a morality problem, yet—

JGB: There is an element of that, isn't there? You could end up in that sort of affect-less realm where you suspend judgment on *everything*. One's got to be very wary of denting one's own feelings, which is what happens to people who, say, work in labs where experiments are done using animals.

There was a girl on TV the other night—there's been some antivivisection activity going on at present, with members of animal liberation movements breaking into labs and releasing animals, many of them locked into electrodes and drips. . . . She was saying that in working with lab animals, the thing that frightened her was the fact that she noticed she was becoming calloused or indifferent to the animals' feelings. And, that this was *inevitable*. If you're a man handling monkeys on a table to prepare them for some sort of operation, after awhile you just give them a goddamn *thump!* That's what happens, and after awhile you don't even notice it—the situation brutalizes you, numbs you, to any sort of response.

That's the problem with all this stuff—unless you're using it in some sort of informed way, out of some sort of imaginative *commitment* (I know that sounds like an easy get-out, but it's still true), you are in danger of being numbed to the very powerful stimuli that attracted you in the first place. I mean, you end up with the *worst* of both worlds! You know—the "after we get bored with car crashes, what do we move on to next?" sort of thing. You need a higher and higher charge of sensation—it's only *child* victims of psychotic killers who interest you. Then what's next?

But of course it's necessary to swing the pendulum in both directions. One's bombarded with lots of obviously predigested, preanalogue imagery from the mass media all the time. You know, you get huge six-page full-color spreads of air crashes graphically showing flames licking through cockpit windows, but you never actually see what happens to the people *inside* the tourist class seats. Or you might just get a little bit of a taste, but not enough—you get that false

ensorship that takes place when you're being provided with the sensational gloss—

R/S: Sanitized—

JGB: Right, sanitized images of violence rather than *truth*. And it's necessary to dig out the truth of what happens when X, Y and Z occur. But I want the truth told by somebody like Diane Arbus—I'd rather Diane Arbus photograph reality for me than the photographic editor of the *Daily Express* or whatever the American equivalent is—the *New York Post*, which I think is a Murdoch paper now. . . .

R/S: *It's important to analyze horror imagery; to confront and come to terms with the darkest recesses of "human nature," if there is such a thing.*

JGB: I agree with you—I've spent a large part of my imaginative life as a writer pushing that idea, in *Crash*, *The Atrocity Exhibition* and so on.

R/S: *Well, your works are an example of how to digest and transform all this imagery—*

JGB: I hope you're right! What would have stopped me in my tracks—I wonder if I would have gone on writing *Crash* if say, halfway through it one of my kids had been killed in a car crash? (Would it matter?—I know.) But there *are* moral dilemmas of a rather tricky kind. I think that to *find the truth* is the important thing. The fact is that the medical textbook *Crash Injuries* does tell the truth, because it's not primarily interested in the truth, in a sense. The man trying to analyze the difference in facial injuries caused by '55 Pontiacs as opposed to '58 Pontiacs in rollover is not primarily inter-

ested in anything but what he is pursuing. He's not interested in the effects; the damage to the human face or scalp or whatever is *incidental*, it's the *data he's after*. The point from which he starts, all these figures and comparisons he makes, are going to be made on the basis of people who are *already* damaged in car crashes—they're taken for granted. So he can leave that; his emotions aren't aroused by the appalling injuries these people have suffered. He is simply analyzing, in a scientific way like a man in a lab, the comparisons between different vehicles, different accident modes or what have you. I think one's got to approach it in the same sort of spirit—trying to find the truth, which is often presented quite *incidentally*.

R/S: *We're trying to rid ourselves of cliché reactions to "atrocities," as part of the overall aim of deciphering the censorship/control process that restricts the imagination and therefore life—*

REVELATION

JGB: When you talk about the "control process," do you mean the whole sort of mental apparatus that *shuts out*, that has all these deliberate filters and shutters, in order to cope with "life"? The sort of material that very strongly interests me does seem to open shutters, like a sort of Advent calendar with which you open those doors, with which you get a brief glimpse of a different world. *If* one could have a blinding revelation and *know oneself totally*—the experience of just sitting in that sofa or chair would seem extraordinar-

"It's important to analyze horror imagery; to confront and come to terms with the darkest recesses of 'human nature,' if there is such a thing." Photo by Ken Werner



ily amazing. I mean, these are the sort of visionary glimpses of the obvious that great mystics are able to convey, aren't they?

The mere existence of our own sort of musculatures, the particular skeletal morphology of the mammal, not to mention the whole vast system of inventions and dampers and blocks and subterfuges of various kinds—elaborate mental languages and visa systems that operate on all sorts of borders of the brain, which is in itself an incredibly elaborate structure—if you could only shine a light through the whole of it, *existence* would seem as bright as the sun! As shocking as a blast of sunlight, or a vast blare of noise.

If you've read any books on neurology and the psychology of visual perception—in the optical centers of the brain, in the perception of even something like diagonal crosses as opposed to vertical/horizontal crosses, huge systems of compensation and adjustment (that are in fact gigantic systems of props and crutches) are at work providing what seems to be our vision of this commonplace object or room. Also, simultaneously, my brain is making all sorts of extrapolations about everything. . . . And social relationships and the human imagination, at the upper end of the scale, are vastly more complicated. But the whole thing is so *conventionalized*. And the brain colludes in a whole system of repressive mechanisms which it willingly accepts in order to make sense of its own identity and of the universe around it. . . . and these mechanisms are *limiting*. It imposes a mass of voluntary self-limitations which allow human beings to go out, sit down, walk down the streets, take planes and lead bourgeois lives with videos and word processors. If you take too many of those shutters away—*boom!* But it's necessary to do it, all the same.

R/S: *If you don't try to remove the shutters, you may have refused some of the only possible adventures in life. All the physical territories have been staked out, explored, and videotaped—the Wild West, mountain climbing, deep sea diving—*

JGB: So many of the mental territories and social territories have been staked out, too. I was talking to a girl who worked for *English Penthouse Forum*. (Bob Guccione started *Penthouse* in the late '60s as a rival to *Playboy*—but *Penthouse* was much more explicit.) This girl regularly wrote for them; she wrote a book on sexual liberation and was something of a free spirit. She's now working for the *Sunday Express*, and we were chatting.

I said to her, "What have you been doing? You've been quiet for the last 10 years." And she said she had written a book on 19th-century botanists and their systems of classifications. I said, "You've sort of given up sex, have you?" (She's now married with two small kids.) She said, "Sex is no longer a new frontier." I thought, "Oh god, how terribly bad, how boring—do we have to forget about sex? It doesn't *count* any more?" What we need is to get away from the whole liberation of the late '60s, the *Penthouse* revolution (if we can use such a ghastly phrase). The whole liberation of the late '60s and '70s simply imposed a different set of grids on the map, a different grill, but shut out just as much light. There are vast territories to explore, but completely hidden.

R/S: *Even more hidden than they ever were—*

JGB: Yes, because now there's this *veneer of freedom*. You can sit down next to a total stranger at a party and start talking about whether one of your respective sons has started to masturbate—something that my mother or father could not have done so many years ago. Now *that*

appears to be a gigantic leap forward.

Dr Martin Bax and his wife rented out half a villa near Nice this summer. They have three teenage sons. She said she loved it there and went topless in front of her sons. Now, that doesn't sound like very much. If you go to the south of France or Spain or Greece you will see armies of middle-aged women going topless in front of their teenage children—bottomless as well. But it's inconceivable that my mother would ever have gone topless in front of me—on a beach or anywhere. Absolutely inconceivable. So a huge leap forward has been made.

But in fact *no* leap forward has been made! The whole thing is just a *convention*—that it's all right for mother to show her breasts to her teenage son (he won't develop some sort of vast Oedipal fixation), and that it's somehow more *natural* than being clothed. But, it's just *another psychological convention*—part of the control mechanism, in a way, to cope with an inevitable tide of greater explicitness that comes, probably, from a different source altogether. It may be that we are *less* liberated now than we were 40 years ago; it's very difficult to know. . . .

R/S: *This may be an age of superficial, simulated freedoms. Since so many people lack eccentricity, it's no wonder they can have a lot of casual relationships—they really are pretty much alike, anyway.*

JGB: When I was 20 (in the late 1940s), there were much greater restraints—going to bed with a girl was a pretty rare occurrence. But because the experience was rarer, it certainly had a powerful charge added to it that casual sex can't have.

THE VILLAGE THEORY

Also, the number of exhilarating, important experiences is *limited*. There's that school of anthropologists who have come up with the "village theory." They started questioning people about the number of significant experiences and significant relationships they've had in their lives, and found that everybody had basically the same pattern: two childhood friends, two adult friends, two doctors in everybody's life (one when they were young or when they had their first baby, and one when they were very old). You had, say, two powerful sexual partners who transcended all the others. You fell in love once, there was one member of your family you really loved, etc. This number of significant personal friendships or relationships was the same for everybody, regardless of where they were in the world.

They discovered it was also the same number of relationships people developed in, say, an African village today. In the African village the relationships developed within, say, 100 meters, because everybody lives in their huts. Whereas, in *our* village these relationships are spread all over the planet, and over a whole lifetime. They nonetheless constitute a village we each have in our heads. And once these slots are filled, they're filled forever.

In your life you're going to meet two adult friends whom you're going to be really close to—if you've had them, you've *had* them—the slots are filled in the brain, because the brain has a certain finite capacity for friendship. If you've already met the two teachers who are going to exert a profound influence on you, that's *it!* And if you have too much experience, you exhaust your capacity for further experiences. And you see this in people who vocationally have a great many relationships, like salesmen. . . . or say, prostitutes, who are unable to relate to *anybody* out there.

SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

There was a case quoted I saw. A rehabilitation effort was made a couple years ago in California on young women who were known associates of criminals. They hadn't been in prison themselves, but they'd been picked up for associating habitually with criminals. These girls were very young—20 or 21. The program was designed to introduce them to a new social background—they met new people, went to their homes, all this sort of stuff. It was a total fiasco.

Many of these girls had gotten married at an incredibly early age—had had their first children at 13 or 14; been married three times by the time they were 20. They had had hundreds of lovers; had had very close relationships with, or a child by, a man who was shot dead, etc. They'd been through bereavement, they'd been through *everything*—the whole gamut of human experience was exhausted by the time they were 20. So they were incapable of any further relationships with anybody—they were all used up, which is bizarre. . . .

There is some truth in this structuralist approach. Now, in the old style of living, because you didn't travel much, or didn't meet many people when you did travel, you didn't have that many opportunities for significant relationships. Whereas now, particularly if you're young, you can have a whirlwind, package holiday and meet an incredible number of people and have all sorts of experiences—you can exhaust your capacity for the new. All those little honey-combed cells in the brain are plugged—Tom, Dick and Harry are slotted into Doreen's mind, and that's it. I think there's a lot of truth in this theory. . . .

SEX AND . . .

I have to think of an experiment—it would be difficult to do, but I'm getting old enough where it might happen anyway: to try being celibate for a period like a year. Celibacy has been used by certain mystics for centuries as a means of heightening experience. Would the magic of human relationships, or human sexuality, suddenly begin to glow a lot brighter after a year's celibacy? Would it be like giving up smoking? That's what frightens me—I might say, Never again!

R/S: Free access to sex can lead to boredom, unless there is some transcendent purpose imagined—

JGB: I noticed with my own daughters—I think on the whole they evolved their own sexual morality. (I didn't want in any way to impose my own sexuality on them because it would have been disastrous.) Out of all the girls they knew at school, very few of these teenage girls were bed-hoppers. Whether this was a sort of '70s thing or not I don't know. They all had boyfriends, and they all went to bed with them and went on holiday, and the parents all understood and didn't mind if they stayed out all night as long as they didn't do it too often. They were all one-to-one, serial, monogamous relationships. I think there was only one girl who was a bed-hopper—I knew her slightly and she seemed to be a real neurotic. A very curious thing about these teenage girls—it was as if they were pacing themselves, like long-distance runners. As if they knew that they had a long sexual life of relationships, and let's take it steady. . . .

R/S: I wonder what will happen with this next generation—

JGB: I can see the clock going back, actually.

R/S: What with herpes, the new incurable epidemic—

JGB: They make it sound like your upwardly mobile, rising

young executive class. It's like your first pair of Gucci shoes or your first BMW, or whatever the up-and-coming young executive gets these days. Unless you've had herpes, you can't have been with the in-crowd—that was sort of a hint, wasn't it? I practically went and inspected myself and felt socially inferior!

I can see the clock going back, although I don't think it will happen quite so obviously. I think we could go into a new Victorian era easily, where the same prohibitions would apply. The pressures would simply come from a different direction, but the net result would be equally repressive. In a peculiar way, you can have a system of general sexual promiscuity and great repression at the same time. That's what's generally frightening. In fact, I'm not even sure if it hasn't already arrived.

I sort of look at my own life and think I'm totally free—I'm not free at all! I'm trapped by a whole mass of conventions which don't seem to have anything to do with my affections and my imagination and even my biology. The whole thing's been conventionalized—a sort of route map has been imposed on my life, and to get from A to B I have to go via C, D and E.

You can spend the night with someone (as it were) within half an hour of meeting them at a party, but you can't spend the next day with them; the convention requires you to drive off the next morning, the convention requires that people be *alone* after getting together. That very peculiar thing whereby you only meet like vampires. I used to feel like this in the days when I went courting: I would fly in from the Thames Valley after dusk. I remember one girl I knew (I think it was Emma Tennant, the editor of a literary magazine called *Bananas*, and who gave me those silver trees). She said, "Jim, I've never seen you before dark!" I said, "Christ, I am like a vampire!" Because she had children, I had children, and we met only in the evenings. Then she had to get the kids off to school and I had to get back to make sure my kids were disentangling themselves from early morning television or whatever they'd be doing. . . .

This was a curious convention: intimacy of a very specialized kind, with absurd reversals where sex would take place followed by an extended wooing, rather than the other way around, with the wooing coming first. You know: "I want to get to know you, for god's sake!" We'd been going to bed together for three months, we'd been on holiday to Greece—"I don't know you"—sounds like a line from a sit-com!

CATS VS. DOGS

R/S: By the way, where's your cat?

JGB: That's not my cat. She put in an appearance yesterday, but I've not seen her today. I think she has other friends—she tours. . . . It's not cupboard love, because she doesn't really like anything I give her to eat; I think she just likes company. Her owners may work during the day and turn her out. How common are cats in the United States?

R/S: Dogs are more common.

JGB: Yes, well they've got a guard role.

R/S: They also have this submissive role of total devotion that people crave. Another trouble with dogs: you can't train them to use a feces box—you have to walk them twice a day—

JGB: Walking them is a drag, isn't it? That's what happened with my golden retriever. Going up to London was a real problem—I couldn't stay more than about four or five hours before I'd have to come charging back here and let him out.

You have to! It's like having a baby, actually. Cats are okay from that point of view. . . .

SURREALISM

R/S: . . . I read an interview and was surprised how much you had been interested in surrealism—

JGB: If you look at that bottom row of books, apart from the Francis Bacon, that's my brain laid out there—all those surrealist texts. I still feel surrealism. In the '40s, '50s, and even the early '60s, you could not mention the surrealists without laying yourself open (in certain literate circles) to the charge of the crudest kind of sensationalism. Take someone like Genesis P-Orridge, whom I don't know and have never met. By analogy, most people over here, whether writing for the serious newspapers like the *Observer* or the *Sunday* or *NME*—would, let's face it, look down on him: "boring freak who hasn't got anything to say. . . pain in the ass. . . why doesn't he go away; don't refer to him."

Now that's how most people in the '40s and '50s looked at the surrealists—there's no question about that, anybody will confirm that. I can remember that well into the mid '60s, to make any reference to the surrealists was inviting reprehension. You still get a hint of that in references to Dali—in intellectual circles Dali is a sensation-mongering exhibitionist who works on a lurid and vulgar slate. That's the attitude about all surrealists!

Surrealism, which has a way of looking at the world as an imaginative enterprise, was regarded in the '40s and '50s in exactly that light. In my first novel, *The Drowned World*, I put in a number of references to the surrealists. I remember the publisher, Victor Gollancz, wanted me to delete these references because they felt my novel was serious, and that I diminished my book by mentioning the surrealists. I mean it would have been quite all right to mention the Impressionists, or even the American Pop creators who were just coming up—you know, Warhol and Co—but the surrealists were disgusting! In the '40s and '50s, I thought that surrealism was the most important imaginative enterprise this century has embarked on. And I still do. For me the paintings of the surrealists have opened windows on the real world, and I don't mean that as any literary conceit, I mean that literally.

R/S: Breton referred to paintings as windows—

JGB: Right, right. . . .

R/S: America never went through a "surrealist" phase of cultural development; in England you at least had a small surrealist movement, with David Gascoyne, Herbert Read, Conroy Maddox—

JGB: Yes, there was a movement, but very, very small. The whole dominant mood of English intellectual, literary life is really set by people who believe the function of the novel is to make a moral criticism of life—that art itself is really engaged in the business of making a moral criticism of life. And in a sense you test life against the novel—you write a novel in order to make moral judgments on the experiences you're describing. You see this very much in the dominant painters popular in this country in the 19th century and most of the 20th century. On the whole, visionary painters like Blake, Samuel Palmer, Stanley Spencer have not been well received—they're too unsettling. It's only in the last 15 years that surrealists have come into their own over here.

R/S: In America, surrealism is still unknown—

JGB: Because there are no real American surrealists, are there? It's very much a European movement, I suppose.

R/S: People think they know what surrealism means, but very few have examined the huge body of philosophy, literature and art that was intended to be subversive—

JGB: Here, surrealist painters have an enormous influence on, say, record sleeves, paperback jackets—you get pseudo-Dali landscapes, Yves Tanguy semi-marine drained beaches, Magritte-ish displacements of things. Here the impact is colossal on advertising.

R/S: In that sense there is an influence in America. But the average person won't have heard of, much less read, André Breton. They've heard of Dali, but that's about it.

JGB: Because of his lurid sensationalism.

R/S: People confuse surrealist painting with fantastic painting, which has different aims—

JGB: Right, very different. That's what always attracted me to surrealists—they had the inner eye. The inner eye remained critical; it didn't just respond passively to the imagination. That critical eye the surrealists have toward their own fantasies—you feel that all the painters are awake, that these are dreams dreamt by sleepers who are awake—that's the important thing.

GRACE JONES

R/S: Surrealists have also influenced photography in the direction of inventive manipulation and juxtaposition—

JGB: There was a feature in *Time Out* about—I don't know whether she's American or Jamaican—the singer Grace Jones, who's a black singer with a sort of robotic appearance—a very powerful character. She sings a song called "Warm Leatherette," which I gather is based on *Crash*. Her manager, *eminence grise*, is a photographer who has lived with her for five years. He gave her her image. He takes photos of her in, say, a running pose, and then cuts the photo at various points so that each thigh and leg and arm is cut; next he puts in little inserts that make her arms longer and legs longer, then retouches them so that the woman, in reality, would have to be about nine feet tall. But you don't realize this, because she's posed against naturalistic backgrounds like hotel rooms, and because it's so beautifully done. He's published a book of photos on Grace Jones, and they're extraordinary. She's sitting on a chair or lying on across a bed, with an extra three inches of thigh or leg. Bizarre. . . .

R/S: I think of Grace Jones as restoring blatant animality—

JGB: She's got a powerful imaginative presence—she does touch something. She's obviously manufactured, in the sense that her high-gloss ebony look and her clothes and that strutting manner are very calculated. But she transcends that—she's calculated, but at the same time there's this atavistic power drumming out of Africa, coming at you. You don't often get that mix.

HELMUT NEWTON, DIANE ARBUS

I'd like to turn a photographer like Helmut Newton, whom I adore, on Grace Jones. His photos are like stills from very elegant, slightly decadent movies, aren't they? And you don't need the movies as long as the images are strong—you don't really need video, all you need is a still camera. You feel you've seen the movie when you've looked at one of his photographs; the movie reconstructs itself from a single image. All the images that have gone up to that point, and all those that follow after, are there. That's a marvelous talent to have as a photographer, and there are very few that have that.

Diane Arbus had a bit of that—you felt that the figures

were characters in a movie, but a short movie, maybe five minutes long, about maybe a couple of dwarfs in a New York hotel. But with Helmut Newton you feel it's a 90 minute, very elegant—

R/S: *Marienbad-ish, sort of foreign film.*

JGB: And also very innocent. Because the photos are *explicit*—fantasies of women dressed up in surgical gear and so forth. *That* doesn't actually turn me on or interest me, but I like his hotels—his women in hotels caught at some sort of *moment*. They're not in any way decadent, because it's all so *explicit*. Very elegant, those photos.

R/S: *Quite the opposite of most of the so-called sexy photos in Playboy—*

PLAYBOY

JGB: Actually I don't underestimate *Playboy*; I think it's always a much better magazine than people think, because of its investigative articles. It used to have first-class interviews, and very good fiction. . . .

R/S: *It always seemed kind of silly, trying to promote some bogus ideal-male-with-class image—*

JGB: That's the middle-aged man's idea of what being young is, isn't it? It's the image of youth created by somebody who's forgotten what it is to be young. *Playboy* conveys the idea that if you're young, the glamorous life is an incredible penthouse flat with splendid utensils and carpeting, masses of electronic gear, terrific suave know-how with drinks and food, and if you go to the beach for a barbecue you'll take along about ten thousand dollars worth of barbecue equipment and fancy martini freezers. . . and you'll be wearing incredible clothes to do all this in.

But in fact young people often live in sort of *shacks*, with just a mattress on the floor. And their idea of fun is to pile into an old VW, and if you head for the beach you don't take any *gear* with you. *Playboy's* idea of youth is absurd—it's funny that it was ever dreamed up. It's rather like Hefner's idea of the "good life," living in this preposterous mansion, surrounded by girls and jacuzzis, drinking Pepsi-Cola. It certainly doesn't relate to real experience. I actually wonder whether the guy actually goes to bed with the girls—it's very hard to imagine. It's fascinating that that sort of image, that dream, can prove as durable as it has been. Five million people a month buy the thing, and have done so for 15 years.

I thought it was interesting when he set up his bunny club in London. It was basically a gambling casino, and it provided a large part of the revenues for the *Playboy* empire; it was making something like 60 million dollars a year—clear profit—from sheiks and the like. A year or so ago there was a big brouhaha when its gambling license was revoked.

When the club in London was founded about 15 years ago, they went to great lengths—I suppose they wanted to hang on to their gambling franchise—to make it clear that this was not in any way a brothel. They explained exactly how these girls were paid, said that you could not date them, and that anybody offering money to perform "services" would be turned out of the club *immediately*.

The extraordinary thing is that this appears to be the way these places are run. They *aren't* run as brothels; the girls are just waitresses. There's all the come-on of an old-fashioned bordello, but nothing is delivered. Which is most peculiar in this permissive age—it's an example of the clock going forward while actually going back. Very, very odd.

I can see the future of sexuality on this planet as rather like a *Playboy* club, with all the come-on and freedom of plum-

meting cleavage, high-cut little things they wear, and the whole atmosphere of permissiveness that surrounds the *Playboy* enterprises. . . and yet nothing actually *happens*. Because the rules of the house don't allow it; the house being whatever the system of values may be. I think it's very easy to visualize.

R/S: . . . *Playboy* represents just another systematized recreation ideal for people without imaginations. Incidentally, where do you go for vacations? Ever go to Barcelona?

BARCELONA

JGB: Barcelona's a wonderful place. It's worth going to see the big church, the Sagrada Familia. You should go to the Park Guell, which Gaudi designed. And you can walk around the center of Barcelona and see these apartment houses which he also designed, with their decorated railings. The Catalans have always had their own culture—it's one of the oldest languages in Europe. Both Dali and Picasso came from Catalonia. It's a very lively place—Barcelona's a great city. If you've got a reasonable amount of money, the hotel to stay in is called the *Colon*, opposite the gothic cathedral (not the Sagrada Familia) there.

If you can afford to rent a car you can go to Figueras, which is not that far—about 100 miles. It's Dali's home town, with a Dali museum. If you go about 10 miles further you can go to Cadaques, where Dali lives, which is worth visiting for its own sake. All the landscapes resemble the giant, lizard-like forms that you get in Dali's paintings—you actually see them: "My god, he just sat on his porch and just painted those ancient rocks!"

I've been there many times. My girlfriend and I used to take our kids on holiday every summer (not always together). Spain is the place to take a vacation 'cause it's near (Greece is a bit of an effort—it's a long way to drive). Also, I enjoy driving across France. We'd go to a place called Roscas, near Cadaques, which Dali has used in several of his paintings. It's very near Barcelona. Get a good guidebook before you set out. . . .

LSD

R/S: *With his melting watches and other images Dali has provided visual correlations to LSD—*

JGB: I once took LSD in the late '60s and that was the *end* for me—I had a *classic bad trip*. I opened a little Trojan horse inside my mind—it took me on a nightmare; I wouldn't want to go through *that* again. (Actually, I think it helped me to give up smoking. It sounds silly, but even taking something like an aspirin makes me wary.) It put me back on the alcohol standard firmly forever—I realized I was a whiskey-and-soda man. Because it was such a terrifying experience—profoundly paranoid.

I mean—a real *vent of hell* opened up; I could almost feel the neurology of it. [shudders] For months after (subtly; it would only last perhaps half a second) there'd be a fleeting (presumably, connections were just briefly being made; residues of the drug were just tripping off associations in the brain), terrible feeling of paranoia, of pure fear. *Essence* of profound fear would just sort of flash through you like electricity. It was terrifying, quite apart from the hallucinations which I had while taking the drug. They seemed to be the kind of classic hallucinations brought on by severe brain damage—like everything colored with festering bugs (which doesn't sound like much, you see it in too many movies), but when you actually look around the room and everything is

covered with these damned things...! Or time stopping: you're looking at your watch and nothing is happening—my god, the second hand is *stationary*, and then suddenly you realized it's moved, and you've been looking at it for what seems like 10 minutes.

What was frightening was: lying in bed, I thought of putting my hand on the top of my head, and suddenly I felt that the top of my head was missing—I'd plunged my fingers into my brain! In fact I suppose I had just touched my soft scalp, but—ugh! All those nightmares adults shouldn't need to endure—those are nightmares of childhood, aren't they? They didn't seem to have anything to do with an *adult* nightmare. I mean, they were purely terrors of the nervous system, the flesh, of space and time.

Being alive at all is a nightmare—witness the newborn child's scream at the air. Terrifying. I never again took anything. I gave up smoking—I never smoked any pot after that. Which is something I sort of regret—it's quite a pleasant relaxant. Pot was a mild euphoric, a bit like alcohol in a way. It was very relaxing; I thought it was good for sex. It wasn't anything as radical as the amphetamines which you can buy over the counter....

R/S: Did pot do anything for your writing?

JGB: No, it didn't, actually. One of my earlier novels, *The Crystal World*, was about a crystallizing world. A lot of people who knew I had taken acid thought I had written the book on the basis of that. I wrote the book in '64, I think, but I didn't take LSD until 1967 or '68. The curious thing is that the book does convincingly, in my experience, describe what an LSD vision is like; particularly the effects of light and time. And it made me feel that in fact the imagination can reach those visions that LSD elicits—you can systematically assemble into the critical imagination those visions that LSD elicits biochemically. You can reach the base of the brain, as

it were; the unaided imagination is equal to any task put upon it. One doesn't need the stimulus of powerful drugs to trick the imagination, if you persist enough. Anyway, that was my impression....

R/S: Have you ever shot guns?

JGB: Yes, in the RAF when I did my National Service in '53.

R/S: Did shooting guns do anything for your imagination?

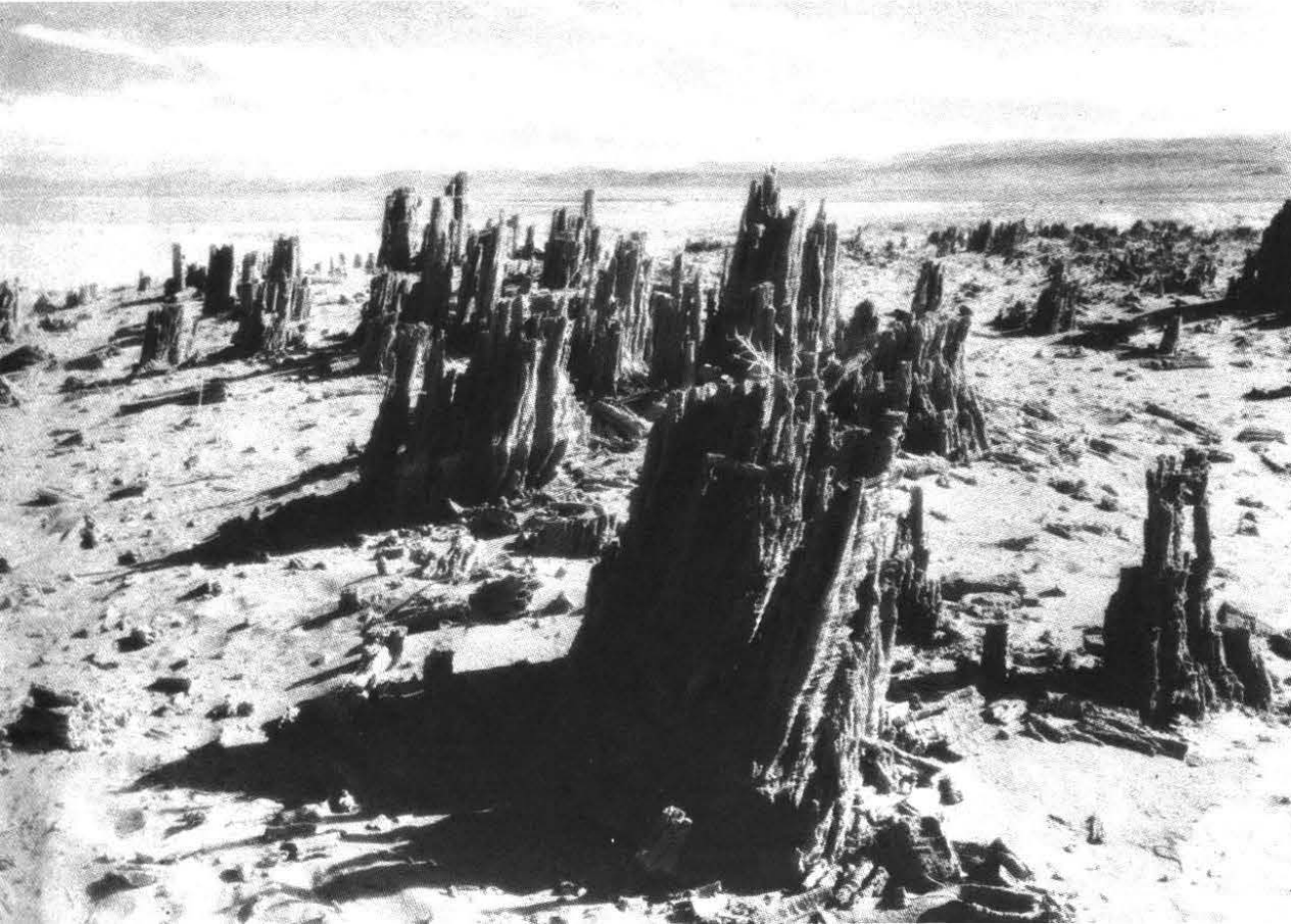
JGB: There's something about *having* a gun that bothers me. Now, I don't consider myself particularly susceptible to swings of mood. I'm a fairly level character; I don't really ever get depressed.

SUICIDE

But—suicide runs in families because it is an act that is extremely suggestible; a remarkable number of the sons of fathers who have committed suicide commit suicide themselves. Interestingly, Hemingway's brother recently committed suicide—he was a writer of some kind. Hemingway committed suicide, and Hemingway's father shot himself (he was a doctor in Michigan). Suicide is a suggested act, and it worries me that the presence of a gun might destabilize me—it might elicit latent swings of mood much greater than I've experienced so far....

Doctors have a very high suicide rate because of their access to easy ways of killing themselves—to drugs. Admittedly, that would presumably include those doctors who contract cancer—obviously they know that what's in store for them is very unpleasant, so they kill themselves as a preventative measure. But it's not just doctors; it's nurses, veterinary surgeons, dentists, all people with access—the easy availability of the means of killing oneself does seem to act as an incitement. That's what worries me about having guns....

R/S: Although if you read forensic pathology books you find out



"One of my earlier novels, *The Crystal World*, was about a crystallizing world. A lot of people who knew I had taken acid thought I had written the book on the basis of that. I wrote the book in '64, I think, but I didn't take LSD until '67 or '68."
Photo by
Barbara Martz

how often a gun doesn't kill you, but just blows off part of your face and leaves you alive to suffer . . .

JGB: Did you ever see a magazine called *Coevolution Quarterly*? It's very much into that sort of alternative technology stuff, which I'm not too keen on, myself. But it does have interesting articles, and it did have a long section devoted to the whole question of suicide. All the ways *not* to commit suicide for all the reasons it can go wrong. Don't try slashing your wrists—you can wake up three hours later in a pool of blood and find you go through the rest of your life with crabbed hands because the tendons will never bind properly. Don't try shooting yourself; as you say, it shows these photographs of people with bizarre injuries—some woman with half her head missing, *alive*. Or you blind yourself—many people who raise a pistol to their temples and pull the trigger just shoot their eyes out! Also, eating large quantities of things like aspirin or sleeping tablets is unwise—many of these powerful sedatives won't kill you, but they'll depress your centers of respiration to the point that your brain suffers oxygen starvation and you wake up halfway to a human vegetable. The article was a bit overdramatic, but it was incredible material, heavily researched.

Also, suicide's a very antisocial act, because you're probably going to be found by a relative. There's a British science fiction writer called Brian Aldiss whose father-in-law committed suicide. His daughter and his wife went shopping one Saturday morning, came back and couldn't find the father, a man in his 60s who'd given no indication that something might be wrong. They found him in the garage, which was just spattered with blood and bits of brain and bone. Here was this man whom they'd known all their lives, with half his head gone. Not the sort of image you'd want to leave with people who may have loved you!

During the time I was writing *The Atrocity Exhibition* stories, people did send me strange things. Some people in the 'States sent me a copy of a magazine which I first thought was a spoof. It was called *The Bulletin of Suicidology*. It's

actually a real journal; one copy was extraordinary. It had an article which was a study of self-strangulations and suicide by hanging, and the dangers involved, etc. But the most interesting article for me was a piece on suicide among doctors. And it had all these tables of those doctors listed by specialties most likely to commit suicide. Those most in danger were psychiatrists; pediatricians came soon after. Those with the lowest suicide rate were surgeons, which I thought was quite interesting.

R/S: Did they offer reasons why?

JGB: No, they didn't. This was just a research study carried out presumably with the cooperation of the AMA, using their records. They even had tables showing the suicide mode—it was quite extraordinary. The most common method of committing suicide was, I think, drug injection. Pretty simple—put a gram of morphine into yourself and forget it. It gave a number of incidences, perhaps 875 (1963). Then we moved downwards to the other methods. It even had *suicide by light aircraft crash*. Somewhere in America were two or three physicians who'd taken planes up and deliberately crashed them—into the sides of mountains, or whatever. But it was the detail laid out like that that was quite bizarre. Fascinating magazine. . . .

R/S: Doctors often are the victims of their specialties—

JGB: They're terribly prone to depression, too. It can take 20 or 30 years, but gradually they can become more and more depressed, simply by contiguity; by endlessly meeting people who are sick and dying. . . .

R/S: There are certainly reasons for the occasional relevance of suicide—

JGB: It's a way of saying to the universe, *Don't call us, we'll call you!* It's saying goodbye on *your terms*. You're shutting the show down, you're deciding the ending of the play. . . . I think there's some appeal to that.

R/S: Do you think there's a general depression setting in all over?

JGB: Don't believe everything you read about the economy crashing. It hasn't hit everybody equally. I don't know



"Don't try shooting yourself; as you say, it shows these photographs of people with bizarre injuries—some woman with half her head missing, alive."
Collage by
Monte Cazazza &
Sharon Saenz

whether you know Italy at all, but I think this country is just getting to be like Italy. If you go to Rome, Turin, Florence, Venice and so on—the big cities—you'll find stacks of well off, comfortably middle-class professional people. And a lot of very rich people. You'll find some of the best shopping streets in the world. Drive down to the south towards Naples and beyond, and suddenly you enter areas of incredible poverty; you could be in the 19th century. This country's getting to be a bit like that. People here are doing okay, but go up toward the midlands and the North of England—the areas of old industry, and—

R/S: Sheffield definitely has that 19th-century Dickensian atmosphere—

JGB: Why did you go to Sheffield, of all places?

R/S: To visit that music/video group, Cabaret Voltaire—

VIDEO

JGB: Oh yes, they're very well known over here. What sort of videos do they do?

R/S: Uncommercial video presentations using cut-up news footage, documentaries, original film, music—

JGB: How do you avoid the home movie thing? Is that a danger?

R/S: Perhaps occasionally, but a lot of the basic footage used is outrageous and strong. It's what they select that keeps it out of that realm.

JGB: A lot of the promotional films put out by, say, big weapons manufacturers have built-in ironies of the most extraordinary kind. Now and then they appear on TV. They're well worth getting—just ring up Boeing or Lockheed and say you're a foreign arms buyer and, my god, they'll probably rush the videocassettes straight over to you. Say you want antipersonnel air-to-ground non-nuclear attack systems. . . .

There was a show three or four months ago—Lockheed commercial, I think—that featured a huge "gatling gun" firing about 10,000 rounds a minute through 10 barrels mounted on a kind of pod outside a helicopter. It literally just minced everything in the landscape below that came within the sway of these bullets. And they use a certain language: "Unfriendly intruders can be dealt with." Beautiful photography, very dramatic, showing an entire wood of trees turned into sawdust, and all done in a sales pitch as if they were selling this year's Buick. What you wonder is—who are the people these films are designed to impress? Presumably they know that men sitting in ministries of defense all over the world are looking at these films and being impressed. You can use footage like that!

Those films that commercial companies like IBM put out hover on the edge of unintentional irony. They offer a promise of world domination in their different ways, with super-technology *ad absurdum*. "Want to find out what all your employees are thinking? Just buy IBM's system number so-and-so so-and-so"—everybody's got a plug in the side of their head. More sinister in a way than Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, because they're unintentionally strange.

R/S: Industrial espionage leading to murder has finally become a common topic of mystery fiction. And now you see everywhere ads from the CCS Corporation advertising all these anti-kidnapping, antiterrorist devices—bulletproof briefcases that sniff out bombs, etc. The catalog alone costs \$25.

JGB: Perhaps they're super-executive toys that are bought along with the matching leather furniture, the helicopter, and the Paolozzi sculpture in the director's forecourt. I

wonder whether they're actually ever used. If you're a senior businessman, your chances of being gunned down in your car are much greater in a country like Italy. You don't get much of that in the 'States. How much street crime is there in the 'States?

R/S: Rich people rarely see the street—they go from high-rise penthouse directly into limos. Maybe these ads are just propaganda—

JGB: They want more crime, yes? Rather like the arms manufacturers want more wars. "Buy this surplus ex-Royal Navy aircraft carrier and start your own war somewhere!" I think it happens like that.

The Australians wanted to buy the *Invincible*, one of three aircraft carriers we sent to the Falklands. They were very disappointed when the British government decided they wouldn't sell it to them. I wonder what they were planning to do with it—now that you've got this huge weapons system, you've got to start a war against somebody—maybe stir up some trouble in Papua, New Guinea. Or Indonesia, or the Malay Federation. You can't just let the thing sit in Sydney harbor all day long!

R/S: In America there's been a lot of propaganda on how to survive a "limited nuclear attack"—

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

JGB: Actually, the *CND* (Committee for Nuclear Disarmament) movement, which has been going for 25 years, has started to gain a small hold in the 'States for the first time. One doesn't know to what extent it's one of those fads that seem to sweep the 'States from time to time. I'm taking a cynical view of it, but it is tailor-made for those people who have a general or non-specific sense that society is wrong or ill in some way; people who need a cause which in all probability will never be fulfilled. Because the likelihood of the American government adopting unilateral nuclear disarmament must be about one in a billion. So you can go on campaigning nobly on one of the largest issues facing mankind, with no likelihood of it ever coming to pass. . . which is the perfect recipe for a great cause! I think that's a large part of the appeal of *CND* over here, which I may say I'm totally out of sympathy with—I want more nuclear weapons!

Here there's a big controversy about cruise missiles which are being allowed to be sited. The whole point about these cruise missiles is: they're going to be mounted on trucks, and in the event of a worsening of relations with Russia and a nuclear confrontation, these trucks will charge all over the country with cruise missiles on their backs to secret dispersal points which won't be targeted by the Russian nuclear attack system. And various *CND* speakers said at the time, "Who will want these cruise missiles at the bottoms of their gardens?" I felt like putting my hand up and saying, "Yes, I want a cruise missile stationed here!" (I also want three American technical sergeants smoking their Lucky Strikes and eating their hamburgers, or asking me where they could buy a decent hamburger.) This beautiful bird sitting there waiting to fly towards the air will give me a real sense of involvement with the world. I want my own cruise missile at the bottom of my garden!

I am rather suspicious of all millennial causes, actually.

R/S: Sunday marches against nuclear weapons are sort of—

JGB: —church services. I'm fascinated by that kind of thing. People who have achieved the highest standard of living—Mercedes and all the rest of it—still feel, clearly, that it's all worthless. Otherwise they wouldn't be attracted to any-

thing like CND or these other doom causes.

Have you ever thought of doing *Re/Search* as a video-cassette magazine?

VIDEO MAGAZINE

R/S: *How would distribution work?*

JGB: You mail them out! A French publication called *Faits Divers* is now a video magazine, and about three years ago the group that produced this magazine came to film an interview with me. I was sitting there and I could see myself being interviewed. It was very curious, because I realized that I was at the point of change from one medium, the print medium, to the electronic medium. They were planning to do four issues a year for something like £100, which is £25 per cassette, to be mailed to you. You would have the cassette, which was then worth about 15 quid, so you were paying about £10 for each magazine. They were starting with a foundation subscription of about 300 people, and their break-even point was something very low—about 900 subscribers. That interested me. . . .

R/S: *I'd still be worried about distribution. Plus, it's hard to include really detailed reference information that we like to give—*

JGB: I'm not so sure about that, actually. Doing the sort of magazine you're doing, you could actually get some riveting material. All that blandness, the clichés and conventions that swamp documentaries on the BBC—and I daresay in the 'States as well, given the nature of the mass medium, the government and all the rest of it—would be forgotten. You'd be able to interview people with as much frankness as you do in the print medium, and you'd have the added depth of "This is what William Burroughs is *really like*." There's a whole range of people who're never interviewed; I'm just thinking of the basic documentary approach here. I think you could do extraordinary things just in the general area of the arts alone, not to mention overall documentaries. . . .

You could always combine the two, of course—you could have your print interview running three hours, with edited highlights running 20 minutes on cassette. But I'm more interested in your documentary. Vast areas, 99.9% of "reality"—the world of the home, most of the activities we engage in—are screened out of TV and film these days, or one sees a very *stylized* account. You know, a day in the life of a midwife in a busy hospital. . . .

Actually, I remember when the first live birth was shown on TV—around '62 or '63—and it was stunning. To actually see the baby emerging from between the mother's legs, coming into life, actually stopped this country in its tracks; everybody the next day was talking about it. I feel that there are still very large areas of human experience that need to be given that treatment. I think there are great possibilities.

I mean, I wouldn't mind just watching a 20-minute film of, say, William Burroughs in his bath, playing with a rubber duck while carrying a conversation on what's wrong with the human race. You could set up little situations. All those things that no TV documentarian would do—because he might get into trouble—you could embark on. I think there's a place for it.

You could produce a video magazine in which your punctuation was provided by, say, one-minute sections of Burroughs playing with the duck in the bath. This is just off the top of my head, but the thing is capable of so many possibilities. You could produce a videocassette on how to steal a car, for one.

The economics somehow seem to make more sense to a small-circulation magazine than to one of mass appeal. Obviously you can charge more. Perhaps you could make a really unusual 90-minute documentary-arts magazine that would be part documentary and part original material; not just keyhole-type subject matter or heart surgery stuff, but really unexpected interviews with unusual people, interviews of a kind not seen on TV. You could have original films, plus previews of artists at work—you could go around to the studios of painters and sculptors and see what they are actually *doing*. If you had a magazine that was unlike anything you could get anywhere else, most people would probably pay a bit more—I would be prepared to pay £20 for it.

R/S: *There may be some kind of distribution for alternative-content video just around the corner. . . .*

JGB: On British TV a few months ago they showed a series of comedy programs produced for cable TV, called *Bizarre*. Everybody here panned it and said how terrible it was, but I thought it was brilliant. It broke completely away from the comedy formats the big companies use both in the 'States and here. It was a sort of two-man-and-a-dog operation, but it was funny, inventive, challenging—I thought it was absolutely brilliant, the best thing I've seen in that sort of line since *Laugh-In*, though not so lavish. It was damned good because it got away from the big TV studio. *Bizarre*. . . .

Italian TV went through a wonderful experience. They found some loophole about five years ago in the law governing the franchise arrangements for television stations. The result was that anybody could start a television station. So they had totally unregulated TV *pouring* out. The claim is always made that you can't have unregulated TV, or you'd have the airwaves jammed all the time. In fact, this wasn't the case. In one small city there were about 20 rival channels pouring out stuff—extremely permissive kinds of programming, where local housewives were doing striptease shows, or appearing on late night programs telling sex secrets about their husbands to all their neighbors. . . . Absolutely incredible material, like a bar full of drunks at the end of a party. It sounded great!

But—one's still back to the question of who's got any new ideas, or a new way of looking at things. If you haven't got any new ideas, it doesn't matter if you've got total freedom! In fact it could be bad. . . . because then you've got freedom to stop everybody else having any new ideas. . . .

I think we're in a situation not unlike the '50s, which at the time also seemed a bit dull. . . . but things were happening—the rails were being laid on which everything was suddenly going to go forward at enormous speed. That may be happening now—I have that feeling. I don't feel as depressed about everything as I did about five years ago—when I felt that nothing was ever going to happen again. . . .

R/S: *We just saw a French video by Marc Caro, made with an apocalyptic theme. What was impressive was how much it communicated with a minimum of titles, without being dependent on a given language. Whereas I had difficulty actually talking to the filmmaker—his English was minimal and so was my French. . . .*

JGB: I wonder whether video now is going through the phase that, say, the movies went through about 1910—which in a sense the movies are going back to—*pure spectacle*, when people flocked to cinemas to pay their five cents just to look at flickering silent screens full of trains rushing across the landscape or going over viaducts, ships battling on the high seas or in New York harbor, and cars going over

cliffs. . . . Is the video imagination in this phase, perhaps, where the inherent thrill possibilities are being exploited for all they're worth? We need to get to the stage of Hollywood 1938, when things *really* started to happen. *That's* what one's waiting for.

R/S: *For the first time it's possible for quite poor people to buy a video outfit and—*

JGB: It's always been possible for very poor people to buy a typewriter, or borrow one, and write a novel. . . and we've all seen what they can look like! That's the problem, isn't it?

I remember when home cine cameras and projectors became freely available in the 1930s. Most of my parents' friends in Shanghai had cine cameras, and because they all made trips to the 'States or Australia or South Africa, they often gave little screenings of their travels. These were black-and-white silent films showing the equivalent of some two-year-old tottering across a lawn or falling into a paddling pool; or people endlessly standing by Niagara Falls. . . Is video just *that*, with a few tricks? It's got to get beyond that phase fast.

FILM

R/S: *When film first started it was mainly conceived in terms of the theatrical play. Now video is mainly conceived in terms of film, and yet they're very different mediums—*

JGB: It'll be interesting to see. Certainly one thing, thank god, is that things happen fast these days. You aren't going to have to wait 10 years or 20 years—it's all going to happen by next Wednesday! That is really good.

I feel cautious about it, because if you look at the commercial film industry around the world, *that's* actually sunk below the point reached, say, in the early '60s—which I think was the end of an era, in a way. I'm not just thinking of American films, but British, French—you name it. Even allowing for vast budgets, the unrivaled resources of today's special effects, high-definition lenses and optimum film stock and processing—how often do you see a film like *Mad Max 2*? They *all* ought to be like that! Why hasn't there been an imaginative follow-through to all those technical resources?

R/S: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers, made in the '50s, hardly cost anything. The same for The Incredible Shrinking Man—*

JGB: Right, I almost make that my favorite film. That's not strictly an SF movie—the perforation at the end, where the guy stands on the grill looking at the stars, is a high point in imaginative cinema. All one's displacement fantasies—those are powerful fears lurking in the back of one's mind. . . What would happen if this room were really upside down, or if we were all inside-out, or if we were only living in two dimensions instead of four? Those are basically metaphysical questions about the nature of existence—finding yourself a *strange human being*. Everybody recognizes you, and I know who I am, but I know I'm not *me*! Those are fears that lurk in the back of everybody's consciousness, and these fears make us realize that consciousness is a very special condition—there's nothing *normal* about normality! That film tapped all those things much more deeply than some "serious" movie. . . .

R/S: *It didn't cop out at the end, either.*

JGB: Yes, that was good. The film was very efficiently made by Hollywood at its height. The skills of the men working on that "B" movie were probably far greater than most of those working in the film industry today.

R/S: *In the '30s, '40s and '50s, Hollywood used to produce at least 10 great movies every year—*

JGB: Modern movies are overblown, aren't they? I went to see Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo*, and I thought it was terribly disappointing. Magnificent photography—who could miss, given the Amazon sunsets, the lush vegetation. . . But I thought it was overblown, and deficient in story. No Hollywood studio would have *allowed* that movie out of the factory in 1950, because its story was weak. It wasn't nearly so obsessive as his previous movies, like *Aguirre*. *That* was a stunning film—he thought out his plot and storyline, probably.

A lot of these late '70s-early '80s movie are overblown, whereas many popular movies of the '40s were actually very serious. They used melodrama to tackle very important topics. What today would be presented as soap opera, was in the late '30s a Bette Davis-Joan Crawford melodrama. It would be set in some small town, where the ne'er-do-well type that Joan Crawford knew when she was a waitress in some other city—before she married the nice lawyer and brought up three kids—suddenly turns up. *He's* sexually attractive, which her boring husband isn't, and she has to make a decision. This type of film was often a powerful, stirring drama that touched issues—important ones—that today's sit-coms or soap operas can't handle. Modern conventions and plots don't allow you to. . . .

R/S: *Hollywood made radical films such as Dead End (with Humphrey Bogart) which starred these tenement kids who lived right next to a wealthy high rise—incredible class tension. A very strong social critique, yet this was almost run-of-the-mill Hollywood fare—*

JGB: And a film like *The Grapes of Wrath* was not alone—there were hundreds of movies like that being churned out.

R/S: *Like Val Lewton's Out of the Past, I Walked With A Zombie, The Cat People—they made films seething with eroticism, as well.*

FRAGMENTATION

JGB: They were great. Presumably, movies just reflect the society that makes them. Life itself may be a bit overblown these days—one never knows. It's an interesting time; much more fragmented than if one lived in the late '40s, which I did. Then, if one thought of newspapers, magazines, television in its early days, the cinema—the whole media landscape generally (the world of publishing, the books that came out on topics of the day, political events around the world), they were all part of one *whole*—*sort of graspable* in a way. And it may be that that's going to end. Sections of the landscape will have no connection whatsoever with each other, in the way that many of the fine arts, such as pottery, are more specialized. For example, glassware like Fabregé ornaments had no connection with the political events at the court of the Tsar for which they were made. Nor did the work of the great ceramic artists of classical China have any bearing on the societies in which they lived or the political currents running through them. You can't reconstitute an epoch from looking at a Ming vase; it stands outside time. It's hard to say, but probably nobody will ever again be fully engaged with a sort of *central experience*. Not in the way people from the '30s can speak of: a shared feeling of everyone being involved in great political currents. . . when you could see change coming and everybody shared in it equally. Also, great changes are taking place in life in general: the way people live, the standards of living, modern travel. Time will in a sense cease to exist; it won't matter whether you're living in 1982 or 1992 or 2002—that sense of a single world will go.

The American landscape, particularly as perceived through the mass media—through advertising, consumer goods and so on—has it begun to fragment, or is it still basically one landscape?

R/S: It's hard to say; there's a certain homogenization in that you can go from Connecticut to California and you'll find high school kids eating at McDonalds and having nearly the same experiences coast to coast.

JGB: That's incredible, isn't it? I never understood that.

R/S: Television.

JGB: Wait a minute—we've had TV in this country. In land area England is about the size of Florida, but in this country we have probably a half-dozen completely separate and individual cultures. Compare the North of England, say, to the Southeast or West or middle, or to Wales or Scotland—you get people with totally different attitudes—

R/S: Speaking different dialects—

JGB: Dialects, ways of thinking, but also traditions and attitudes towards things like "friend," "hard work," "the value of saving," what "tomorrow" means, "education"—totally different schemes of reference. We have in this country—thanks to television and national newspapers which are delivered to everybody's doorstep every day—one of the most powerful media landscapes in the world. Yet it hasn't imposed any kind of homogeneity at all on British culture; if anything, it's more fragmented than it's ever been. The homogeneity of American culture is strange . . .

You'd expect, given the richness of Americans in terms of opportunity and cash in the pocket, that the U.S. would be

an incredibly diverse society. Its homogeneity is peculiar; I find it fascinating, in a way. There seems to be a very strong set of psychological formulas that work well—well enough, anyway, so why change them? The hamburger is a perfectly good, nutritious thing to eat, so why change it, for heaven's sake? It may be that.

In the 19th century, presumably, the United States wasn't nearly so standardized. One gets the impression there were far greater diversities in the American character of the 19th century: the Yankee type, the Southerner, the Midwesterner. And huge differences in cultural types between the big city and the small town inhabitants. I wonder whether the 'States will shake off the carapace of identity that strangles it now, and if intense individuality will reassert itself. . . .

R/S: Well, for example, in San Francisco the Latinos have their own free newspaper, Ascensia, listing primarily Latino events. But I think this just expresses a veneer of their "own" culture, while concealing just basic conformist consumerism—

JGB: You mean they're just buying the same refrigerators, but called by Spanish names?

R/S: These free newspapers are supported by ads. The ads mean there's a middle-class consumer base. The Latinos have now reached that middle-class consumer base. . . .

JGB: . . . Is this your first trip to England?

FRANCE

R/S: Yes. We've just come from Paris—the perfect town for sensual pleasures. The metro is humane; food is cheap and wonderful. Yet it seems to be incredibly bourgeois and conformist—

"The American landscape, particularly as perceived through the mass media—through advertising, consumer goods and so on—has it begun to fragment, or is it still basically one landscape?" Photo by Bobby Adams



JGB: You're right, France is a very bourgeois country. . . yet in many ways the British, like myself, regard it as a kind of bridge to be crossed to freedom and paradise where the spirit *flies*. And I still feel that as I roll the front wheels of my car off the quay of Boulogne. I start to breathe the air—smelling that mix of garlic, Gaulois, shit and perfume—and it's intoxicating. I immediately think of the whole of French culture from the Renaissance onwards, particularly the late 19th century: Rimbaud, Baudelaire, the French Impressionists. . . Manet and Monet are sitting on practically every street corner in front of their easels. All the great adventures of the human spirit took place there.

I still think, as a lot of Englishmen do, that France is where the spirit takes wing and flies. But in fact France is incredibly bourgeois. Life in France, particularly for young people still living with their families, is like being inside a *visé*.

One of my daughters did a special French course in school, and had to spend a fortnight with a French family. She'd been to France many, many times, staying in hotels and rented apartments, but she'd never *lived* with a French family. And she was stunned by all the unspoken assumptions about what you *can't* do if you're 16 years old and living with a French family.

Even though they're all drinking their heads off with the first *pastis* at ten in the morning, it's an immensely rigid life. The domestic observances, assumptions about *everything*—values, one's attitude to work, play, life, responsibilities—my daughter said it was like something out of a Henry James novel. Everything was so straitjacketed, so formalized. On Sunday morning you visited relations—the idea of *not* visiting relations (and, say, going down to the local bar and getting drunk) was unthinkable. You could get drunk with your relations, but you *had* to see them. Incredibly bourgeois and puritanical.

It may be that some of the great artists in France have needed that to give them escape velocity—they *had* to be geniuses, they had to be *Rimbaud* to escape this tightened world which the tourist never sees. It's a very formal society. I love France, but I visit it as a tourist, and I know that. I may have read Rimbaud, but I'm still a tourist, and I don't delude myself otherwise.

R/S: *I wouldn't mind living there at all—*

JGB: I sometimes think that. Of course, I don't like England at all. If my children weren't living here I think I would move—I don't know where I'd go, but—

R/S: *You wouldn't live in America?*

JGB: I don't know. Maybe I would. I like the idea of living in America, but I don't know whether I'm old enough to make the necessary adjustments to myself—it's hard to say. Living in England isn't bad in some respects, but it's too much of a media scene here. The British imagine that it's the *Americans* who've always lived in a society dominated by advertising and media values, but I don't think that's true. I think we are the people most dominated by the media landscape; the most dominated the world has ever known.

THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE

This is due to the huge network of national newspapers and magazines that everybody reads in great numbers. The output of daily papers with huge circulations is unequalled anywhere in the world. TV dominates everything and is watched by everyone all the damned time. Advertising is very powerful here. Given the size of the country, the volume and turnover of images—the constant bombard-

ment—is enormous. The commercial pressures of merchandising are tremendous—there's hardly a product you can buy that isn't blitzed at you. In a way that is supposed to be American, but I don't think it is. I think we're the victims of this huge media overload that has practically flattened the life out of people. It's the only reality we have here—the media landscape. . . .

R/S: *We just saw Coronation Street—*

JGB: I watch it; I do sometimes.

R/S: *The people weren't glamorous—*

JGB: They're infinitely more glamorous than the real-life clod-busters they're supposed to be imitating. If you wandered the back streets of Manchester, among those old Victorian factory houses, in the first place you wouldn't find those incredible hairdos the women wear. And, what you wouldn't find is—you may not notice it—that enormous *confidence* people playing the parts all have—they are all happy to be *themselves*, with very few exceptions. And that isn't true of actual working-class people—many of them are *not* confident.

That's a myth held by middle-class people in this country—the myth of the “noble working class” man or woman who know their place and are happy with their indigenous working class culture. That's a myth, and a very useful one to have—*Coronation Street* is the most popular program on TV here. But it's much more than that—night after night people here are watching TV in a way that nobody else in the world does, I suspect. We watch TV the way you read a book: with undivided concentration. I don't think that in the 'States they do this to the same extent.

I get the impression that TV doesn't play that important a part in American life: the tube may be on, but nobody is *that* riveted to it. Here they're *locked* into it—it goes straight into the central nervous system. Everybody on the street will be watching *Coronation Street* at this moment except we three. It's the only thing they share—the shared community. It really is an electronic community, this country.

R/S: *There's a lot fewer channels in England [4], so that helps centralize everybody. Whereas in America there's about 30 channels to choose from.*

JGB: I noticed that my children were riveted to the TV screen 'til they reached puberty, and then—wham! They were out of doors all the time, prowling the streets all day long. During their teens, my girls, particularly, partly lost touch with their own culture. If you said something like *Dallas* (or a comparable program) to them, they wouldn't know what you were talking about. Something that was part of the air you breathed—they hadn't tasted. Thank god for that!

How was your train ride here?

R/S: *We liked it better than riding the San Francisco BART system—*

JGB: I know all about the San Francisco rapid transit system, and I'll tell you why. We have something called *The Open University* which is one of these sociology-infested TV universities, transmitted in the afternoons. And one of the programs which is endlessly repeated is a six-part (each segment's a half hour) one on the Bay Area Rapid Transit system that runs around the bay. . . . I know all about the ambitions of the designers—what they intended to do, their great visions about the future of mass transit systems in San Francisco, how the damn thing was built and financed, interviews with upteen men in blue suits, and *finally*, the system itself, which, according to everybody on the pro-

gram, is a profound disappointment! I'm surprised it hasn't been shown on San Francisco television.

R/S: *Oh, they wouldn't do that. . . . Instead of building BART, I wish they'd duplicated the British rail system, with its atmospheric old cars. The ride is so pleasant—you're not that far from London.*

JGB: By car it takes something like half an hour because I know the route. It's just far enough to be a disincentive for people to come out here, really, and to myself—I only go to London when I have some work to do. People used to ring up and say, "We're having drinks at Hampstead, pop over" and I'd pop over. But now I don't; I go, "Christ, I'll watch the reruns of *The Rockford Files*—it's more interesting"—and it usually is, of course!

After awhile you really begin to apply the principles of cost accounting in a sort of ruthless way to your own life. Is it (in imaginative terms) going to be cost-effective to go all the way up to Hampstead to have dinner? Do I want to sit and make small talk with the wife of _____ or some other writer? I can't; I only want to meet the people in whose company I feel something *valuable* will emerge. Nobody knows that many real friends. . . .

R/S: *The village theory.*

JGB: It's true—you wait and see! As you get older—wait 25 years—you begin to find that friends fall by the wayside. If you get divorced, you never quite make up the friendship with the spouse. A few die, or immigrate—you name it; interests change. But the typewriter still remains, of course, and work goes on. So you look inside your own head—endless forests crisscrossing across the sensorium. I'm not sure that's a very good way to live—I somehow think it may be terrible. [laughs]

One of the problems about being my age, or being middle-aged in general, is: that great invigorating factor that my parents' generation had—sex—no longer is there to provide that sudden change of gear in mid-life. In one's 40s one begins to feel that need to remythologize one's self—to recharge the whole imaginative basis of one's life and one's compass bearings. That used to be provided by sex: you ran off with your secretary. Or you ran off with your best friend's husband and went to live in New Zealand or what ever it was. That doesn't happen now, because you ran off with your secretary when you were 26, and your wife forgave you in 10 minutes. So—what do you do? It's very difficult now to recharge your life in mid-life. . . .

PUBLISHING

R/S: *At least your publishing is there to support you—*

JGB: Publishing is in a terrible state—just popular books, coffee table books—that's that. There are very few bookshops in England, actually. It's a great mistake to imagine the British are terribly literary—they're not. They watch TV. Their familiarity with their great literature is strictly in terms of TV adaptations—people know all about Lord Byron not because they've read his poetry, but because they've seen a TV drama-documentary on him. That's no exaggeration, it's literally true. . . .shocking. . . .

Britain is renowned for its writers, for its great literature, but the English on the whole aren't very interested in their writers. Writers enjoy a very low status here. . . . I think the British have got a surfeit of literature—the stuff's coming out of our ears. For 500 years we've produced this vast quantity of writers of genius: poets, playwrights, novelists—all the great 19th-century novelists and so forth and so on. In

a sense the British feel we've got *enough* novels! We don't need any more novels!

R/S: *Well, your novels aren't exactly conservative. . . .Incidentally, how do you think your books have changed?*

JGB: My earliest three or four novels, which are more explicitly science fiction, are all heavily influenced by the surrealists (Max Ernst, Dali), and also the symbolist painters like Gustave Moreau. Once you get to *The Atrocity Exhibition*, *Crash*, *High Rise* and so on, they're sort of *technological* books set in the present day—you've got all the imagery that the titles themselves are about. You name it, everything from car crashes to Kennedy assassinations to high rises to motorways. . . .

R/S: *Did you ever do any collages to accompany The Atrocity Exhibition?*

JGB: I have never done any collages just by myself—I would have wanted to collaborate with a professional, otherwise the stuff looks amateurish. You can make a dreadful mess. . . .

R/S: *Your imagery must translate well into Japanese—*

JGB: My stuff is very popular in Japan for some reason. I have a fairly big following there. . . . They've translated everything. Quite a lot of Japanese over the years have come to interview me. None of them know about me—they think I've lived all my life in Shepperton. Then I drop this little thing in: "Actually I was born in Shanghai and spent three years in a Japanese camp. . . ." There's a *deep silence*—not a word is said for about 15 minutes. It's terribly funny! So I reassure them that I don't harbor any unpleasant memories. . . .

PHOTOGRAPHY

R/S: *Do you have any photos of you in the Japanese camp?*

JGB: There are no records because it was a war zone. And there are no photographs of me standing with my back to a pagoda, or anything recognizably Chinese.

R/S: *Any photo of you and your wife, or you and your wife and three children all together?*

JGB: You know what family life is like—there's always one member of the family holding the camera! I'll dig around, and I can mail them to you. I have one or two photos of me as a small child—I think I have one upstairs of me at the age of four, sitting astride a horse. Don't get any wrong ideas—most of these are just *snapshots*. I'll gather together a selection of photos and send them to you.

R/S: *You can insure them!*

JGB: I've never had any mail go astray—you can sort of send a million dollars through the mail and nothing will ever get lost! My son, when he was 18, sent me a bottle of whiskey. All he did was, he took a bottle of Johnny Walker, wrapped it in brown paper with scotch tape, wrote my name on it, and pasted stamps on it. And it wasn't opened, and it wasn't broken. I have total faith in the postal services of the world!

THE CAR CRASH

R/S: *When was your car crash?*

JGB: I had a serious car crash about 10 years ago and I took some photographs of the car, but they aren't very dramatic—they aren't in the *least* dramatic. Compared with all those photos of cars that have been totally mangled—say, the car in which James Dean died, or the car in which Jayne Mansfield—these photos are not very dramatic. Of course, if they *had* been very dramatic I'd have been dead! It shows what strong cars British Ford makes. . . .

R/S: *Was this before you wrote Crash?*

JGB: Actually it was after; many people think the book was

inspired by the crash.

R/S: Was it serious?

JGB: Well, I rolled the car on a divided motorway where there's a continuous island separating the oncoming traffic from the outgoing. A tire blew out and the car swerved and rolled over and then crossed the central island, demolishing a piece of furniture which I had to pay for.

R/S: Furniture?

JGB: In this country, if you demolish a piece of street

furniture—a sign saying "No Entry" or anything, you have to pay for it! You get a bill! I got a bill for £100! I saw the new one they put in—it was a more advanced model, illuminated or something, and I realized that all this street furniture was being paid for by people who had had accidents!

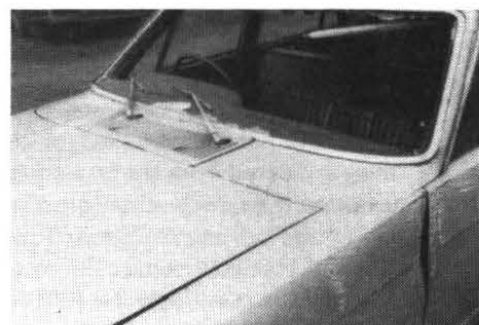
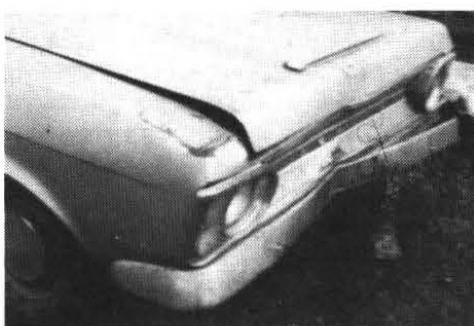
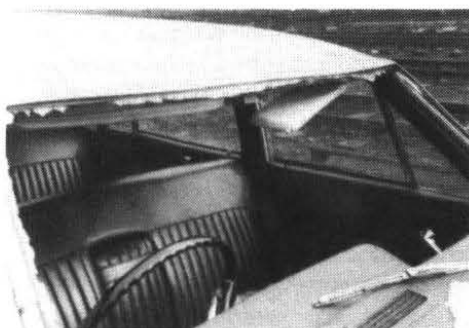
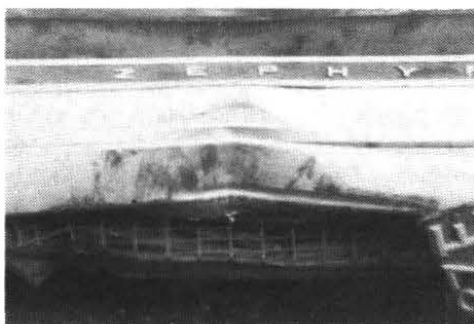
R/S: Were you okay after the crash?

JGB: I had a bit of a headache, but I was wearing a seatbelt.

R/S: That saved you?

JGB: It did, it did. I was lying upside down in this car; people

Photos by Ballard of his car after a serious crash.



were all around me shouting, "Petrol! Petrol!" [Gas! Gas!] running everywhere from the engine—the car was upside down. They couldn't open the doors which were jammed because the roof was down. If the car had burst into flames I would have had problems—putting it mildly!

R/S: *Were these photos taken just after the accident, or later?*

JGB: The car was towed away by the police to a pound, and I visited the pound and photographed the car there. Very strange experience, that. But as you see they're not very dramatic.

R/S: *Did your head strike the windshield?*

JGB: It struck the mirror—I got a real headache.

R/S: *But the windshield was broken.*

JGB: That was just the pressure of the roof coming down, because the roof was depressed.

R/S: *You weren't in the way of oncoming traffic?*

JGB: Yes, I crossed the central island and demolished this illuminated sign, then continued up the oncoming lane. By a miracle I didn't hit anything, which could have been really nasty—

R/S: *Or get hit by an oncoming car—*

JGB: Or a truck. But I wasn't. That was the biggest piece of luck, and secondly that the car didn't actually burst into flames, since it was leaking all this gasoline everywhere. But [referring to photos] it just doesn't look dramatic. You go to somewhere like Athens—all the cars in Athens look like this! All the cars in Havana look like that! Clacked-out old Dodges used as taxis—there's nothing particularly dramatic about that.

R/S: *Did your life flash by?*

JGB: No, because I didn't think I was going to die, to be honest. All I was conscious of was this overpowering smell of gasoline pouring from the engine, and people shouting "Petrol! Petrol!" so my one ambition was to get out of the car fast, as I was upside down. It was difficult, as I said, because the roof came down and the doors were jammed. But I wound down a window and got out.

R/S: *You were alone?*

JGB: Yes, thank god, no kids were there.

R/S: *Do you remember what your mission was that day?*

JGB: I was driving home. I think I'd been to some film premiere or something.

R/S: *This was at night?*

JGB: Yes, about midnight. Busy road . . .

ARCHIVISM

JGB: I'm not very good on the archival side of things. I throw away my manuscripts. You've got to understand, I can't take all that stuff. I hate that instant memorializing—your used beer mats and used typewriter ribbons and tax returns—little shrines erected in some university library around the handkerchief in which Graham Greene blew his nose in 1957. One can have too much of that. That's "Eng. Lit" carried to the point of absurdity.

I don't keep bibliographical information about me around—frankly it's of no interest to me whatever. All those things that obsess archivists, like different variants of a paperback published in 1963 (on the first 10,000 run something is deleted from the artwork, or the Berkley medallion is not on the spine)—that sort of thing is of interest to the bibliographical people. But it leaves me cold! There's too much of that going on.

I used to know the writer Kingsley Amis (I still do slightly) who is very well-known in England, not so well-known in

America. He wrote a book in the '50s called *Lucky Jim*. Anyway, it was a great success over here—he's as famous over here as, say, John Updike is in America. He made his breakthrough as a writer by writing about a new kind of young man who hated phonies and hated bullshit and hated all the compromises you have to make to get on in society. He was an "Angry Young Man."

The funny thing is that Amis told me that he'd kept not just the manuscript of the preliminary notes for *Lucky Jim*, but the pencils and pens that he'd written it with. I thought, Christ—this is the author, one of the original "Angry Young Men" who refused to *join the system!* That's life. Keeping the pens—that's going a bit far, isn't it?

But don't get this wrong—in America and particularly in American academic institutions, the archivists' departments (simply because they've got so much money to spend) are buying all this stuff all the time. Even a writer like myself, who (let's be fair, is hardly known at all in America and doesn't figure in any kind of critical landscape at all)—I get invitations. In fact a man who called himself the archivist at Wyoming University wrote a very nice letter to me asking, "Have you got any material I can have?" I wrote back a friendly note saying that I hate that whole archivist approach. And he, to his credit, said "I understood and I sympathize, but as a professional archivist it's my job to write around."

There must be great basements—wherever they store this stuff—full of the most incredible detritus that will be meaningless 50 years from now. As for most of these writers, people will be scratching their heads, saying, "Who's John Updike? Who was he?" Like some vanished Victorian novelist who was so famous in the 1880s, but now . . . And not only will these strange books be there, but all these used typewriter ribbons and beer mats—people will think, "What is all this stuff?"

R/S: *Someone has Hemingway's gun—*

JGB: I understand that—in that case, fair enough; he's a major writer of the 20th century, and weapons were a large part of his world. It might be interesting to get hold of the desk at which George Bernard Shaw wrote all his plays—that's a legitimate object of curiosity. Or the manuscripts of a Shakespeare play, god knows. But when you apply that to—let's face it—writers who aren't worth a damn, and when all this memorabilia, this trivia, is admitted to be more important than the works they've produced, then the whole thing's gone haywire.

R/S: *Do you keep any notebooks or journals?*

JGB: Sorry about that.

R/S: *Do you subscribe to any magazines?*

JGB: Yes, but they wouldn't be counted as interesting. As I was saying, I used to subscribe to a number of scientific journals, but not anymore—the subscriptions are so expensive. The ones I subscribe to are *New Scientist*, *Paris Match*, *Time* magazine—things like that, just to get another window on the world.

R/S: *You read French?*

JGB: Schoolbook French, but I couldn't read *Le Monde*. *Paris Match* is like the equivalent of *Life* magazine; with the help of a few pictures you can make out what's going on—which movie star is sitting there on the beach . . .

R/S: *Just to write Hello America you had to have input from America—*

JGB: I got that from *Kojak* and *Vegas* and the *Rockford Files!* If you watch those with the sound turned down you can pick

up an enormous amount of information, because *Vegas* was certainly filmed in Las Vegas. And I take it *The Rockford Files* was filmed in Los Angeles.

R/S: *Have you ever been there?*

JGB: No. I went to the 'States when I was about nine years old, and haven't been back since. My parents made a trip across the Pacific states. In 1953 I did my pilot training in the RCAF in Moose Jaws, Saskatchewan, and spent about a month or two in London, Ontario. We made a number of trips across the border into the 'States—went to Detroit, Buffalo, Niagara Falls, and around there. But I've never been to New York City or to the West Coast. I keep meaning to go, but it's just *inertia*. Also, I think one doesn't really need to travel—TV travels for you. [laughs] I go to Europe every summer—Greece for the beach, Italy for the museums. I know Europe pretty well.

Also, a trip to the 'States would be expensive. I wouldn't want just to go to New York and come back after three weeks. I'd want to *tour* the 'States—to spend, say, two months traveling. That would cost quite a lot of money, wouldn't it? Whether you rented a car or not, it would add up. . . .

Americans on the whole are a very likable people, rather like the Russian people. The British and the French are rather cool and frosty. Don't try speaking French to the French unless your French is *perfect*. But you get little anomalies—I gather American police are not helpful at all in the way British police are genuinely helpful. The French police have a political role—they are there to keep the populace in line. They're not going to be rude to you, but they're going to be rather brusque. Whereas here the police are roughly on the side of the populace.

CORRUPTION

R/S: *The British police somehow don't seem to be as corruptible. . . . How do you think people get corrupted?*

JGB: People get corrupted without realizing it. . . . We've had a big scandal over here running a couple of years. Very senior men—deputy commissioners—were found to be on the take. Hundreds of senior police officers were found to be on the take, and brought to trial. Many were acquitted, but a few hundred have resigned. It's inevitable! An *incorrupt*, honest police force doesn't catch crooks, because *informants* provide the means—if you want to catch the crooks and keep the criminals under control in any society, the first thing you need is a corrupt police force! It's a fact of life.

WRITING, OBSESSION

R/S: *. . . . Are you writing more now that your kids have grown up and gone away?*

JGB: It's hard to say, actually. I'm certainly not slacking off in any way, simply because I've got so much time on my hands. In 1965, when I was writing *The Atrocity Exhibition* stories, my youngest was only about seven years old. The kids were seven, nine and 10, and it was a full, hurly-burly family life—driving them to school, collecting them, all that sort of thing. I'd write those stories whenever I could find snatches of spare time. And most of my other fiction was like that. Now, I get up in the morning and the day just sort of stretches like the plains of Kansas, with not a speck on the horizon. Which is great, of course!

R/S: *I like the fact that your phone hardly ever rings—*

JGB: That is arranged; I don't encourage people to ring too often! Otherwise you spend all day answering the phone.

R/S: *Concentration and sublimation—*

JGB: I think there's a lot of truth in that; I think a certain degree of sublimation *does* take place. As you get older you can become very obsessive—one gets a sort of closed focus on whatever one's doing—writing a novel, painting a picture, or whatever it may be. (Sexual obsession—god, I wish I had that. I have to think back!) This close focus shuts out the rest of the world, and in a curious way that includes the world of the senses, too—a way that you at your age would find impossible to believe. But it happens, and it applies to everything. You can become so immersed in, say, a particular paragraph, that when you go out to do the shopping you don't even see the *street*! It's just a blur. You have to stop and say, Come on! Enjoy the sunlight! That is a danger as you get a bit older—becoming so immersed in what you're doing. . . .

R/S: *You simply become more focused, doing your will—*

JGB: I think you begin to realize that certain things *are* important to one's self; they provide satisfaction. "All I want to do is write a certain kind of fiction that I write." And that's where my particular fulfillment comes from. I haven't got children to bring up, to be involved with on a day-to-day basis; I haven't even got a *dog* to take care of, so I just concentrate on my work. And that *can* lead to a peculiar sort of very selective approach to reality, which has advantages. . . .and disadvantages. One has to be wary of that sort of tight focus. It's not a problem yet; it could become one in five to 10 years' time.

R/S: *Do you think it could affect your writing?*

JGB: No, it's not *that* intense—I'm not literally staring at the end of my foot all day, in the way that Burroughs described doing when he was on heroin. It's not *that* sort of obsessiveness. It's really a marshaling of all one's energies to do a particular job at hand. The wider life around one—social life and all the rest of it—does tend to take second place. One begins to apply the principles of cost accountancy to one's social life: do I want to drive 20 miles to make small talk at a publisher's party? Well, the answer is no—why bother, when I can go on with my work instead.

When one's younger, there's a natural tendency to want to meet *more* people. Straightforward biological reason supervenes (and rightly, I think), so one says To hell with it, let's leave the typewriter *and* drive 30 miles to make some small talk—(sardonically) you never know who you may meet!

I don't know if people get that much fulfillment from painting, or writing a novel, or whatever—in fact, I'm not sure they get any at all! I think it's just a way of unsettling oneself. It's so intangible. Even a painting or a piece of sculpture is really rather intangible. It has a finite form, all right (you can actually touch a sculpture), but nonetheless it's a conceptual object—a conceit. It's very peculiar—I don't know how much fulfillment and satisfaction can come from being "creative." I have the deepest satisfaction when I do a job around the house—put in a new window pane, say. It's enormously pleasing and satisfying—getting that putty in, or getting out the saw and hammer and nails; very satisfying, a profound feeling of fulfillment.

R/S: *And when you finish a book?*

JGB: It's sort of a nightmare that's briefly stopped; one that will recommence in about three days' time. I don't think I'd do it again if I had the chance offered me—I think I'd become something like a *cabinetmaker*—I'd opt for a craft, rather than an art! Very hard to say, actually. . . . ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

INTERVIEW WITH MARTIN BAX



Dr. Martin Bax has known J. G. Ballard since 1963. A pediatrician from North London, he is perhaps best known for his experimental periodical, *Ambit*, which has published over 100 numbers to date, many featuring new writing by Ballard. Additionally, Ballard has been the Prose Editor of *Ambit* since 1967.

This interview took place in San Francisco, winter of 1983.

R/S:

How would you describe Ballard's relationship to science fiction?

■■■ MB: In terms of *content*, he uses the science fiction device to confront the software—namely, people—with the hardware of the 20th century—namely, Cape Canaveral, rockets, drug scene, cars, etc. He's interested in the way the physical facts of the environment impinge upon people. And although he knows all about it, he's not interested (to any extent as a writer) in intrapsychic behavior. He's not interested in the classic behavior that has interested novelists from Jane Austen to Margaret Drabble, of how social manners and customs influence human behavior.

■ If you take Jane Austen or Margaret Drabble or Saul Bellow, the scenery, the physical surrounding, doesn't really matter. Jane Austen writes about the customs of late 18th century England; Updike writes about New England, and how they will travel somewhere in a motor car; but in a *Ballard* novel, the motorcar plays a vital role in the story—sometimes an extraordinarily vital role, as in *Crash*. And that's what he's aware of—which he's been aware of for 20 years: the *third* revolution.

■■■ R/S: Explain?

■■■ MB: First, you had the industrial revolution which brought everybody into cities; herded them together and treated them very badly. The rise of the factory, steel mill; the growth of capitalism with the industrialists grinding the faces of the poor.

■ Second, you had a post-industrial revolution. That came because of the success of the first revolution. The industrialists needed a much larger market, so they had to create a consum-

er class, and the only people to make up the consumer class were the factory workers, who were thought to be exploited.

■ Now, actually that was associated with theorists of social change such as Marx and Freud who, in the late 19th century, established a more benign view of humankind—the “you should be nice to people” type of philosophy. You saw social concern and the development of welfare—things like this. But the reason they *really* developed was because of the need to create a consumer society to handle the products of the industrial revolution. So, *consumerism* is the second phase of the industrial revolution.

■ The third phase of the industrial revolution is, if you like, this *Ballardian* phase, which is that industrialization—the microchip, the home computer, the television itself—is actually *invading people*, impinging on people's behavior, taking over their lives. The industrial revolution which *started* to change the way people behave, is now changing the way people behave at an *extraordinary pace*.

■ In Ballard's short story “The Intensive Care Unit,” all sexual relationships are conducted via television screens—the people never actually touch anyone. That's a description of what's actually happening! Ballard is the chronicler, if you like, of the third stage of the industrial revolution. All of us are now, in fact, *bio-robots*—we can't exist without the equipment which we have around us, like cars, telephones, tape recorders, contact lenses, so we're no longer just biological organisms, we're *bio-robotical* organisms. And Ballard's identified that.

■ Of course, there are all sorts of other things which infuse his work, like surrealism. People like Max Ernst were a big influence on his work . . .

■■■■ R/S: *And the proliferation of images in general—I once read that we see more images in a year than 19th century people saw in a lifetime—*

■■■■ MB: Yes, there are so many images about one now—on screens, photos, photocopiers—rock, punk—that you can do anything you like—

■■■■ R/S: *Almost be anybody you like. Reading a Ballard story is more like being in a film—*

■■■■ MB: In *Vermilion Sands* he really created a whole landscape of a suburb in dystopia. Although people keep making offers to film Ballard, I suppose the reason why nobody's actually made a Ballard film is—when they come down to it, the visions are such that they are very difficult to make visually. If you tried to recreate *Vermilion Sands*, with living clothes and houses which were alive, you'd have problems.

■■■■ R/S: *High-rise might be easier—*

■■■■ MB: Actually, it is amazing to me that someone hasn't made *Crash* and *High-rise* into films—I just can't understand it. If I were a filmmaker, I would—just because I'd want to make money . . .

■■■■ R/S: *Do you know of any theatrical performances of work by Ballard?*

■■■■ MB: I'd like to arrange a jazz opera of *Vermilion Sands*—it's absolutely made for that. I've spoken to some guy at the Royal Shakespeare Company Theatre, and I'm trying to persuade them to be interested. I've got jazz musicians, too.

■ We've already set a piece by Ballard to jazz—some found texts which Jim titled "The Side-Effects of Orthonovin G."

■■■■ R/S: *What's that?*

■■■■ MB: Orthonovin G is a form of a birth control pill, and these texts which Jim found are autobiographies of American women, and they're quite weird. One of them is about this girl who comes to London who tries to make friends with the people, and she finds it very difficult. She decides to study their national game—soccer. She says, "I studied their national game. That year, England won the World Cup!"

■ So she comes back to the US and decides to get her Master's degree in soccer, and goes to Brazil. She says, "Even the great Pele granted me an interview just to see if I were for real!"

■ Anyway, here was a great Ballardian/Ambit occasion. This was at Kingston Polytechnic, for the students. We took these two pieces and had them set to jazz. We had them read by a girl named Euphoria Bliss; she's an amazing, tall, beautiful Trinidadian. There were two pieces; one was about soccer—for that one she said she'd dress in soccer boots and shorts. The other was about a woman—it just describes an American life—and she looked at it and said, "I'll read that naked."

■ The jazz group started playing; then I came on and said, "And now Euphoria Bliss is going to read for us J.G. Ballard's piece 'The Side-Effects of Orthonovin G.'" She was sitting in a big hat, her head down, with a green coat on. She came forth, and I went behind her and took the coat off, and the students just sort of fell off their seats while she read:

The Side Effects of Orthonovin G

(Department of Sociology, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut)

■■■ (1.) I was born in Chicago, Illinois, and lived there until I went away to college. But I have had anything but a protected life. I have traveled all over the world since I have been 15, and while my parents were ambivalent about this early meandering, they have always encouraged me to be independent, and to like myself enough to feel secure in an idiosyncratic life-style.

They didn't make sex an awesome or disturbing topic, and generally helped me to avoid two great problems that make women unfree—feelings of inferiority and sexual inhibition.

■ I have always wanted to do everything well, in fact, to do everything, period. Naturally, this caused me a lot of self-searching. It also got me thinking early about the nature of male and female roles. However, I avoided the question of larger societal norms by spending a great deal of time in theatrical subcultures. I didn't really take time to define myself too closely, and so, until graduate school, I spent a great deal of time acting—not all of it on the stage.

■ I have also been very active in organized groups. I liked making something work. I liked working with women, and I derived a good deal of ego satisfaction by being able to channel energy. I am involved in women's groups, counseling and participating in consciousness-raising. I have also invested a lot of myself in the field of human sexuality. Besides writing on the subject, I lecture and hold informal groups on the subject, usually with women, which are based on open conversation and an effort to get rid of misconceptions and guilt. Inevitably, we explore alternate life-styles. I have taught courses on marriage and the family at Yale, and lectured on human sexuality in church groups and social clubs.

■ My husband and I were separated the day after our wedding for six months so that I could finish my book on women at Yale. We have a very independent and honest relationship with a sexual code that is flexible and permissive, but not dangerous to our personal sense of worth and dignity. As for my professional life, a good part of my research interests center around sex roles, the socialization of men and women, and culture and sexuality.

■ Sociological reality for me ineluctably leads to the dynamics of the sexes. I find this a valuable perspective that meets both my personal and professional needs.

■■■ (2.) I was born and educated in St. Louis, Missouri. I lived at home with my family while attending Washington University. My parents felt guilty about my missing the "independence" experience of leaving home for college, and allowed me to take a summer job abroad after my sophomore year. I had finished my sociology course before leaving for Europe, and made every attempt to avoid being ethnocentric. I set off to make friends and become one of the natives wherever I might go. In my London office the personnel were courteous but distant to me. Wanting to make every effort to communicate with them, I found my opportunity in 1966 when England played host to the World Cup. I bought books and magazines about soccer and about the Cup. I watched my first soccer game on television. My co-workers at the office appreciated my attempts to understand them, and sincerely befriended me. England won the championship.

■ One year later I was accepted as a member of an exchange-student program to Brazil. I quickly resumed my new interest in their national sport. My curiosity developed into a small research project. I requested an interview with some players at Maracana Stadium. The officials were confused. The locker-room was off-limits to me.

■ I returned to the sociology department at Washington U. I found that my feeble attempts at interviewing were very promising. Everyone was interested in what I had to say about the soccer cult. I dropped out of school for a semester, and caught the first plane back to Rio. In Brazil I was a freak of sorts. Due to my unusual status, sportsmen became interested in what I was doing, and invited me to explain my study on their TV talk shows. Even the great Pele granted me an interview just to see if I were for real.

■ I returned to the U.S. once again and wrote my senior honors thesis on the social mobility of soccer players in Brazil.

—from *Ambit* no. 50, 1972.

■ After she read it she sat down (stark naked) and turned to

me and asked, "Do I look all right?" I said, "Yes, you look all right!" And nobody knows what Orthonovin G is except me!

■■■ R/S: When did you meet J.G. Ballard?

■■■ MB: When Ballard's first published novel, *The Drowned World*, came out in England, I read it, found out where he lived, called him up and went and saw him—where he still lives, in Shepperton. That must have been about '63. Then I got material from him for a special science fiction number of the magazine I publish (*Ambit*, no. 23) which must

have had a bit from *The Burning World*. There were also some illustrations by Eduardo Paolozzi. He actually introduced me to Paolozzi—Jim was very interested in his work at that time.

■ Soon after that was published, I must have asked Jim to be the prose editor of *Ambit*, which he's been ever since. I've gone on publishing material all the time from him. Also, he did that famous set of adverts in *Ambit* [reproduced in this *Re/Search*]. Jim paid for those—they're advertising copy! He applied to the Arts Council for a grant to take advertising in other magazines.

A note on these collages by J. G. Ballard: "[These are] a series of four facing-page spreads that were specimen pages I put together in the late 50s . . . sample pages of a new kind of novel, entirely consisting of magazine-style headlines and layouts, with a deliberately meaningless text, the idea being that the imaginative content could be carried by the headlines and overall design, so making obsolete the need for a traditional text except for virtually decorative purposes . . . The pages from the Project for a New Novel were made at a time when I was working on a chemical society journal in London, and the lettering was taken from the US magazine Chemical & Engineering News—I liked its very stylish typography. I also liked the scientific content, and used stories from Chem. Eng. News to provide the text of my novel. Curiously enough, far from being meaningless, the science news stories somehow become fictionalized by the headings around them."

T-1

EMERGENCY MEGA-CHANNEL MULTI-HORN DIVE DRILL

Thoracic drop Taped

Washington conference hears "harsh words" hurled at chemical industry's tariff policies Here are comp Fifth domestic low pressure process plant comes in as U-10 Carbide cements its top position Synthetic growing fast with imports a big factor Continent holds the balance \$25 million slash cuts ones making news last month, adding to the new emical process industries by programs but House-t Acid capacity in U. S. creeps toward 21.5 million tons; need seen for more sulfur

"Mainline," kline dialled
"L-5 on the big routes."

Now 7- and 7-hydroxysteroids are available via new Merck and Schering techniques opposes bills, Membrane permeation process wrests components out of difficult to separate liquid mixtures New tool stems from photosynthesis work, says Nichols Medalist Calvin—credits free research

... depth squad:

CHANNEL	11 05 pm	1110	1115	1120	1125
situational	Present and Future	Preparation and Recycle	Conversion State	Feed Materials	Feature Lecture
infra uterine	Foundation Projects	Optical Rotation	World: Past	Familiar Elements	Less Familiar
neurophonic		Conformational Analysis	Nuclear Field		
ano genital	Preparative Organ	Newer Methods			
psychochem	Parine Antagonists	Biochemical Origins	Hypoglycemic Agents	Fuels of the Future	Food Additives
hypno trigger:			Group Events	Plant Trips	
autonomic	Heavy Elements	Modes of Action	Heterogeneity		Bivalent Organ
time drive	New Tools	New Elements	High Performance	Recent Approaches	New Developm*

programming the psychodrill: coded sleep and intertime

am : beach hamlet

pm : imago tapes

: the existential yes !

Fresh water from sea water is one way to relieve the shortage of both industrial and municipal water. The cover shows a Badger-Hickman No. 5 centrifugal boiler compression still during erection. This semi-commercial unit went into operation on March 7, 1957.

Fundamental research being pushed by industry . . . Cotton coming back strong . . . Fresh water shortage gets boost from new type still . . . Foreign low-pressure polyethylene may stir U. S. businessmen . . . Shale oil, one way to increase oil reserves . . .

TIME ZONE

Heard over-the-transom at Miami . . . Ozone, although hard to handle, is finding use in industry as an oxidizer . . . Photography is no small item with today's companies; several companies employ as many as 6 or 7 full-time shutter experts . . . Argonne's boiling water reactor . . .

pre-uterine claims KLINE

Should we have research for its own sake? Many companies say yes. There are problems in implementing a fundamental research program. Plastics are taking over a big share of the job of removing corrosive fumes in industry; catalytic exhaust muffler makes operation of gasoline-powered fork lift trucks safe . . .

the A-girl COMA

C. H. Pelton of Clinton Corn Processing Co. outlines the role the chemical engineer plays in selecting the right materials for building process. Are separators too old-fashioned for cleaning up wastes at oil refineries? Definitely yes, says author Hart . . .

time pack MR F

: neuronics low Drops the pH

Plastics consumption may hit 35 pounds per capita in 1965 . . . here are the manufacturing, fabricating, and distributing trends . . . Digital computers are solving some basic math problems for the chemical engineer

Hope you haven't forgotten the Paley Report—this is what our materials picture looks like at the end of five years . . . Nose still isn't much of a chemical industry problem, but there's active interest in Beginning with the January 1957 issue, the Workbook pages (A-numbered pages), have been perforated. This new approach was adopted by the editors to increase the usefulness of these pages to the reader. In a test of this operation for the editors, more than 90% of the readers endorsed it.

... Coma slid out of the solar rig

Zolin and Green of Du Pont begin a two-part study of epoxy resins as engineering construction materials, with 13 case histories of successful Pressure packaging may spawn new family of food products . . . Research—Cottrell's plastic models help in study of precipitator design . . .

First trip to outer space may be to Mars' moons . . . Minerals found by chemical prospecting . . . Pulp mills are still the biggest source of stream To pilot plant or not to pilot plant? No matter how you decide this question, it could be expensive for your company. Cover shows make believe process which a panel of experts discussed. Top to bottom: Donald D. Jordan, Shelby A. Miller, John B. Tepe, Edward G. Scheibel, Donald Q. Kern. Their answers to this question are on page 578.

Schuman and Alpert of Hydrocarbon Research Inc. demonstrate that for a broad and basic segment of the chemical industry, prices have not risen to the extent indicated by government statistics. They propose a new price index, and show that the moderate increase indicated is related Epoxy resins are among the most versatile new polymers for combating corrosion. A dozen of these successful applications by Du Pont and Chemical are shown on this month's cover to emphasize the im-

Experts forecast big year for epoxy resins . . . Industry goes to Florida to attract technical talent . . . Manager development programs coming for the chemical industry . . . Breeder reactors look like the coming thing but pose problems . . . Still more emphasis on human engineering

you :

kline : Do you know when to add continuous process control to conventional control methods? Our new instrumentation editor, R. F. Wall of General Electric has a plan for developing chemists and chemical engineers into managers. T. S. Libberger follows his general discussion of last month with the specific principles behind this successful program.

■■■■ R/S: Did he get it?

■■■■ MB: No. What he said was—what people read nowadays is advertising, so if you want to have novels that people read, you should publish them as advertisements!

■ I have an entire unpublished Ballard novel designed to go on billboards. It's eight frames photocopied with headlines with famous Ballard characters like Coma and Kline. Most of the text you can't read because when you see things on billboards you don't read the small print, so the text is deliberately blurred—you can only read the headlines and some remarks; e.g., the last line is, "'Let's get out of time, Coma,' Kline murmured." I don't know why I never published it . . . I had it framed some years ago. It hangs above my mantelpiece. . .

■■■■ R/S: Weren't Ballard and Paolozzi going to start an image archive?

■■■■ MB: Well, Eduardo has a huge image archive of material—which I think fascinated Jim very much. I suppose what Jim was interested in was Eduardo's style of collecting images of the 20th century, which struck him as something a writer should do. Like, Eduardo will have magazines or newspapers from all over and he'll stand over a dustbin reading them, turning the pages, and if an image strikes him—a car, or something—he'll rip it out. He's got files of everything. I've been in his studio when we were doing some images, and he said, "What about a playing card, Martin?" I said, "A playing card?" And he opened a drawer which was totally full of packs of playing cards which he'd bought all over the world—some

extremely sexy ones of ladies with nothing on, but then I remember a pack from Iceland of Nordic heroes . . . Eduardo's used that type of material in his silkscreen work, and Ballard saw this as a way in which you could use this material in texts.

■ There was a piece by Eduardo called "Moonstrips" and "General Dynamic Fun," that was published in *Ambit*. He had collected 300 or 400 pages of texts, and Ballard and I went through this huge pile of texts together and we cut and arranged it so it has some sort of curious logic. It starts off with a piece about internists locking up wealthy women in Long Island mental hospitals, and goes through a curious range of material. At any rate, those are some of the sorts of things which perhaps derived from that relationship with Paolozzi.

■■■■ R/S: When did you start publishing *Ambit*?

■■■■ MB: 1959, when I was a medical student. Next year we will have published 100 numbers.

■■■■ R/S: It's relatively easy to start a publication, but very difficult to sustain—

■■■■ MB: Yes, what you need is a continual input of new ideas. And that's where Jim's very good—he comes up with ideas, makes suggestions, which is very vital to a magazine.

■ During the drug scene period, we ran a competition (for which he provided the prize) for the best piece of creative writing written under the influence of drugs! Jim and I really set that up partly to send up the drug scene—neither of us thought that people under the influence were writing anything very great . . . The Arts Council, who at that time were giving us a grant, were furious, saying that we were inciting people to

zero synthesis

COMA : the million year girl
KLINE : rescoring the c n s

mr. f is mr. f

psychodynamic :

neuronic the level to level hook up
biopsychic screen time
ni further out

program

all crash drills

xero

" i am 7000 years old "

Xero Run Hot with a Million Programs Starts

Larger tank car and truck shipments made possible New continuous vulcanizat markets found in welding and titanium processing medium at 400° to 600° F o What happens when a metal dissolves in ition process uses liquid Use fede molten halide? SRI research tries to find out n extruded rubber stock ACS tells Applied Research Labs x-ray unit makes x-ray fluo New chromatographs to h rescence competitive with emission spectroscopy tures, give faster analyses, New spectroscopy devices coming to U S andle higher tempero. Figures just analysis by emission spectroscopy methods show up at Pittsburghcast of pow They will enjoy the near future, but pho:out an Shippingport atomic plant show processors may trouble them later on er stands at 64 mills per kw-hr.

General defends right of Executive. Educators call for quality not quant to withhold information, opposes Senate bill cation, enrollments in science cou budgets will take larger percentage, C&EN finds Ziegler and lithium-type catal On basis of expected sales this year, resear in race for job of

mad :

time probe

servo maze
time sea
total bureau
the nth root of wonderful
yes yes yes yes
blood house

HEAT

Volcano Jungle: vision of a dying star-man

Editor's Note: Feature of the March 1957 Scientific American was an article by David S. Jenkins, director of the Office of Saline Water, U. S. Department of the Interior. This article, which described generally the various salt-water conversion methods being investigated under Interior's sponsorship, said partially of the Badger-Hickman still, "In the past three years interest in compression distillation has been heightened by an exciting new system. In essence what Hickman has added is a simple device for increasing phenomenally the rate of heat transfer to the water; namely spreading it out in a thin film. The salient feature of this device is a rotating drum, shaped something like a child's musical top." I&EC's article on the succeeding pages describes in detail the development of this still. As this article went to press, the editors were advised that the semiconductor prices obtainable from government sources, which provide a much larger price increase from 1939 to 1947 and for the over-all period considered. A correlation shows that the very moderate price increase in industrial chemicals from 1939 to 1953 (compared with the sharp price increases experienced by the rest of the economy) is related to the rapid expansion of the chemical industry during this period. The result has been more goods at relatively low prices ultimately for the consumer, on these bases it can be concluded that the industry is fulfilling its functions satisfac-

... 'Coma,' Kline murmured, 'let's get out of time.'

R/S:

How do you see the importance of mythology in modern times? In ancient Greece, mythology was a kind of ontological explanation of the world or of things unintelligible—do you think it has changed its function?

■■■ JGB: Actually, whereas classical mythologies, classical legends, tended to be concerned with explaining *origins* (where the world came from, how the planets were formed, how life itself was born), I think the sort of mythologies I'm interested in (in, say, *Myths of the Near Future*) are concerned with *ends* rather than with beginnings. Certainly they're *projections*.

■ The title *Myths of the Near Future* exactly sums up what I think a lot of present writers, musicians like yourself (as far as I can tell), filmmakers, painters like, say, Francis Bacon, are concerned with: the mythologies of the future. Not myths which will one day *replace* the classical legends of ancient Greece, but *predictive mythologies*; those which in a sense provide an operating formula by which we can deal with our passage through consciousness—our movements through time and space. These are mythologies that you can actually live by: how to cope with the modern urban landscape, the whole series of enciphered meanings that lie half-exposed within the urban landscape, within the communications landscape we all inhabit and to some extent contribute to. I'm interested in what I think of as a radically new set of mythologies that *aren't* concerned with the past, even in the sense that psychoanalysis is concerned with the past—with trying to explain the origins of, say, personality conflicts—

■■■ R/S: All psychoanalysis did was take a few Greek myths anyway—

■■■ JGB: I'm not in any way denying the importance of psychoanalysis—psychoanalysis has had a tremendous importance for me. But it's concerned obviously with the past, whereas I'm interested in the *future*. I want a mythology that starts *now*, this moment in time, and runs forward. And books like *Crash* and *The Atrocity Exhibition* and many of the stories in *Myths of the Near Future* (particularly the title story itself, and a similar story, "News From The Sun"), are attempts to try to grapple with that moment-to-moment stream of events that surround us as we live our lives. This is a mythology that obviously draws heavily on science and technology, and also on the communications landscape (which is a completely new thing, a *parallel world* which we inhabit), because they play such an important part. . . .

In the summer of 1983 J. G. Ballard was interviewed by Graeme Revell, a writer, musician and conceptual artist behind SPK, an "industrial music"/video performance group currently based in London, England. See Re/Search #6/7: The Industrial Culture Handbook, for more information on SPK.

■■■ R/S: There are two theorists who take different attitudes toward mythologies, both of whom (I think) relate to what you're doing in your fiction. One is Roland Barthes. In his book *Mythologies* he takes a sociological view, cataloging a mythology or a set of symbols which relates to our way of living and assists us in living. I think he takes a pejorative view, saying these are the *status quo* mythologies, and they're in some way dictating to you their faults.

■ The other person is Jean-Francois Lyotard, who has the idea of taking a point of view which he calls a "minor" point of view—a radical strategy in terms of what he calls "narrative." He says, "I can tell you a little story. It can be a little story about anything, but it's not a story about presidents, kings or anything like that—it's a minor story, about my little ideas, my little obsessions, and any man can tell his little narrative." And I think that's what you're detailing as well—you're telling an interesting little story, a little obsession or set of obsessions that you have or that you're interested in, and it's a new kind of literature. If you look back several hundred years you've got all this nonsense about kings and queens—history is the history of power. You're detailing the possible point of view of a minor man, an ordinary sort of person, which is missing in history. . . .

■■■ JGB: I'd go along with that. Also, I would say that a lot of my fiction is, if you like, open-ended. I leave for the reader to decide what the moral and psychological conclusions to be drawn from my fiction should be. For example, in the case of *Crash*, *High Rise* and *The Atrocity Exhibition*, I offer an extreme hypothesis, for the reader to decide whether the hypothesis I advance (this extreme metaphor to deal with an extreme situation) is proven.

■ In a sense, I'm assembling the materials of an autopsy, and I'm treating reality—the reality we inhabit—almost as if it were a cadaver, or, let's say, the contents of a special kind of forensic inquisition. *We have these objects here—what are they?* The analogy is misleading in that I don't see reality as resembling a corpse!—but I'm thinking mainly of the investigative procedure. You find in police museums strange collections of items under glass cases—washed up on a beach after a plane has crashed into a nearby sea, or a ship has sunk. If you move into a house that hasn't been properly cleaned up, you find these strange unrelated items: a pen, a hair clip, a copy of Auden's poems; and without even thinking you begin to assemble from these materials some sort of hypothesis about the nature of the life that was lived in this house, or the nature

of the people who've left this debris on a beach after they've vanished in a plane crash or what have you.

■ Now in many respects my books are constructed in a similar sort of way. I assemble materials and I draw from them. I treat the reality I inhabit as if it were a fiction—I *treat the whole of existence as if it were a huge invention*. These days we're living inside an enormous novel—I think that's probably even more true now than when I said it 10 years ago.

■ I don't take *anything* at its face value—the angle between 2 walls, the perspectives that a given street or a given corridor offer to me. I regard all these as data which will play their role in whatever hypothesis I'm proposing to offer, to explain the significance of mysterious and apparently unrelated objects, this huge network of ciphers, and encoded instructions—perhaps—that surround us in reality. So mine is not a fiction where I the author take a moral viewpoint and sit in judgment like a magistrate on the events, passing sentence or urging some morally improving course of remedial treatment, which is the classic standpoint of the classical novelist. I don't take that view at all.

■ I think my fiction has a lot in common with *case histories*. I'm *interested* in case histories. Case histories, textbooks of psychiatry and so forth, always seemed to have an enormous

mystery—a mystery not of the central event (say, the mental crisis [of a housewife, or Mrs G or Mr F] which has drawn this particular patient to the psychiatrist's attention) but the sort of *surrounding world* which these largely anonymous people seem to inhabit, very close to the world which I sense that I inhabit. My fiction really *is* investigative, exploratory, and comes to no moral conclusions whatever. *Crash* is a clear case of that; so is *Atrocity Exhibition*.

■ Even though I've lived in Shepperton for 23 years, if I need an infinitely mysterious place I don't have any problems finding one. (In fact, *after* living here for 20 years I was able to write a book about it—*The Unlimited Dream Company*.) All my fiction is based on the perception of that set of mysterious ciphers which in fact constitutes reality.

■ Our central nervous systems provide us with a conventional view of reality that most people accept simply in order to be able to cope with the day-to-day business of crossing rooms, walking up staircases, or talking to one's agent on the telephone. I mean, *unless* one accepted a high degree of conventionalizing, reality would be impossible. You can't start off every second by saying, "What is this white structure beside me? Uh—it's a wall."

■ The thing about reason is that it rationalizes reality for

"I don't take anything at its face value—the angle between 2 walls, the perspectives that a given street or a given corridor offer to me. I regard all these as data which will play their role in whatever hypothesis I'm proposing to offer, to explain the significance of mysterious and apparently unrelated objects..." Photo by Ana Barrado



us—I mean in the Freudian sense of providing a convenient explanation, perhaps *too* convenient. And I'm very interested in *dismantling* every assumption I can see, however trivial it might be. I'm making a whole sort of Christopher Columbus-like discoveries about the nature of floors, windows, carpets, and the like. Because often, behind the most trivial things, lie enormous mysteries.

■ I was joking about taking walls too seriously, but in fact the sort of architectural spaces we inhabit are enormously important—they are *powerful*. If every member of the human race were to *vanish*, our successors from another planet could reconstitute the psychology of the people on this planet from its architecture. The architecture of modern apartments, let's say, is radically different from that of a baroque palace.

■ I'm interested in deciphering the whole system of codes that I see—in dismantling that whole conventionalized apparatus with which our central nervous systems cope with the business of day-to-day living—which, of course, is the greatest trap facing us all. . . .

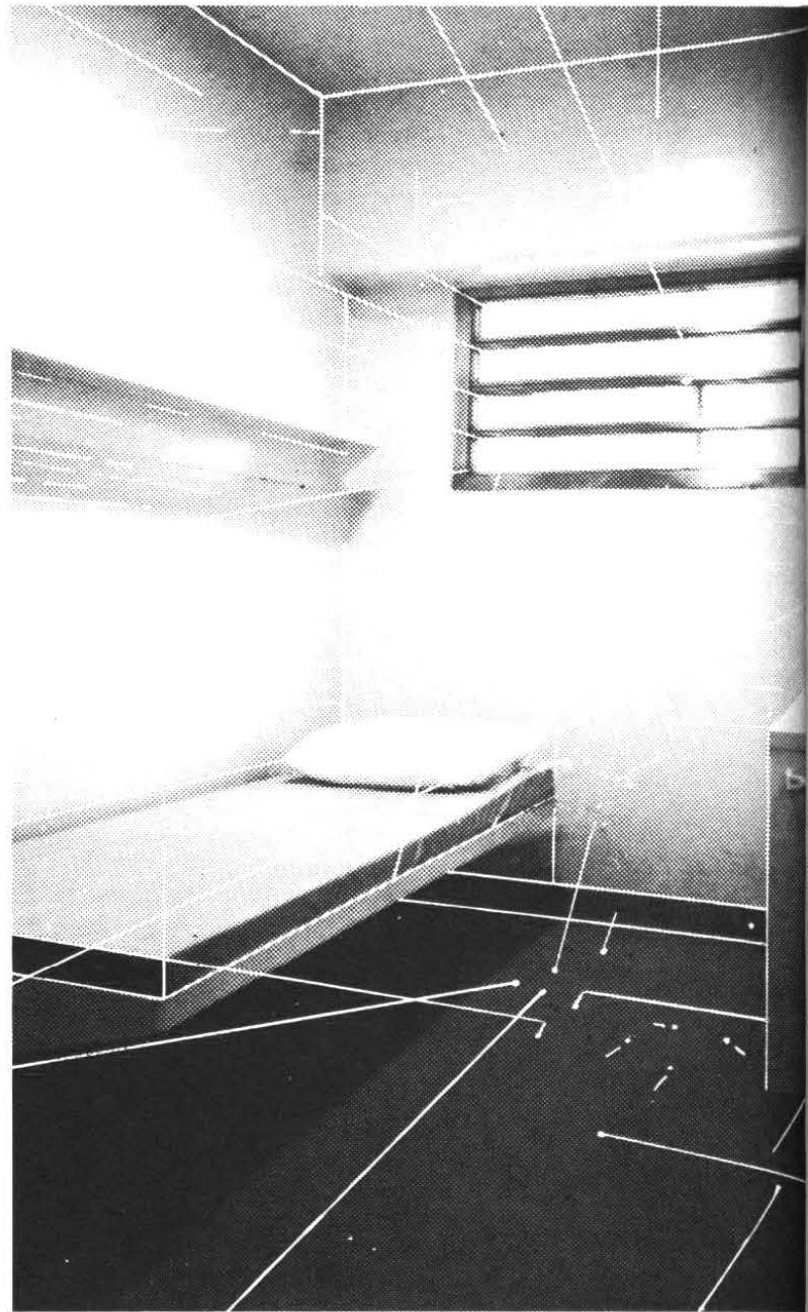
■■■ R/S: *How do you deal with the problem that even in the way you dismantle something, you're more or less setting forth a program?*

■■■ JGB: Well—that's true, and it's unavoidable. One's back to the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, where the position of the observer itself affects the behavior of electrons or fundamental physical particles which are being observed. Of course, one is in that position—I have to accept that. The fact that I am who I am is a gigantic accident. This is a paradox we *all* have to live with: each of us has a unique character and identity which is an enormous accident, a complete billion-to-one chance against, while at the same time it's totally real. For each of us, existence is like being the winner of some enormous lottery prize! It's both a product of enormous chance (what are we, just a twitch on some sort of vast random cosmic tracing?) but at the same time it's totally *real*.

■ Of course no writer or painter or musician can maintain total objectivity, and *I* don't. I deliberately exploit my own obsessions. In fact, as a writer all I do is to follow my own obsessions, whatever they may be—car crashes or the media landscape or Ronald Reagan or what have you. I deliberately use my obsessions because I can *trust* my obsessions, or rather, I can *rely* on them—they're strong enough to provide the main imaginative impetus.

■ I think that's where modern fiction or modern painting or music, filmmaking and the like, is at its most interesting—where it differs from the past. I mean, a classical 19th-century novelist would have thought it very bad form to have intruded his own particular quirks and obsessions upon the subject matter. But I think the contemporary writer *must* do so—it is, after all, why he's writing. It's his only key. If he *has* a key to unlock the universe and decipher all these codes around him, then it's his own obsessions and the particular bent of his own nature that's going to provide that key. So, I accept that, but then again I don't regret that at all. . . .

■ I couldn't take an objective view—I don't think one *can* be objective about the modern landscape. Since, say, 1945, where the specters of mass psychosis stride across the communications landscape (the specters of the atom bomb, of the Nazi death camps, of the misuse of science, and so forth) I think that one no longer can be objective. One can no longer *pretend* to an objective view of the world, one *must* be subjective. One's entering into a paradoxical realm where the psychopath is the only person who can imagine—who is capable of imagining—*sanity*, of conceiving what sanity is.



"...the sort of architectural spaces we inhabit are enormously important—they are powerful. If every member of the human race were to vanish, our successors from another planet could reconstitute the psychology of the people on this planet from its architecture." Photo manipulation by Paul Mavrides

■ In certain areas of western Europe, like present day West Germany, one sees a totally sane society coming up: liberal, humane, well-regulated to the point where you can't even throw a cigarette down to the street without feeling guilty. In a totally sane society the only freedom is madness, and that goes a long way toward explaining the Baader-Meinhof phenomenon, the terrorist gangs who, up to their capture 3 or 4 years ago, committed largely meaningless crimes.

■■■ R/S: *The Baader-Meinhof had this queer Marxist messianism, where they mistakenly (and idiotically, I think) thought they were going to bring in a new society and get rid of the old.*

■■■ JGB: They had the objective view of events, which the traditional novelist or playwright or filmmaker took: with a

firm viewpoint, a firm moral basis on which to make a reasoned judgment about what on earth went wrong in this given situation—

■■■■ R/S: *The New Left do that—*

■■■■ JGB: They continue to do that, and that's why they're so out of touch. I think one needs to take a wholly subjective viewpoint, and press one's obsessions almost to the point of madness, if not to the point of madness.

■■■■ R/S: *That, unfortunately, has a good side and a bad side. I find a political or power problem arises if somebody happens to press their interpretation of a mythology or symbol too forcefully, which indeed they do if there's a political set-up. Then we have that situation where people without that power go voiceless again. Hopefully, what your spectrum—the way you work—allows, is the possibility of that infinite range of interpretations where you don't try and corner the market with your interpretation...*

■■■■ JGB: I agree with that.

■■■■ R/S: *I see relating to your work almost like relating to a new Shakespeare, which is saying a lot—*

■■■■ JGB: Too much, by far! Having just helped my three children through various exams and university courses, and having read again the plays of Shakespeare, it nearly put me off writing altogether. I may say I always rather enjoyed Shakespeare, even as a child—I never did have it rammed down...

■■■■ R/S: *Shakespeare seems to have more or less defined a widespread set of symbols which relate to the great chain of being. In his writings, the divine right of kings was suddenly questioned—humanism was probably born and developed for all time there. Certainly in the English language, almost every simile we've ever come up with can probably be traced back to Shakespeare. Maybe he just catalogued them; maybe they were already existing in various forms anyway, but...*

■ *Now, in the 20th century and in your work in particular, what I think may be happening is a cataloguing of how humanism has come into question. In all spectrums of political philosophy and philosophy in general you still have a humanism in there somewhere—even in Marxist materialism you have this “man is basically good” kind of stuff. On a superficial reading, it looks like you're positing another kind of materialism—you don't make all these humanist judgments about man directly, but you take a lot of materialist symbols and relate those to a landscape of the unconscious. Do you see yourself as documenting a radical change in history just at the moment?*

■■■■ JGB: Well, I think I'm one of a number of people who are documenting what has been (I think) a revolution in mass psychology and popular sensibility in the last, say, 20 or 30 years, with even bigger changes to come. An important strand in my own stuff is something a lot of people who've read my fiction haven't noticed, and that is: there's a great thread of idealism running through most of my fiction.

■ I was talking earlier about the case history and the autopsy—myself as a writer assembling materials, doing an autopsy. But of course that's only a part of it. In fact, even in the most extreme cases of all such as *Crash* and *The Atrocity Exhibition*, the heroes, particularly the central figure of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, are driven by a dream of a perfectible world—a better world, in a moral sense—where everything will make sense. He wants to assassinate Kennedy again, he says somewhere, but he wants to do it *in a way that makes sense!* He accepts the event, but wants to re-make it in a more meaningful way.

■ In *The Atrocity Exhibition*, the hero variously tries to assassinate Kennedy again, tries to start World War III, tries to come to grips with the significance of these sort of spectral figures

like Reagan and Marilyn Monroe, but he's driven by, in its way, almost a sort of strand of—I won't say sentimentality, but an idealistic notion of a perfectible, meaningful universe. Either you accept/believe that the universe is totally random and meaningless, which is quite possible (a handy attitude to take if you're planning to take the way out, of *madness*—if you're choosing *that* particular exit door from reality). The view that the universe is a meaningless structure is a very useful one—I don't want to take that particular door. Quite the contrary, I feel (just as my heroes did in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, *Crash*, and in *High Rise*), that there is some sort of truth to be found...

■■■■ R/S: *In the admission that you have some sort of moral or idealistic strain, do you feel there is “a” truth to be found, or do you just believe in the general idea of truth, faith, hope—*

■■■■ JGB: No, I don't.

■■■■ R/S: *You never exactly state the way out. What do you expect the reader to do?*

■■■■ JGB: This is where the open-ended character of my fiction requires the reader himself to make a significant contribution. I'm offering a kit with which the reader, using my books as a sort of instructional manual (fit nozzle A into socket B, and you'll hear a loud whirring noise, which is the cosmos getting through to him). But I don't want to go too far with this, because obviously the manufacturer of this strange kit—myself—is a man with very peculiar notions of his own...

■ The analogy is with certain naive paintings, or the drawings or paintings of psychotic art. The show *Outsider Art* in London a couple of years ago impressed me enormously, because of the way in which these deeply isolated and disturbed people, many of them life-long inmates of mental institutions—cut off from the world entirely—were still struggling, through their drawings and paintings, to make sense of the world they inhabited. The average visitor, looking at these strange obsessive symbols and recurrent peculiarities of perspective and landscape and all the rest of it, thinks, “My god, these people are locked inside their own mad little universes.”

■ But quite the contrary! What came through, and what was so inspiring and so heartening about that exhibition, was the way in which these deeply isolated people were trying to make contact with the universe as a whole, and were, in fact, driven by the *grandest imaginative dreams*. I see myself in the same role, actually—I mean I've got my own particular *oblique* set of perspectives, my own *bent* in all senses, and I construct my emergency kit—the latest short story or the novel I'm working on at present—an emergency assemblage with which I try to cope with the situation in which I find myself. I offer it to anybody else I feel is in the same boat.

■■■■ R/S: *A morality in progress?*

■■■■ JGB: Yes, it's an attempt. Also, we don't arrive at every moment of consciousness completely free of the past. The past is enshrined in us, of course, and our minds contain the materials of huge mythic quests formed probably long before we were even *born*, probably at the moment of conception.

■■■■ R/S: *That's a Jungian idea—*

■■■■ JGB: Yes, I accept that. It's a sort of multi-generational thing. I accept the collective unconscious—I don't think it's a *mystic* entity, I think it's simply that whenever an individual is conceived, a whole set of operating instructions, a set of guidebooks, are meshed together like cards being shuffled. A whole set of unconscious mythologies are nestled and locked into one another to produce this individual, who will then spend the whole of his life evolving and

fulfilling that private mythology for himself, and setting it, testing it against the universe around him. We all enshrine within ourselves vast Homeric journeys; we're all clusters of mythological systems that began to unwind the moment we're born, and we go on unwinding them. . . .

■■■■ R/S: *All this talk about morality—I hope it's not going on too long, but it's something that's very important to me, reading the last 3 books of Nietzsche where he's grappling with the idea: what exactly is a morality beyond all morality? Some of us do operate on a very moral plane—almost as a reaction to the earlier 20th-century "anything goes" idea in art. . . .*

■ *No matter how you try and make it anti-church, anti-state, anti-whatever you think has been forced upon you, you inevitably come up with some kind of morality of your own. And the problem arises: how do you manage to do that without forcing it on anybody else who might not want to be influenced? I think towards the end of this millennium we're going to have a lot of neo-religious stuff appearing—*

■■■■ JGB: I would think so—

■■■■ R/S: *Religion in itself may not be so bad; the problem may be restrictive religious ideas. What is the difference between an individual set of morals and what you consider to be a useful social set of morals for the near future?*

■■■■ JGB: I am concerned with that, it's part of the subject matter directly related to a lot of my own fiction. One cannot repress the imagination, and it seems to me that one certainly cannot suppress the *deviant* and *perverse* imagination. Often the more deviant and perverse ideas we have by a sort of paradox lead towards the grasping of some sort of moral truth. One needs to break the conventional enamel that encases everything.

■ It seems to me that we're moving into an area where the moral structures of society, the whole social basis of the lives we lead, are provided for us externally without any sort of contribution by ourselves—they're provided to a large extent by the nature of modern science and technology. We don't think of, say, the modern traffic system as being a moral structure, but in a sense the green and red lights that move traffic around safely are making a whole set of moral decisions for us, which allow us to get on with the business of, say, having a row with the girlfriend as we go around the cloverleaf in complete safety. All around us, in practically every aspect of our lives, decisions are being made for us to guarantee our safe passage through this world. This leaves our imagination free and untrammelled by the moral considerations. . . .

■■■■ R/S: *On the other hand, I think for the vast majority of the population it presents a landscape for the imagination which is totally regulated.*

■■■■ JGB: Well, I'm thinking of *individuals* and their own imaginations. I'm not thinking of popular entertainment. I think we're living in societies now where it's extremely difficult to commit a serious crime or a genuinely perverse act; it's extremely difficult today to do anything perverse or deviant, or to commit a crime—it's almost impossible to commit today an act that is *genuinely evil* or morally repugnant. One simply *lacks* the ability to impose oneself to that extent, to any real extent, on the environment around us. The world is too powerful.

■ So, this leaves us (I've written in a lot about our ability soon, if we haven't done so already) to achieve a morally free psychopathology, where psychopathic acts can be indulged in—I won't say just as a matter of *whim*—but without us having to be too concerned about their consequences on either ourselves or anybody else, because there won't be any

sort of direct consequences in the old-fashioned sense. And it seems to me that the arts; in particular film, the novel, and music, are providing an example of this, purely in private imaginative terms. Obviously there *are* unconscious decisions, and most people embark on them with complete independence of mind. I mean, if you're going to plant a bomb on board an airplane and blow up the passengers just as a sort of joke—a very sinister joke—the decision to do so was probably made by the time you were 4 years old. I mean, people have carried out gratuitous acts of violence—Breton himself said that a sort of ultimate surrealist act was to go out into the street and fire a revolver at random into the crowd. . . .

■ Now, I'm not suggesting anything like that. Firstly, most of us aren't constitutionally able to commit that sort of meaningless crime. But more important, the restraint's on us, and the moment you stepped out the door probably somebody would grab your pistol and ask you whether

"I'm always struck by the enormous sort of magic and poetry one feels when looking at a junkyard filled with old washing machines, or wrecked cars, or old ships rotting in some disused harbor." Photo by Ana Barrado



you've got a permit!

■■■■ R/S: *I wanted to clear that up; everybody associates the word "psychopath" with B-grade movie violence—*

■■■■ JGB: Well, as long as it's in movies it's okay. I'm not thinking of psychopathology simply in terms of sadism and meaningless cruelty and all the rest of it; but rather, the deliberate immersion of oneself in all sorts of destructive impulses—let's say the deliberate immersion of one's *imagination* in all sorts of destructive impulses. Writing a novel like *Crash* was to some extent a psychopathic act. I don't believe that any readers of that book have been incited to have a car crash as a result of reading it. I'm sure they haven't. But—I'm thinking of the sort of morally free psychopathology of *metaphor*, as an element in one's dreams. . . .

■■■■ R/S: *Baudrillard said that in modern society, the only way man can approximate the idea of sacrifice, or a social will rather than a privatized life, is in the idea of the violent or accidental death; for example, the car crash. Do you see your treatment of violence in that sense?*

■■■■ JGB: Maybe I'm at heart rather anti-social. Or rather, let's say, an extreme solitary—I think *that's* probably true. The social dimension isn't really what I'm interested in. There's a sort of constant struggle on a minute-by-minute basis throughout our lives, throughout every day; one needs to dismantle that *smothering conventionalized reality* that wraps itself around us. There's a conspiracy, in which we play our willing part, just to stabilize the world we inhabit, or our small corner of it.

■ One needs at the same time to dismantle that smothering set of conventions that we call everyday reality, and of course violent acts of various kinds, whether they're car crashes or serious illnesses or any sort of trauma, do have that sort of liberating effect. I mean, people talk nostalgically about the Second World War, not because in wartime moral standards are more relaxed, or because people lived more for the moment and tried to enjoy themselves in a more unself-conscious way—not for those reasons, but simply because the conventional stage sets that are erected around us from which we can never escape, are suddenly dismantled, and there's an element of *magic* involved. . . .

■ I'm always struck by the enormous sort of magic and poetry one feels when looking at a junkyard filled with old washing machines, or wrecked cars, or old ships rotting in some disused harbor. An enormous mystery and magic surrounds these objects. I remember not so long ago being in the Imperial War Museum where they have the front section of a Zero fighter cut through the cockpit. One can actually stand looking into the cockpit. And one can see what's actually underneath the plane; looking up into the interior, one can see every rivet. An enormous sort of tragic poetry surrounds that plane in the Imperial War Museum. One can see all those Japanese men at work; women in their factories in some Tokyo suburb stamping the rivets into this particular plane. One can imagine the plane later on a carrier in the Pacific. . . . This very touching poetry is completely absent, say, from a brand-new plane or a brand-new washing machine in a showroom, or a brand-new motorcar in a local garage window. . . .

■ You need that violent dislocation which time itself will bring. Because to dismantle all those stage sets around us—violence plays a part in that. But I don't have any sentimental delusion about violence; I certainly don't glorify it in the way that, say, the Nazis did. The Fascist infatuation

with power and brute force, the stamp of thousands of steel-shod boots—all that I detest. That is glamorizing the lowest human motives conceivable; building a society on the level of the street-corner brawl.

■■■■ R/S: *That's a point I never tire of making—violence itself isn't fascist; I think you can actually use violence as a metaphor in order to increase choice—*

■■■■ JGB: Of course! When I was writing *Crash* I did a fair amount of research, particularly in this book called *Crash Injuries*, a medical textbook full of the most gruesome photographs as well as a lot of extraordinary material—for example, comparisons between injuries caused by rollover in 1953 Pontiacs compared with 1953 Chevrolets. Upon viewing the photographs in *Crash Injuries* taken immediately after violent car crashes—all one's pity goes out to these tragically mutilated people. After all, any of us who drive a motorcar may end up like them 5 minutes after starting the engine. . . .

■ But at the same time, one cannot help one's imagination being touched by these people who, if at enormous price, have nonetheless broken through the skin of reality and convention around us. . . . and who have in a sense achieved—become—mythological beings in a way that is only attainable through these brutal and violent acts. One can transcend the self, sadly, in ways which are in themselves rather to be avoided—say, extreme illnesses, car crashes, extreme states of being. I'm not suggesting we should all infect ourselves with rabies merely in order to enjoy—

■■■■ R/S: *Like that rabies program on the television last night—*

■■■■ JGB: Yes, it was very impressively done—it was *brilliantly* done, I'd say. I thought that was going to be the most awful sort of BBC drama, but it was done very astonishingly—I wonder who the director was. No, I'm not suggesting we all infect ourselves with rabies in order to experience (although at colossal cost) a total transformation of our nervous systems, to enjoy a sort of ultimate *blowing of the mind*. It's unfortunate that one does have to draw so many metaphors from areas like madness or car crashes; insanity or psychopathy.

■■■■ R/S: *The mythological figures of the past have been exactly the deviants—the giants, the dwarfs. . . . As you said before, all you're doing is updating the thing—*

■■■■ JGB: Right, I accept that. And of course people have a natural fear of the psychopath in the 20th century, because a few psychopaths have managed to put their fantasies into reality, to have murdered tens of millions of people.

■■■■ R/S: *And the rest have become businessmen—*

■■■■ JGB: Right. The thing is: as you well know, it's one thing to indulge some sort of *dream* of violence or explore a psychopathic urge within the freedom of one's own skull. It's quite another thing to actually have to *fuse* that psychopathic vision into an actual novel or a piece of music. Having to do *that* has a sobering effect. I can only speak as a writer, but the requirements of constructing an imaginative work that will touch other people's imagination and elicit a powerful response from them, does tend to eliminate the frivolous. . . .

■ Actually, Alan Burns (British experimental writer of the 1960s—I haven't seen him for 10 years; I'd never met him until he came to interview me around the time *Crash* was published) said I certainly wasn't what he expected. In the published interview he quotes himself saying to me, "I thought you would be sort of cool, cynical, and detached,

but in fact I was surprised by your passion and commitment." Which is absolutely the case.

■■■■ R/S: As a writer, if you're going to spend that much effort, you're doing it for some reason.

■■■■ JGB: Absolutely. I mean, I'm very suspicious of somebody like Genesis P-Orridge with his lunatic stunts—they just strike me as being gratuitous attempts to draw attention to himself. But I'd be unfair to the man—I daresay his motives are deeply serious, too. I've been accused as "having a relish for the nasty"—said by somebody reviewing *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Not true—actually, I don't. And people think I'm interested in cars—I'm not the least bit interested in cars; couldn't care less. . . .

■■■■ R/S: There's a lot of sexuality in many of your works; for example, in *Crash* you talk about the sexuality of news-related men and women, or scarred men and women. Do you find them more powerful or interesting or—

■■■■ JGB: Me personally, or me the writer? Well, the *man* Ballard doesn't find them a turn-on at all. If I see someone deeply mutilated or scarred, I don't feel aroused in any way. I'm of an age where I do know women who've had to undergo a fair amount of surgery; I don't feel anything but concern for them, and regret. But one's got to separate the elements of the imagination from those of our ordinary behavior. There isn't a sort of continuum whereby one lives one's novels. I mean, a novel is like a painting or a film or a piece of music—its great strength is that it is separate from the world that surrounds it. Nobody suggests that imaginative and dramatic necessity correlate in all manner of topics—at the end of *Hamlet* the stage is littered with corpses, but that doesn't mean that Shakespeare's a—

■■■■ R/S: Necrophiliac—

■■■■ JGB: Or a psychopathic killer. There's probably less violence in my fiction than there is in his, as a matter of fact! My prose isn't as good as his, but I'm probably a more moral character! No, obviously sexuality as a whole provides a gigantic fund of metaphors and exploratory techniques which the imaginative writer can use—and I've done so. Simply because the sexual element in our makeup is so powerful—almost everything we do has a sexual component in it somewhere. Also, it's one of those areas which has an enormous emotional charge, so that for the writer, it's a shortcut to dramatizing whatever private obsession, myth, dream, vision (or what have you) he wants to. . . .

■■■■ R/S: Do you have any comments to make on pornography in general?

■■■■ JGB: I'm afraid I'm out of sympathy, particularly with modern feminists. If by bad pornography one means the portrayal of what would be criminal acts, I'm opposed to distribution of that sort—say, pedophiliac material. I don't regard that as a little harmless; I'm all for the prosecution and suppression of pornographic films involving small children; snuff movies. The trouble is, when people start talking about pornography, one doesn't know what they mean.

■■■■ R/S: Slight problem there of definition and degrees of exploitation—

■■■■ JGB: I can see that point of view, but I don't accept that point of view in any way. One cannot restrain the human imagination. I mean, they disapprove if you enjoy taking pleasure in looking at a pretty girl—to them that's exploitative. I don't go along with that at all, as a matter of fact.

■ Large elements of exploitation exist in our relationships with one another—elements of exploitation exist in "per-

fectly happy" relationships between parents and children. They're part of the mechanisms by which we deal with one another. Obviously there are areas where exploitation can be abused. I won't say that I think pornography should be encouraged, but in many ways I think we're seeing a new kind of prudery. There isn't as much pornographic material available to us as the modern communications landscape could, and should, be able to provide—I think there should be far more. . . .

■■■■ R/S: I'm always rather disappointed when I go into a pornography shop—

■■■■ JGB: There's so little of it around; also, the curious thing is that the more deviant kinds of pornography can in fact be the least sexually explicit. Many years ago, an old friend of mine lent me a whole collection of pornographic books that he'd picked up somewhere. And some of them were devoted to what I take to be the extreme forms of bondage porn—

■■■■ R/S: They're usually the least explicit in terms of genitalia—

■■■■ JGB: These were little booklets in which there was a text on the left hand page, and a series of photographs on the right—I suppose about 50 photographs. I remember one in particular: the most extreme one. The human figure appeared only in the first 2 photographs; in the remaining 48, the human figure—I can't remember whether it was a man or woman—was completely hidden or trussed up within the blanket or whatever it was.

■ It was quite extraordinary to see what was supposedly a human figure under this blanket being trussed up with various ropes and armatures and riggings like an old-fashioned sailing ship—ropes that united this figure to bits of the furniture, and lamps, and brackets on the walls. In a very peculiar way this seemed to have nothing to do with sex—it was much closer to an attempt by the people devising this "sexual perversion" to grapple with ordinary reality. It was as if their hold on sitting in a room and surveying the 4 walls didn't give these bondage fanatics enough of a sense of their own existence, of their own tenancy of time and space. Only by tying themselves down to every corner of the room and to every object within the room—as if gravity itself were about to end and the whole universe fly apart—could they somehow restrain and tether their imaginations to "reality."

■ Oddly enough, this is called a sexual perversion. It seemed to me that the more extreme the sexual perversion, the less it has to do with sex at all. In fact, I used a photograph from another bondage magazine as one of my 'ads' in *Ambit*, a poetry magazine of which I'm the "prose editor."

■ This series of bondage photographs (one of which I used in my ad) was much closer to what ordinary people would think of as porn. But, although young women were shown, here again none were ever shown undressed. There were 4 or 5 girls; it all took place aboard a motor yacht near Miami. And the narrative text got off to a quick start, something like: "Darlene had forgotten to bring the picnic hamper, so I decided that she should be punished." (This was the first line of the text, which must have been 5000 words, accompanying these photographs; we immediately got down to business.) We saw Darlene shackled; little manacles were put on her. Then, somebody else had forgotten to bring the thermos flask; she had to be punished. This crew of pretty girls all had to be punished in various ways.

■ But, no pain was inflicted—they were mainly con-

strained. Nobody was actually spanked or whipped, they were merely shackled. They were made to wear what seemed to be surgical trusses and other appliances, and ultimately they were all gagged with strange "helmets"—I don't know whether they were used in corrective surgery, or whether they were specifically designed for the bondage freaks—but they were fitted with what looked like scuba gear. These strange contraptions were designed both to expose the face of the person wearing the thing, and to constrain it at the same time, gagging them—a peculiar kind of paradox.

■ Then, they were shackled and chained in various strange pieces of what appeared to be corrective wear. Then, all these girls wearing this stuff were tied by ropes to the masts and the portholes and wherever else you could lash a rope to on a boat. The final photos in this series showed this strange yacht in which these girls, all tied up and shackled, were incorporated into the rigging.

■ Now, this would be classed as pornography. Yet there was absolutely nothing sexual about it at all. Again, it seemed to have something to do with the need to anchor the consciousness of the bondage fanatic to *ordinary reality*. To quote my text for the ad, "In her face the diagram of bones was a geometry of murder." (To my mind that isn't quite right—that was just a sort of handy word.) "After Freud's explorations *within* the psyche, it is now the outer world of reality which must be quantified and eroticized."

■ *That's* the whole point, the phrase that sums up everything: *quantifying and eroticizing*. This is where the conceptual systems behind certain kinds of deviant erotic or deviant sexual behavior provide *keys and devices*.

■ When I see a modern version of one of the Greek myths, whether it's by an American playwright like Eugene O'Neill, or Tennessee Williams, or whoever—I'm always struck by how, in a way, they miss the point. I mean, you don't re-create the Oedipus Complex, or the story of Oedipus, by having a typical Southern family get a bit hot under the collar with one another. You'd do it by coming to terms with the angle between two walls—that's where the Oedipus Complex resides today: in the styling of an automobile dashboard. . . .

■ JGB: . . . The ideal interview is one where I remain silent and you just ask a stream of hundreds of questions. Or—the interviewer hasn't read the books he's asking questions about, and the author can't remember them!

■ Some students from the Royal College of Art Film School made a 25-minute film about me which I went to see last week. It was actually quite good. It began with an evocation of the landscape of Shepperton, which they made look like a very mysterious and sinister place—*Eraserhead* had nothing on them. . . .

■ R/S: —*Like the lighting in an Alain Resnais film?*

■ JGB: Right. Although I've seen myself on TV occasionally, I've never seen myself on a movie screen. God, it was humiliating—there I was with my face 15 feet high. My sympathies and my admiration went out to every actor in the world, because you really submit yourself to a detailed inquisition on every little defect. The high spot of the movie was a zoom that actually closed in very slowly on one eye—my eye looked like a dying planet. . . .

■ I said to the director, Sam Scoggins (a very talented fellow; I admire his film a lot), "I'll give you every help I can, as long as I don't have to *do* anything. I don't want to stand on the roofs of multi-story car parks or drive cars down the M-101—you've

got to film it *here* . . . and you've got to have an original idea."

■ So he went away and came back with a 90-question questionnaire prepared by the Institute of Psychiatry, designed for use in hospitals to sieve out psychopaths. Most of the questions are perfectly straightforward, like "Do you get depressed?" and "Do you like to go for walks?" and "Do you like meeting other people?"—all this sort of thing. Then there are the obvious trick questions like "Is your mother a good woman?" And there was even "Do you like seeing animals in pain?" Any psychopath would have spotted that one miles away!

■ I started answering these 90 questions (which I hadn't read beforehand), and as I was doing this (just answering Yes No, Yes No—it took 8 minutes to do the whole thing), it suddenly occurred to me that of course the questions were much more interesting than any answers I could conceivably give. They said far more about the mentality of the psychiatrists who'd set the tests than any conceivable answers that could be given.

■ R/S: *Did you ever read Philip K. Dick's novel about Abraham Lincoln? Society's test for putting someone away was of the Rorschach type. You had to give your interpretation of the adage "A rolling stone gathers no moss." And if you answered in an anti-social form—if you move from place to place you don't get tied down under the boring trappings of life—you'd get put away. I remember being shocked, because I'd never had any inkling that it meant the opposite: if you keep moving around, you miss out on all the good things in life, like friends. . . . How did you rate, anyway?*

■ JGB: I didn't dare ask them, actually. But I daresay they could submit my answers to the Institute of Psychiatry and—one day, two men in white coats will be turning up. . . . [laughs]

■ R/S: *Thus confirming the opinion of the person who, upon reading Crash, wrote that you were a most seriously disturbed person, beyond all psychiatric help.*

■ JGB: Yes, that was from *Reader's Report*, a piece by the wife of a psychiatrist: "The author of this book is beyond psychiatric help"—which for me meant total artistic success! For a *psychiatrist* to say "you're beyond psychiatric help"—in a way, that's the greatest compliment you can be paid! You've achieved freedom then—absolute freedom.

■ R/S: *How extensive is the physical capacity to perceive in a different way? The things you write about are metaphorical, symbolic, and so on. Do you think there might be an actual physical basis for change in man, so he could then come to perceive his existence in an entirely different way, and not just in a way that's usually considered to be "hallucinatory" or "mad"?*

■ JGB: I think in a small way it's already started, hasn't it? The cine-camera and the television set allow us to perceive, say, slow-motion. The concept of anything other than *real time* had never occurred to anybody until the first slow-motion movies were shown, and this radically changed people's perception of the nature of *time* . . .

■ One certainly doesn't need any hallucinogenic drugs to achieve that end. A lot of people who've read *The Crystal World* think that I wrote it after taking LSD, but in fact I wrote it *before* taking LSD. (It's about a crystallizing forest in Africa.) My imagination had no difficulty. . . . the imaginative road led straight to a sort of vision of paradise, and in a far less painful way than the LSD route can be, I may say. I think the imagination is capable of devising almost anything—I don't see any restraints on it. I think it's capable of living—it *does* live—in an *unlimited universe*. One's merely got to channel it into the right direction.

QUESTIONS/ANSWERS FROM SCOGGINS' FILM

Do you have many different hobbies? NO ■
Do you stop to think things over before doing anything? YES ■
Does your mood often go up and down? NO ■
Have you ever taken the praise for something you knew someone else had really done? NO ■
Are you a talkative person? YES ■
Would being in debt worry you? YES ■
Do you ever feel "just miserable" for no reason? NO ■
Were you ever greedy by helping yourself to more than your share of anything? NO ■
Do you lock up your house carefully at night? NO ■
Are you rather lively? NO ■
Would it upset you a lot to see a child or an animal suffer? YES ■
Do you often worry about things you should not have done or said? NO ■
If you say you will do something, do you always keep your promise no matter how inconvenient it might be? NO ■
Can you usually let yourself go and enjoy yourself at a lively party? YES ■
Are you an irritable person? NO ■
Have you ever blamed someone for doing something you knew was really your fault? NO ■
Do you enjoy meeting new people? YES ■
Do you believe insurance schemes are a good idea? YES ■
Are your feelings easily hurt? NO ■
Are all your habits good and desirable ones? NO ■
Do you tend to keep in the background on social occasions? YES ■
Would you take drugs which may have strange or dangerous effects? NO ■
Do you often feel "fed-up"? NO ■
Have you ever taken anything (even a pin or button) that belonged to someone else? YES ■
Do you like going out a lot? NO ■
Do you enjoy hurting people you love? NO ■
Are you often troubled about feelings of guilt? NO ■
Do you sometimes talk about things you know nothing about? YES ■
Do you prefer reading to meeting people? NO ■
Do you have enemies who want to harm you? NO ■
Would you call yourself a nervous person? NO ■
Do you have many friends? YES ■
Do you enjoy practical jokes that can sometimes really hurt people? NO ■
Are you a worrier? NO ■
As a child did you do as you were told immediately and without grumbling? NO ■
Would you call yourself happy-go-lucky? NO ■
Do good manners and cleanliness matter much to you? YES ■
Do you worry about awful things that might happen? NO ■
Have you ever broken or lost something belonging to someone else? YES ■
Do you usually take the initiative in making new friends? NO ■
Would you call yourself tense or "highly-strung"? NO ■
Are you mostly quiet when you are with other people? NO ■
Do you think marriage is old-fashioned and should be done away with? NO ■
Can you easily get some life into a rather dull party? YES ■

Do you sometimes boast a little? YES ■
Do people who drive carefully annoy you? NO ■
Do you worry about your health? YES ■
Have you ever said anything bad or nasty about anyone? YES ■
Do you like telling jokes and funny stories to your friends? YES ■
Do most things taste the same to you? NO ■
As a child were you ever cheeky to your parents? NO ■
Do you like mixing with people? YES ■
Does it worry you if you know there are mistakes in your work? YES ■
Do you suffer from sleeplessness? YES ■
Do you always wash before a meal? YES ■
Do you nearly always have a "ready answer" when people talk to you? YES ■
Do you like to arrive at appointments in plenty of time? YES ■
Have you often felt listless and tired for no reason? NO ■
Have you ever cheated at a game? YES ■
Do you like doing things in which you have to act quickly? YES ■
Is (or was) your mother a good woman? YES ■
Do you often feel life is very dull? NO ■
Have you ever taken advantage of someone? NO ■
Do you often take on more activities than you have time for? NO ■
Are there several people who keep trying to avoid you? NO ■
Do you worry a lot about your looks? NO ■
Do you think people spend too much time safeguarding their future with savings and insurances? NO ■
Have you ever wished that you were dead? NO ■
Would you dodge paying taxes if you were sure you could never be found out? YES ■
Can you get a party going? YES ■
Do you try not to be rude to people? YES ■
Do you worry too long after an embarrassing experience? NO ■
Have you ever insisted on having your own way? YES ■
When you catch a train do you often arrive at the last minute? YES ■
Do you suffer from "nerves"? NO ■
Do your friendships break up easily without it being your fault? NO ■
Do you often feel lonely? NO ■
Do you always practice what you preach? NO ■
Do you sometimes like teasing animals? NO ■
Are you easily hurt when people find fault with you or the work you do? NO ■
Have you ever been late for an appointment or work? YES ■
Do you like plenty of bustle and excitement around you? NO ■
Would you like other people to be afraid of you? NO ■
Are you sometimes bubbling over with energy and sometimes very sluggish? NO ■
Do you sometimes put off until tomorrow what you ought to do today? YES ■
Do other people think of you as being very lively? NO ■
Do people tell you a lot of lies? NO ■
Are you touchy about some things? YES ■
Are you always willing to admit it when you have made a mistake? NO ■
Would you feel very sorry for an animal caught in a trap? YES ■



"Now that sort of transformation of reality is an eliciting of the magic inherent in every living object...The mere fact of its unique existence in time and space is infinitely marvelous. Part of the job of the imagination is to remind us of the marvelous."
Photo by Ana Barrado

■ In a lot of my stories, particularly in a couple of the longer tales about time in *Myths of the Near Future*, the characters were searching for a world that was, in a sense, beyond time. There are certain chrono-aesthetic transformations going on in their perception of events. In the story "News from the Sun," the central character finds himself in a simultaneous universe: a fellow and his girlfriend, out in Arizona or New Mexico or somewhere, retreat into some deserted Paolo Soleri type of solar city, and they live there. And they move into a world of simultaneity, where time ceases to exist. Because normal speech obviously couldn't be used, they develop a new language that grows with simultaneity. They use a language similar to that of babbling infants, and I suggest that this babble of the newborn is perhaps their attempt to use a language that's our ancestral language—a language we cannot actually use in our time-dominated continuum. Which may be the *true language* that we can all speak, etc.

■ Those kinds of perception dislocations are very important, because they're arrows pointing towards richer realms that one can assemble out of imaginative materials. I'm not trying to say anything very profound; there's nothing new in this. When a child picks up a piece of cracked glass and looks at familiar reality through it, everything becomes different—everything acquires a halo around it. Everything in this room

can be transformed by a piece of cracked glass; everything can be transformed into a rainbow of itself.

■ Now that sort of transformation of reality is an eliciting of the magic inherent in every living object. Every stone in my garden is in its way mysterious—even more mysterious than that machine [points to tape recorder]. The mere fact of its unique existence in time and space is infinitely marvelous. *Part of the job of the imagination is to remind us of the marvelous. . . .*

■ R/S: *In the western world, we've been obsessed with the macroscopic. Take, for example, the symmetry of the French garden—*

■ JGB: —Which I always find nightmarish for some reason, those formal French gardens. One would think all that intense formality would be the absolute opposite of madness. The gardens were obviously designed to enshrine the most formal, rational and sane society to ever exist during the Age of Reason. Why they should immediately fill me with notions of psychosis, I don't know.

■ Have you ever been to Maddingly Hall near Cambridge? It's a big Elizabethan mansion, and a couple of years ago some friends took me out there. Behind this large house, which is used for conferences and academic meetings and the like, were notices everywhere requesting *silence*. We walked into this large, very formal French garden with beautifully crisp pages, like great green sculptures, everywhere; very severe, rectangular, rectilinear passways—like diagrams—on the ground. Profoundly enclosed, very silent. I nearly went mad. . . .

■ R/S: *With the advent of computer technology, everything seems to be becoming binarized, so you have a million relationships on one silicon chip, and this changes our discourse, our way of relating to each other and so on. I can't really see how it's affecting us, except in a bad sense—everything seems to be becoming simplified, codified, rationalized, and functionalized. On the other hand, I presume that once we get control of it, technology will give us a chance for something different. . . .*

■ JGB: I think this is the problem now: we've got to get it into *our* hands. I think people are on the threshold. . . . The people who purvey film and TV and so on have, for the most part, total control of so much. I'm not taking a *paranoid* view about it at all; it's just a convention that it's very difficult for the average person to make a movie. He can make a home movie, but the chances of his making anything with the high degree of finish that his theater experience has led him to expect—let's face it, for the average person that chance is *nil*. He's never going to get beyond the home movie stage.

■ I mean, the technology now is much more advanced. You can buy home TV systems—cameras, editing facilities and the like, which actually put the average man, without any skills, within a stone's throw of the TV programs he's used to watching. But the average man with his home movie camera couldn't hope to produce something like *Gone With The Wind*; that's a different order of magnitude altogether.

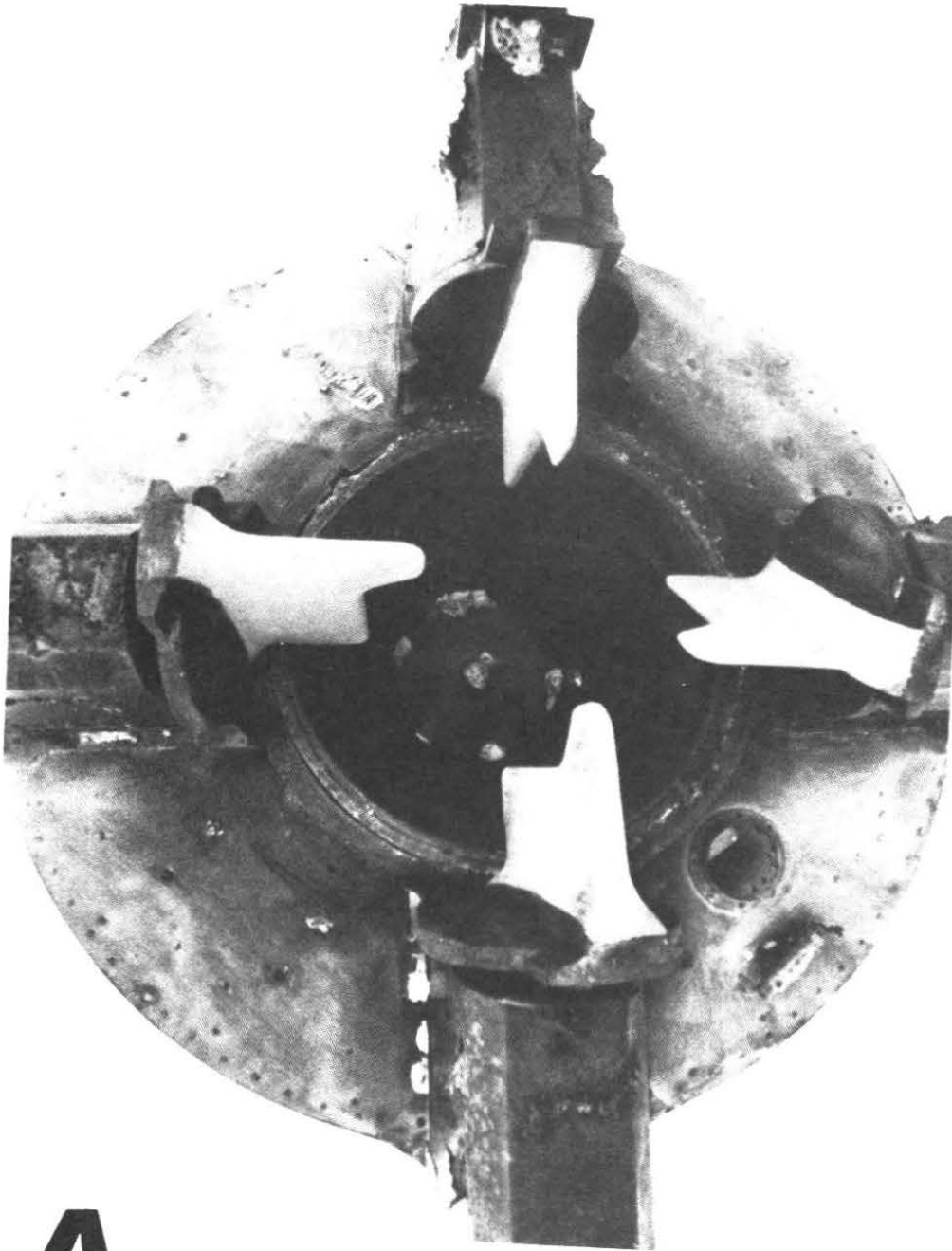
■ Most people still haven't got the technology in their hands.



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MYTHS OF THE NEAR FUTURE

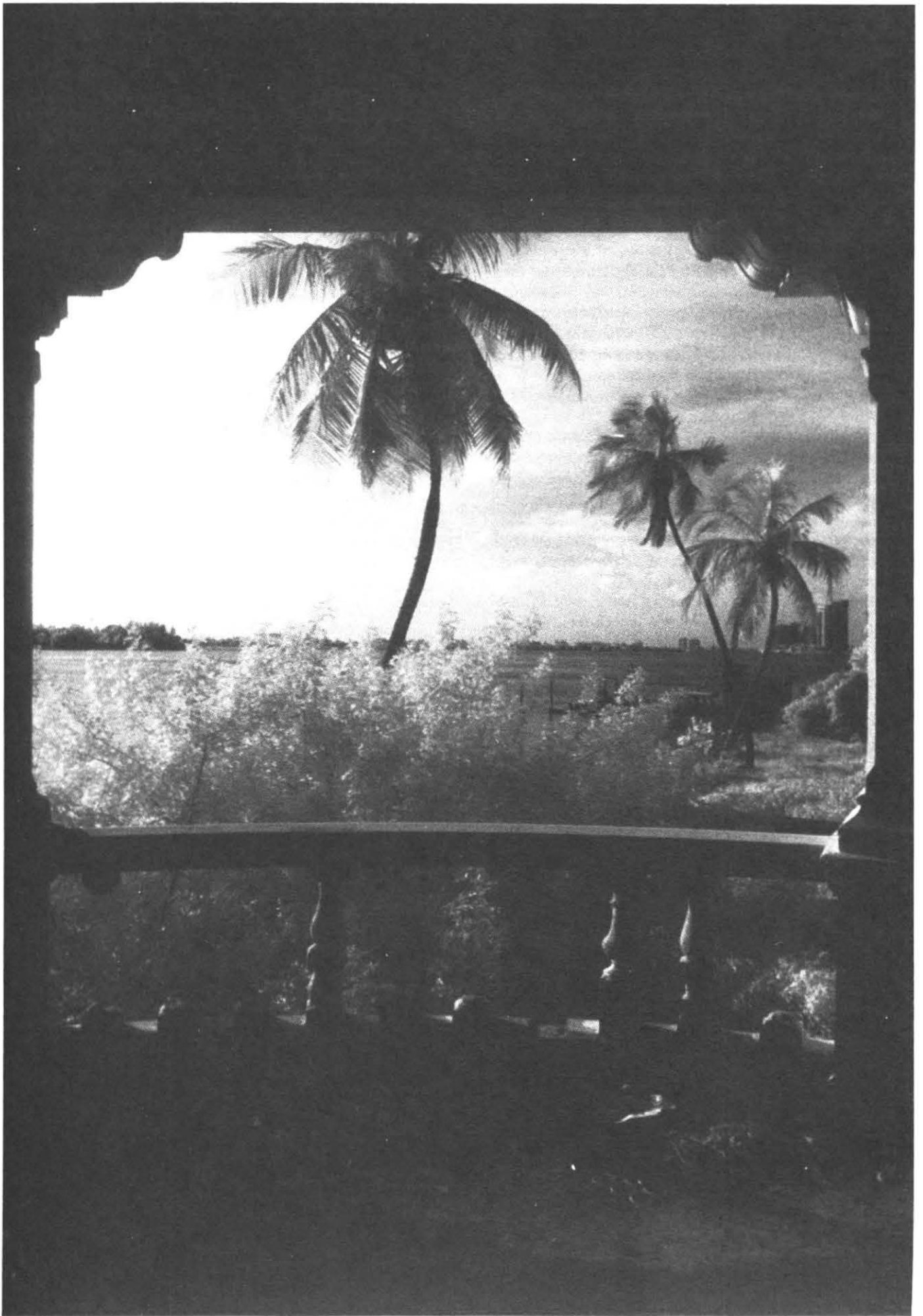
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At dusk Sheppard was still sitting in the cockpit of the stranded aircraft, unconcerned by the evening tide that advanced towards him across the beach. Already the first waves had reached the wheels of the Cessna, kicking spurs of spray against the fuselage. Tirelessly, the dark night-water sluiced its luminous foam at the Florida shoreline, as if trying to rouse the spectral tenants of the abandoned bars and motels.

■ But Sheppard sat calmly at the controls, thinking of his dead wife and all the drained swimming pools of Cocoa Beach, and of the strange nightclub he had glimpsed that afternoon through the forest canopy now covering the old space center. Part Las Vegas casino with its

PHOTOS: Above Back of Jupiter Rocket that launched Alan Shepard into space. Photo by Ana Barrado
Right Palm trees at Cape Kennedy. Photo by Ana Barrado



flamboyant neon facade, and part Petit Trianon—a graceful classical pediment carried the chromium roof—it had suddenly materialized among the palms and tropical oaks, more unreal than any film set. As Sheppard soared past, only 50 feet above its mirrored roof, he had almost expected to see Marie Antoinette herself, in a Golden Nugget get-up, playing the milkmaid to an audience of uneasy alligators.

■ Before their divorce, oddly enough, Elaine had always enjoyed their weekend expeditions from Toronto to Algonquin Park, proudly roughing the wilderness in the high-chrome luxury of their Airstream trailer, as incongruous among the pine cones and silver birch as this latter-day fragment of a neon Versailles. All the same, the sight of the bizarre nightclub hidden deep in the Cape Kennedy forests, and the curious behavior of its tenants, convinced Sheppard that Elaine was still alive, and very probably held prisoner by Philip Martinsen. The chromium nightclub, presumably built 30 years earlier by some classically minded Disneyland executive, would appeal to the young neurosurgeon's sense of the absurd, a suitably garish climax to the unhappy events that had brought them together in the somber forests of the Florida peninsula.

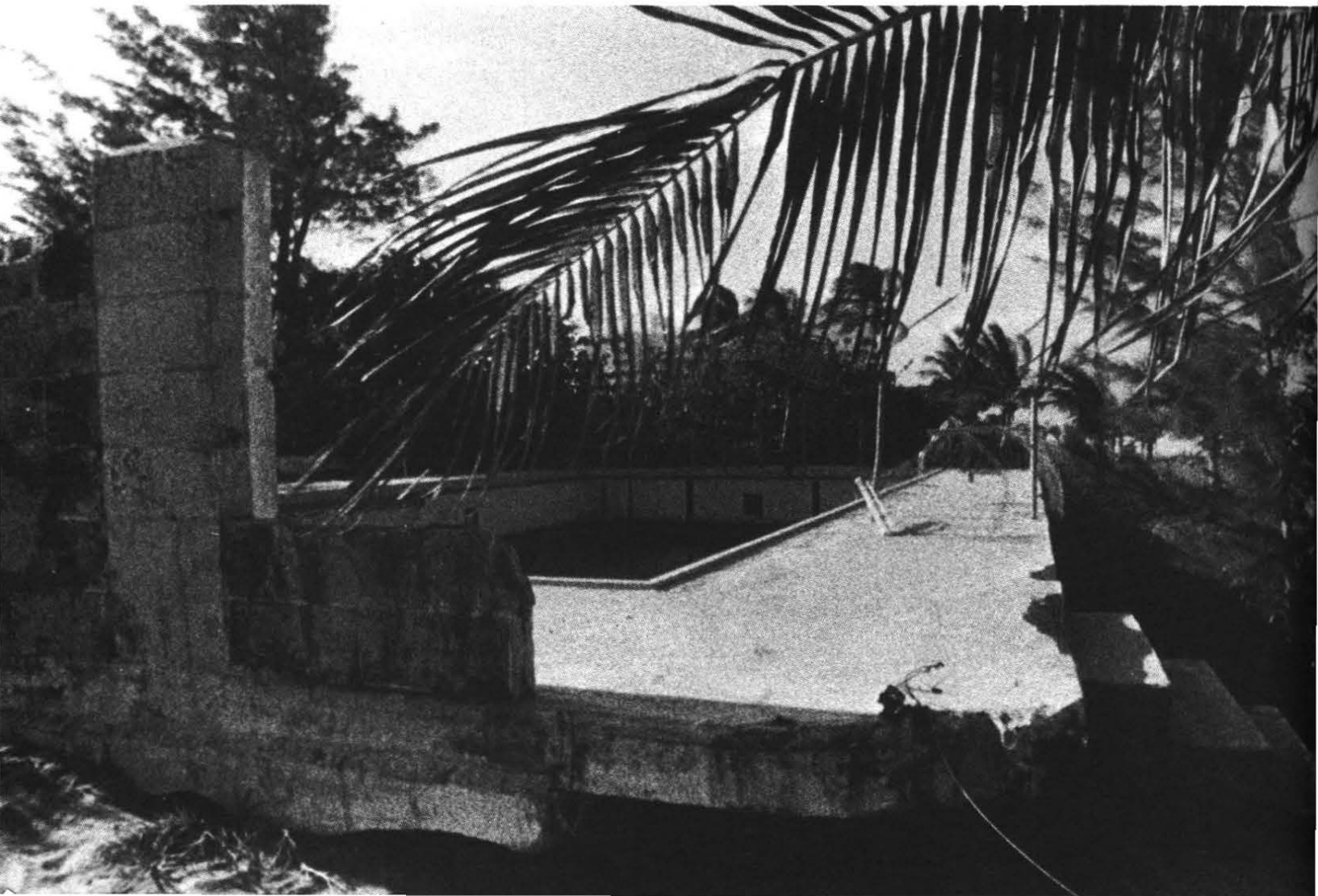
■ However, Martinsen was devious enough to have picked the nightclub deliberately, part of his elaborate attempt to lure Sheppard into the open air. For weeks now he had been hanging around the deserted motels in Cocoa Beach, flying his kites and gliders, eager to talk to Sheppard but nervous of approaching the older man. From the safety of his dark-

ened bedroom at the Starlight Motel—a huddle of dusty cabins on the coast road—Sheppard watched him through a crack in the double blinds. Each day Martinsen waited for Sheppard to appear, but was always careful to keep a drained swimming pool between them.

■ At first the young doctor's obsession with birds had irritated Sheppard—everything from the papier mâché condor-kites hanging like corpses above the motel to endless Picasso doves chalked on the cabin doors while Sheppard slept. Even now, as he sat on the beach in the wave-washed Cessna, he could see the snake-headed profile cut in the wet sand, part of an enormous Aztec bird across which he had landed an hour earlier.

■ The birds . . . Elaine had referred to them in the last of her Florida letters, but those were creatures who soared inside her own head, far more exotic than anything a neurosurgeon could devise, feathered and jeweled chimeras from the paradises of Gustave Moreau. Nonetheless, Sheppard had finally taken the bait, accepting that Martinsen wanted to talk to him, and on his own terms. He forced himself from the motel, hiding behind the largest sunglasses he could find among the hundreds that littered the floor of the swimming pool, and drove to the light airfield at Titusville. For an hour he flew the rented Cessna across the forest canopy, search-

"... he found only a shabby, derelict world of dust, drained swimming pools and silence." Photo by Ana Barrado



ing the whole of Cape Kennedy for any sign of Martinsen and his kites.

■ Tempted to turn back, he soared to and fro above the abandoned space grounds, unsettling though they were, with their immense runways leading to no conceivable sky, and the rusting gantries like so many deaths propped up in their tattered coffins. Here at Cape Kennedy a small part of space had died. A rich emerald light glowed through the forest, as if from a huge lantern lit at the heart of the Space Center. This resonant halo, perhaps the phosphorescence of some unusual fungi on the leaves and branches, was spreading outwards and already had reached the northern streets of Cocoa Beach and crossed the Indian River to Titusville. Even the ramshackle stores and houses vibrated in the same overlit way.

■ Around him the bright winds were like the open jaws of a crystal bird, the light flashing between its teeth. Sheppard clung to the safety of the jungle canopy, banking the Cessna among the huge flocks of flamingos and orioles that scattered out of his way. In Titusville a government patrol car moved down one of the few stretches of clear road, but no one else was tempted out of doors, the few inhabitants resting in their bedrooms as the forest climbed the Florida peninsula and closed around them.

■ Then, almost in the shadow of the Apollo 12 gantry, Sheppard had seen the nightclub. Startled by its neon facade, he stalled the Cessna. The wheels rattled the palm fronds as he throttled up a saving burst of speed and began a second circuit. The nightclub sat in a forest clearing beside a shallow inlet of the Banana River, near a crumbling camera blockhouse at the end of a concrete runway. The jungle pressed towards the nightclub on 3 sides, a gaudy aviary of parakeets and macaws, some long-vanished tycoon's weekend paradise.

■ As the birds hurtled past the windshield, Sheppard saw 2 figures running towards the forest, a bald-headed woman in the grey shroud of a hospital gown followed by a familiar dark-faced man with the firm step of a warder at a private prison. Despite her age, the woman fled lightly along the ground and seemed almost to be trying to fly. Confused by the noise of the Cessna, her white hands waved a distraught semaphore at the startled macaws, as if hoping to borrow their lurid plumage to cover her bare scalp.

■ Trying to recognize his wife in this deranged figure, Sheppard turned away for another circuit, and lost his bearings among the maze of inlets and concrete causeways that lay beneath the forest canopy. When he again picked out the nightclub he throttled back and soared in above the trees, only to find his glide path blocked by a man-powered aircraft that had lifted into the air from the forest clearing.

■ Twice the size of the Cessna, this creaking cat's cradle of plastic film and piano wire wavered to left and right in front of Sheppard, doing its best to distract him. Dazzled by his own propeller, Sheppard banked and overflew the glider, and caught a last glimpse of the dark-bearded Martinsen pedaling intently inside his transparent envelope, a desperate fish hung from the sky. Then the waiting bough of a forest oak clipped the Cessna as it overran its own slipstream. The sharp antlers stripped the fabric from the starboard wing and tore off the passenger door. Stunned by the roaring air, Sheppard limped the craft back to Cocoa Beach, and brought it down to a heavy landing on the wet sand within the diagram of the immense beaked raptor which Martinsen had carved for him that morning.

■ Waves washed into the open cabin of the Cessna, flicking a cold foam at Sheppard's ankles. Headlamps approached along the beach, and a government jeep raced down to the water's edge a hundred yards from the aircraft. The young driver stood against the windshield, shouting at Sheppard over her headlamps.

■ Sheppard released the harness, still reluctant to leave the Cessna. The night had come in from the sea, and now covered the shabby coastal town, but everything was still lit by that same luminescence he had glimpsed from the air, a flood of photons released from the pavilion in the forest where his wife was held prisoner. The waves that washed the propeller of the Cessna, the empty bars and motels along the beach, and the silent gantries of the Space Center were decorated with millions of miniature lights, lode-points that marked the profiles of a new realm waiting to reconstitute itself around him. Thinking of the nightclub, Sheppard stared into the firefly darkness that enveloped Cape Kennedy. Already he suspected that this was a first glimpse of a small corner of the magnetic city, a suburb of the world beyond time that lay around and within him.

■ Holding its image to his mind, he forced the door against the flood and jumped down into the waist-deep water as the last of the night came in on the waves. In the glare of the jeep's headlamps he felt Anne Godwin's angry hands on his shoulders, and fell headlong into the water. Skirt floating around her hips, she pulled him like a drowned pilot on to the beach and held him to the warm sand as the sea rushed into the silver gullies of the great bird whose wings embraced them.

■ Yet, for all the confusions of the flight, at least he had been able to go outside. Three months earlier, when Sheppard arrived at Cocoa Beach, he had broken into the first motel he could find and locked himself for ever into the safety of a darkened bedroom. The journey from Toronto had been a succession of nightmare way-stations, long delays in semi-derelict bus depots and car-rental offices, queasy taxi rides slumped in the rear seat behind 2 pairs of dark glasses, coat pulled over his head like a Victorian photographer nervous of his own lens. As he moved south into the steeper sunlight the landscapes of New Jersey, Virginia and the Carolinas seemed both lurid and opaque, the half-empty towns and uncrowded highways perceived on a pair of raw retinas inflamed by LSD. At times he seemed to be looking at the interior of the sun from a precarious gondola suspended at its core, through an air-like fire-glass that might melt the dusty windows of his taxi.

■ Even Toronto, and his rapid decline after the divorce from Elaine, had not warned him of the real extent of his retreat behind his own nerve endings. Surrounded by the deserted city, it surprised Sheppard that he was one of the last to be affected, this outwardly cool architect who concealed what was in fact a powerful empathy for other people's psychological ills. A secretary's headache would send him on a restless tour of the design offices. Often he felt that he himself had invented the dying world around him.

■ It was now 20 years since the earliest symptoms of this strange malaise—the so-called "space sickness"—had made their appearance. At first touching only a small minority of the population, it took root like a lingering disease in the interstices of its victims' lives, in the slightest changes of habit and behavior. Invariably there was the same reluctance

to go out of doors, the abandonment of job, family and friends, a dislike of daylight, a gradual loss of weight and retreat into a hibernating self. As the illness became more widespread, affecting one in a hundred of the population, blame seemed to lie with the depletion of the ozone layer that had continued apace during the 1980s and 1990s. Perhaps the symptoms of world-shyness and withdrawal were no more than a self-protective response to the hazards of ultraviolet radiation, the psychological equivalent of the sunglasses worn by the blind.

■ But always there was the exaggerated response to sunlight, the erratic migraines and smarting corneas that hinted at the nervous origins of the malaise. There was the taste for wayward and compulsive hobbies, like the marking of obsessional words in a novel, the construction of pointless arithmetical puzzles on a pocket calculator, the collecting of fragments of TV programs on a video recorder, and the hours spent playing back particular facial grimaces or shots of staircases.

■ It was another symptom of the "space sickness," appearing in its terminal stages, that gave both its popular name and the first real clue to the disease. Almost without exception, the victims became convinced that they had once been astronauts. Thousands of the sufferers lay in their darkened hospital wards, or in the seedy bedrooms of back-street hotels, unaware of the world around them but certain that they had once traveled through space to Mars and Venus, walked beside Armstrong on the Moon. All of them, in their last seconds of consciousness, became calm and serene, and murmured like drowsy passengers at the start of a new voyage, their journey home to the sun.

■ Sheppard could remember Elaine's final retreat, and his last visit to the white-walled clinic beside the St Lawrence River. They had met only once in the two years since the divorce, and he had not been prepared for the transformation of this attractive and self-possessed dentist into a dreaming adolescent being dressed for her first dance. Elaine smiled brightly at him from her anonymous cot, a white hand trying to draw him onto her pillow.

■ "Roger, we're going soon. We're leaving together..."

■ As he walked away through the shadowy wards, listening to the babble of voices, the fragments of half-forgotten space jargon picked up from a hundred television serials, he had felt that the entire human race was beginning its embarkation, preparing to repatriate itself to the sun.

■ Sheppard recalled his last conversation with the young director of the clinic, and the weary physician's gesture of irritation, less with Sheppard than with himself and his profession.

■ "A radical approach? I assume you're thinking of something like resurrection?" Seeing the suspicious tic that jumped across Sheppard's cheek, Martinsen had taken him by the arm in a show of sympathy. "I'm sorry—she was a remarkable woman. We talked for many hours, about you, much of the time..." His small face, as intense as an undernourished child's, was broken by a bleak smile.

■ Before Sheppard left the clinic the young physician showed him the photographs he had taken of Elaine sitting in a deck chair on the staff lawn earlier that summer. The first hint of radiant good humor was already on her vivid lips, as if this saucy dentist had been quietly tasting her own laughing gas. Martinsen had clearly been most impressed by her.

■ But was he on the wrong track, like the whole of the medical profession? The ECT treatments and sensory deprivation, the partial lobotomies and hallucinatory drugs all seemed

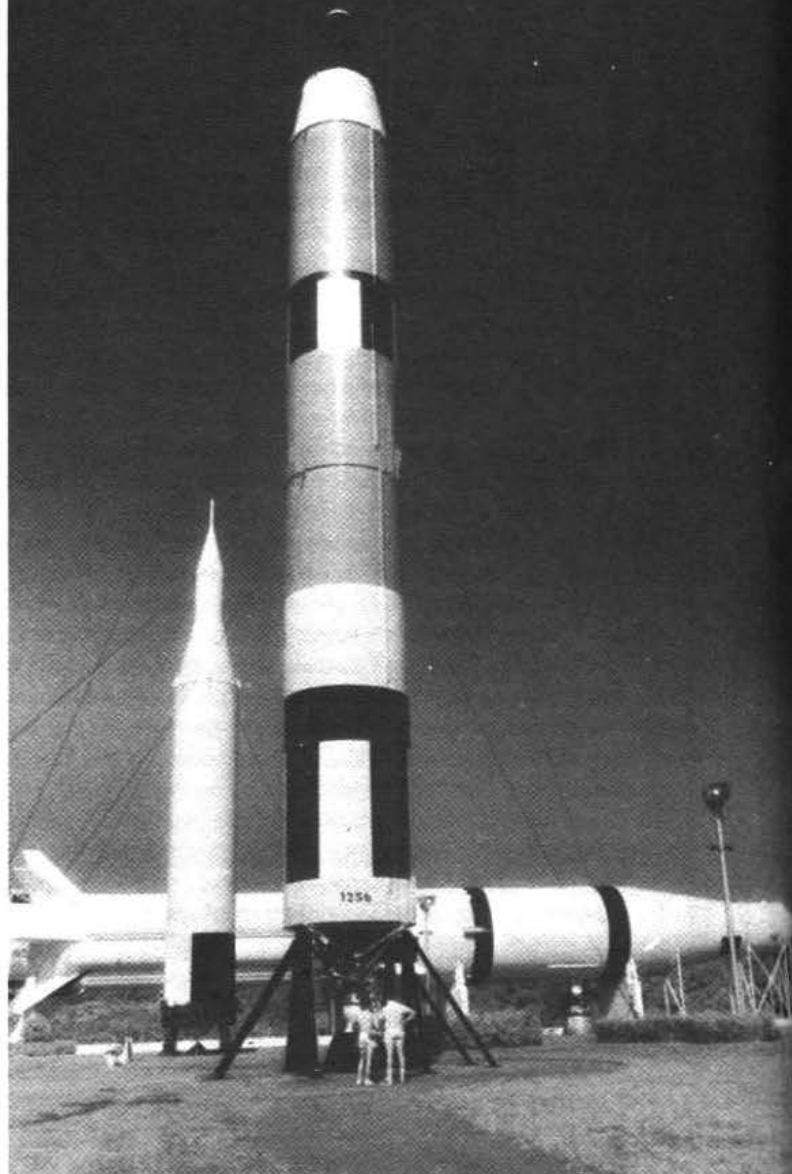


Photo by Ana Barrado

to miss the point. It was always best to take the mad on their own terms. What Elaine and the other victims were trying to do was to explore space, using their illness as an extreme metaphor with which to construct a space vehicle. The astronaut obsession was the key. It was curious how close the whole malaise was to the withdrawal symptoms shown by the original astronauts in the decades after the Apollo program, the retreat into mysticism and silence. Could it be that traveling into outer space, even thinking about and watching it on television, was a forced evolutionary step with unforeseen consequences, the eating of a very special kind of forbidden fruit? Perhaps, for the central nervous system, space was not a linear structure at all, but a model for an advanced condition of time, a metaphor for eternity which they were wrong to try to grasp...

■ Looking back, Sheppard realized that for years he had been waiting for the first symptoms of the malaise to affect him, that he was all too eager to be inducted into the great voyage towards the sun. During the months before the divorce he had carefully observed the characteristic signs—the loss of weight and appetite, his cavalier neglect of both staff and clients at his architect's practice, his growing reluctance to go out of doors,

the allergic skin rashes that sprang up if he stood for even a few seconds in the open sunlight. He tagged along on Elaine's expeditions to Algonquin Park, and spent the entire weekends sealed inside the chromium womb of the Airstream, itself so like an astronaut's capsule.

■ Was Elaine trying to provoke him? She hated his forced absentmindedness, his endless playing with bizarre clocks and architectural follies, and above all his interest in pornography. This sinister hobby had sprung out of his peculiar obsession with the surrealists, a school of painters which his entire education and cast of mind had previously closed to him. For some reason he found himself gazing for hours at reproductions of Chirico's Turin, with its empty colonnades and reversed perspectives, its omens of departure. Then there were Magritte's dislocations of time and space, his skies transformed into a series of rectilinear blocks, and Dali's biomorphic anatomies.

■ These last had led him to his obsession with pornography. Sitting in the darkened bedroom, blinds drawn against the festering sunlight that clung to the balconies of the condominium, he gazed all day at the video recordings of Elaine at her dressing table and in the bathroom. Endlessly he played back the zooms and close-ups of her squatting on the bidet, drying herself on the edge of the bath, examining with a hopeful frown the geometry of her right breast. The magnified images of this huge hemisphere, its curvatures splayed between Sheppard's fingers, glowed against the walls and ceiling of the bedroom.

■ Eventually, even the tolerant Elaine had rebelled. "Roger, what are you doing to yourself—and to me? You've turned this bedroom into a porno cinema, with me as your star." She held his face, compressing 20 years of affection into her desperate hands. "For God's sake, see someone!"

■ But Sheppard already had. In the event, 3 months later, it was Elaine who had gone. At about the time that he closed his office and summarily sacked his exhausted staff, she packed her bags and stepped away into the doubtful safety of the bright sunlight.

■ Soon after, the space trauma recruited another passenger.

■ Sheppard had last seen her at Martinsen's clinic, but within only 6 months he received news of her remarkable recovery, no doubt one of those temporary remissions that sometimes freed the terminal cases from their hospital beds. Martinsen had abandoned his post at the clinic, against the open criticism of his colleagues and allegations of misconduct. He and Elaine had left Canada and moved south to the warm Florida winter, and were now living near the old space center at Cape Kennedy. She was up and about, having miraculously shaken off the deep fugues.

■ At first Sheppard was sceptical, and guessed that the young neurosurgeon had become obsessed with Elaine and was trying some dangerous and radical treatment in a misguided attempt to save her. He imagined Martinsen abducting Elaine, lifting the drowsy but still beautiful woman from her hospital bed and carrying her out to his car, setting off for the harsh Florida light.

■ However, Elaine seemed well enough. During this period of apparent recovery she wrote several letters to Sheppard, describing the dark, jeweled beauty of the overgrown forest that surrounded their empty hotel, with its view over the Banana River and the rusting gantries of the abandoned space center. Reading her final letter in the flinty light of the Toronto spring, it seemed to Sheppard that the whole of Florida was transforming itself for Elaine into a vast replica of the caver-

nous grottos of Gustave Moreau, a realm of opalized palaces and heraldic animals.

■ "... I wish you could be here, Roger, this forest is filled with a deep marine light, almost as if the dark lagoons that once covered the Florida peninsula have come in from the past and submerged us again. There are strange creatures here that seem to have stepped off the surface of the sun. Looking out over the river this morning, I actually saw a unicorn walking on the water, its hooves shod in gold. Philip has moved my bed to the window, and I sit propped here all day, courting the birds, species I've never seen before that seem to have come from some extraordinary future. I feel sure now that I shall never leave here. Crossing the garden yesterday, I found that I was dressed in light, a sheath of golden scales that fell from my skin onto the glowing grass. The intense sunlight plays strange tricks with time and space. I'm really certain that there's a new kind of time here, flowing in some way from the old space center. Every leaf and flower, even the pen in my hand and these lines I'm writing to you are surrounded by halos of themselves.

■ "Everything moves very slowly now, it seems to take all day for a bird to cross the sky, it begins as a shabby little sparrow and transforms itself into an extravagant creature as plumed and ribboned as a lyre-bird. I'm glad we came, even though Philip was attacked at the time. Coming here was my last chance, he claims. I remember him saying we should seize the light, not fear it. All the same, I think he's got more than he bargained for, he's very tired, poor boy. He's frightened of my falling asleep, he says that when I dream I try to turn into a bird. I woke up by the window this afternoon and he was holding me down, as if I were about to fly off forever into the forest.

■ "I wish you were here, dear, it's a world the surrealists might have invented. I keep thinking that I will meet you somewhere ..."

■ Attached to the letter was a note from Martinsen, telling him that Elaine had died the following day, and that at her request she had been buried in the forest near the Space Center. The death certificate was countersigned by the Canadian consul in Miami.

■ A week later Sheppard closed the Toronto apartment and set off for Cape Kennedy. During the past year he had waited impatiently for the malaise to affect him, ready to make his challenge. Like everyone else he rarely went out during the day, but through the window blinds the sight of this empty, sunlit city which came alive only at dusk drove Sheppard into all kinds of restless activity. He would go out into the noon glare and wander among the deserted office blocks, striking stylized poses in the silent curtain-walling. A few heavily cowed policemen and taxi drivers watched him like specters on a furnace floor. But Sheppard liked to play with his own obsessions. On impulse he would run around the apartment and release the blinds, turning the rooms into a series of white cubes, so many machines for creating a new kind of time and space.

■ Thinking of all that Elaine had said in her last letter, and determined as yet not to grieve for her, he set off eagerly on his journey south. Too excited to drive himself, and wary of the steeper sunlight, he moved by bus, rented limousine and taxi. Elaine had always been an accurate observer, and he was convinced that once he reached Florida he would soon rescue her from Martinsen and find respite for them both in the

eternal quiet of the emerald forest.

■ In fact, he found only a shabby, derelict world of dust, drained swimming pools and silence. With the end of the Space Age 30 years earlier, the coastal towns near Cape Kennedy had been abandoned to the encroaching forest. Titusville, Cocoa Beach and the old launching grounds now constituted a psychic disaster area, a zone of ill omen. Lines of deserted bars and motels sat in the heat, their signs like rusty toys. Beside the handsome houses once owned by flight controllers and astrophysicists the empty swimming pools were a resting place for dead insects and cracked sunglasses.

■ Shielded by the coat over his head, Sheppard paid off the uneasy cab driver. As he fumbled with his wallet the unlatched suitcase burst at his feet, exposing its contents to the driver's quizzical gaze: a framed reproduction of Magritte's *The March of Summer*, a portable videocassette projector, two tins of soup, a well-thumbed set of six *Kamera Klassic* magazines, a clutch of cassettes labeled *Elaine/Shower Stall I-XXV*, and a paperback selection of Marey's *Chronograms*.

■ The driver nodded pensively. "Samples? Exactly what is all that—a survival kit?"

■ "Of a special kind." Unaware of any irony in the man's voice, Sheppard explained: "They're the fusing device for a time machine. I'll make one up for you. . . ."

■ "Too late. My son. . . ." With a half smile, the driver wound up his tinted windows and set off for Tampa in a cloud of glassy dust.

■ Picking the Starlight Motel at random, Sheppard let himself into an intact cabin overlooking the drained pool, the only guest apart from the elderly retriever that dozed on the office steps. He sealed the blinds and spent the next 2 days resting in the darkness on the musty bed, the suitcase beside him, this "survival kit" that would help him to find Elaine.

■ At dusk on the second day he left the bed and went to the window for his first careful look at Cocoa Beach. Through the plastic blinds he watched the shadows bisecting the empty pool, drawing a broken diagonal across the canted floor. He remembered his few words to the cab driver. The complex geometry of this 3-dimensional sundial seemed to contain the operating codes of a primitive time machine, repeated a hundred times in all the drained swimming pools of Cape Kennedy.

■ Surrounding the motel was the shabby coastal town, its derelict bars and stores shielded from the subtropical dusk by the flamingo-tinted parasols of the palm trees that sprang through the cracked roads and sidewalks. Beyond Cocoa Beach was the Space Center, its rusting gantries like old wounds in the sky. Staring at them through the sandy glass, Sheppard was aware for the first time of the curious delusion that he had once been an astronaut, lying on his contour couch atop the huge booster, dressed in a suit of silver foil. . . . An absurd idea, but the memory had come from somewhere. For all its fearfulness, the Space Center was a magnetic zone.

■ But where was the visionary world which Elaine had described, filled with jeweled birds? The old golden retriever sleeping under the diving board would never walk the Banana River on golden hooves.

■ Although he rarely left the cabin during the day—the Florida sunlight was still far too strong for him to attempt a head-on confrontation—Sheppard forced himself to put together the elements of an organized life. First, he began to take more care of his own body. His weight had been falling for years, part of a long decline that he had never tried to

reverse. Standing in front of the bathroom mirror, he stared at his unsavory reflection—his wasted shoulders, sallow arms and inert hands, but a fanatic's face, unshaven skin stretched across the pony points of his jaw and cheeks, orbits like the entrances to forgotten tunnels from which gleamed 2 penetrating lights. Everyone carried an image of himself that was 10 years out of date, but Sheppard felt that he was growing older and younger at the same time—his past and future selves had arranged a mysterious rendezvous in this motel bedroom.

■ Still, he forced down the cold soup. He needed to be strong enough to drive a car, map the forests and runways of Cape Kennedy, perhaps hire a light aircraft and carry out an aerial survey of the Space Center.

■ At dusk, when the sky seemed to tilt and, thankfully, tipped its freight of cyclamen clouds into the Gulf of Mexico, Sheppard left the motel and foraged for food in the abandoned stores and supermarkets of Cocoa Beach. A few of the older townspeople lived on in the overgrown sidestreets, and one bar was still open to the infrequent visitors. Derelicts slept in the rusting cars, and the occasional tramp wandered like a schizophrenic Crusoe among the wild palms and tamarinds. Long-retired engineers from the Space Center, they hovered in their shabby whites by the deserted stores, forever hesitating to cross the shadowy streets.

■ As he carried a battery charger from an unintended appliance store, Sheppard almost bumped into a former mission controller who had frequently appeared on television during the campaign to prevent the disbandment of NASA. With his dulled face, eyes crossed by the memories of forgotten trajectories, he resembled one of Chirico's mannequins, heads marked with mathematical formulae.

■ "No. . . ." He wavered away, and grimaced at Sheppard, the wild fracture lines in his face forming the algebra of an unrealizable future. "Another time. . . 17 seconds. . ." He tottered off into the dusk, tapping the palm trees with one hand, preoccupied with this private countdown.

■ For the most part they kept to themselves, twilight guests of the abandoned motels where no rent would ever be charged and no memories ever be repaid. All of them avoided the government aid center by the bus depot. This unit, staffed by a psychologist from Miami University and two graduate students, distributed food parcels and medicines to the aged townspeople asleep on their rotting porches. It was also their task to round up the itinerant derelicts and persuade them to enter the state-run hospice in Tampa.

■ On his third evening, as he looted the local supermarket, Sheppard became aware of this alert young psychologist watching him over the dusty windshield of her jeep.

■ "Do you need any help breaking the law?" She came over and peered into Sheppard's carton. "I'm Anne Godwin, hello. Avocado purée, rice pudding, anchovies, you're all set for a midnight feast. But what about a filet steak, you really look as if you could use one?"

■ Sheppard tried to sidestep out of her way. "Nothing to worry about. I'm here on a working vacation. . . a scientific project."

■ She eyed him shrewdly. "Just another summer visitor—though you all have PhDs, the remittance men of the Space Age. Where are you staying? We'll drive you back."

■ As Sheppard struggled with the heavy carton she signaled to the graduate students, who strolled across the shadowy pavement. At that moment a rusty Chevrolet turned into the street, a bearded man in a soft hat at the wheel. Blocked by the jeep, he stopped to reverse the heavy sedan, and Sheppard

recognized the young physician he had last seen on the steps of the clinic overlooking the St. Lawrence.

■ "Dr. Martinsen!" Anne Godwin shouted as she released Sheppard's arm. "I've been wanting to talk to you, doctor. Wait...! That prescription you gave me, I take it you've reached the menopause—"

■ Punching the locked gear shift, Martinsen seemed only interested in avoiding Anne Godwin and her questions. Then he saw Sheppard's alert eyes staring at him above the carton. He paused, and gazed back at Sheppard, with the frank and almost impatient expression of an old friend who had long since come to terms with some act of treachery. He had grown his beard, as if to hide some disease of the mouth or jaw, but his face seemed almost adolescent and at the same time aged by some strange fever.

■ "Doctor... I've reported—" Anne Godwin reached Martinsen's car. He made a half-hearted attempt to hide a loosely tied bundle of brass curtain-rods on the seat beside him. Was he planning to hang the forest with priceless fabrics? Before Sheppard could ask, Martinsen engaged his gear lever and sped off, clipping Anne Godwin's outstretched hand with his wing mirror.

■ But at least he knew now that Martinsen was here, and their brief meeting allowed Sheppard to slip away unobserved from Anne Godwin. Followed by the doddering retriever, Sheppard carried his stores back to the motel, and the two of them enjoyed a tasty snack in the darkness beside the drained swimming pool.

■ Already he felt stronger, confident that he would soon have tracked down Martinsen and rescued Elaine. For the next week he slept during the mornings and spent the afternoons repairing the old Plymouth he had commandeered from a local garage.

■ As he guessed, Martinsen soon put in another appearance. A small, bird-shaped kite began a series of regular flights in the sky above Cocoa Beach. Its silver line disappeared into the

forest somewhere to the north of the town. Two others followed it into the air, and the trio swayed across the placid sky, flown by some enthusiast in the forest.

■ In the days that followed, other bird emblems began to appear in the streets of Cocoa Beach, crude Picasso doves chalked on the boarded store fronts, on the dusty roofs of the cars, in the leafy slime on the drained floor of the Starlight pool, all of them presumably cryptic messages from Martinsen.

■ So the neurosurgeon was trying to lure him into the forest? Finally giving in to his curiosity, Sheppard drove late one afternoon to the light airfield at Titusville. Little traffic visited the shabby airstrip, and a retired commercial pilot dozed in his dusty office below a sign advertising pleasure trips around the Cape.

■ After a brief haggle, Sheppard rented a single-engined Cessna and took off into the softening dusk. He carried out a careful reconnaissance of the old Space Center, and at last saw the strange nightclub in the forest, and caught a painful glimpse of the weird, bald-headed specter racing through the trees. Then Martinsen sprang his surprise with the man-powered glider, clearly intending to ambush Sheppard and force him to crash-land the Cessna into the jungle. However, Sheppard escaped, and limped back to Cocoa Beach and the incoming tide. Anne Godwin virtually dragged him from the swamped plane, but he managed to pacify her and slip away to the motel.

■ That evening he rested in his chair beside the empty pool, watching the videocassettes of his wife projected onto the wall at the deep end. Somewhere in these intimate conjunctions of flesh and geometry, of memory, tenderness and desire, was a key to the vivid air, to that new time and space which the first astronauts had unwittingly revealed here at Cape Kennedy, and which he himself had glimpsed that evening from the cockpit of the drowned aircraft.

■ At dawn Sheppard fell asleep, only to be woken 2 hours later by a sudden shift of light in the darkened bedroom. A miniature eclipse of the sun was taking place. The light flickered, trembling against the window. Lying on the bed, Sheppard saw the profile of a woman's face and plumed hair projected onto the plastic blinds.

■ Bracing himself against the eager morning sunlight, and any unpleasant phobic rush, Sheppard eased the blinds apart. Two hundred feet away, suspended above the chairs on the far side of the swimming pool, a large man-carrying kite hung in the air. The painted figure of a winged woman was silhouetted against the sun's disc, arms outstretched across the canvas panels. Her shadow tapped the plastic blinds, only inches from Sheppard's fingers, as if asking to be let into the safety of the darkened bedroom.

■ Was Martinsen offering him a lift in this giant kite? Eyes shielded behind his heaviest sunglasses, Sheppard left the cabin and made his way around the drained pool. It was time now to make a modest challenge to the sun. The kite hung above him, flapping faintly, its silver wire disappearing behind a boat house half a mile along the beach.

■ Confident of himself, Sheppard set off along the beach road. During the night the Cessna had vanished, swept away by the sea. Behind the boat house the kite flier was winding in his huge craft, and the woman's shadow kept Sheppard company, the feathered train of her hair at his feet. Already he was sure that he would find Martinsen among the derelict speedboats, raveling in whatever ambiguous message he had sent up into the fierce air.

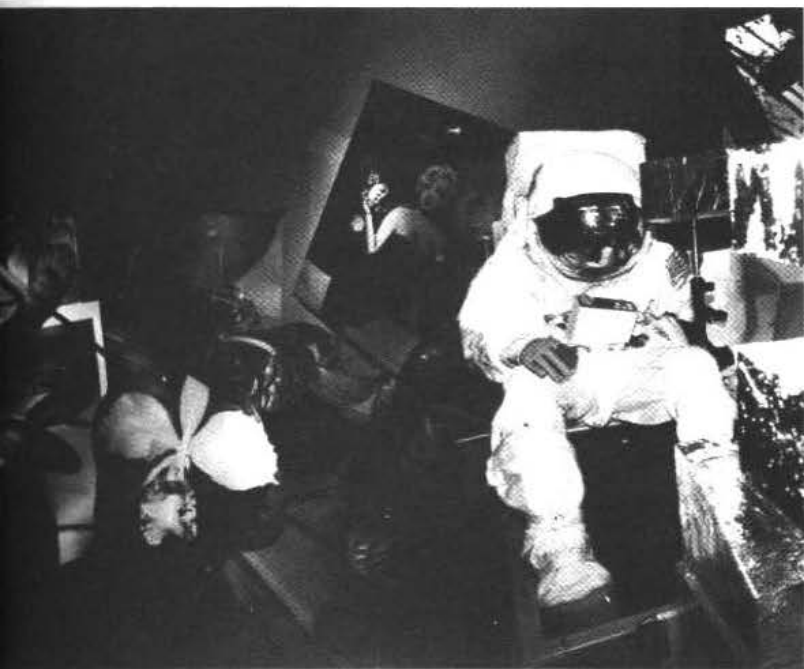


Photo by Ana Barrado



Photo by Ana Barrado

■ Almost tripping over the woman's shadow, Sheppard paused to gaze around him. After so many weeks and months of avoiding the daylight, he felt uncertain of the overlit perspectives, of the sea lapping at the edges of his mind, its tongues flicking across the beach like some treacherous animal's. Ignoring it, he ran along the road. The kite-flier had vanished, slipping away into the palm-filled streets.

■ Sheppard threw away his sunglasses and looked up into the air. He was surprised that the sky was far closer to him than he remembered. It seemed almost vertical, constructed of cubic blocks a mile in width, the wall of an immense inverted pyramid.

■ The waves pressed themselves into the wet sand at his feet, flattering courtiers in this palace of light. The beach seemed to tilt, the road reversed its camber. He stopped to steady himself against the roof of an abandoned car. His retinas smarted, stung by thousands of needles. A feverish glitter rose from the roofs of the bars and motels, from the rusty neon signs and the flinty dust at his feet, as if the whole landscape was at the point of ignition.

■ The boat house swayed towards him, its roof tilting from side to side. Its cavernous doors opened abruptly, like the walls of an empty mountain. Sheppard stepped back, for a moment blinded by the darkness, as the figure of a winged man burst from the shadows and raced past him across the sand towards the safety of the nearby forest. Sheppard saw a bearded face under the feathered head-dress, canvas wings on a wooden frame attached to the man's arms. Waving them up and down like an eccentric aviator, he sprinted between the trees, hindered more than helped by his clumsy wings, one of which sheared from his shoulder when he trapped himself among the palms. He vanished into the forest, still leaping up and down in an attempt to gain the air with his one wing.

■ Too surprised to laugh at Martinsen, Sheppard ran after him. He followed the line of metal thread that unraveled behind the neurosurgeon. The man-carrying kite had collapsed across the roof of a nearby drugstore, but Sheppard ignored it and ran on through the narrow streets. The line came to an end under the rear wheel of an abandoned truck, but he had already lost Martinsen.

■ On all sides were the bird signs, chalked up on the fences and tree trunks, hundreds of them forming a threatening aviary, as if Martinsen was trying to intimidate the original tenants of the forest and drive them away from the Cape. Sheppard sat on the running board of the truck, holding the broken end of the kite line between his fingers.

■ Why was Martinsen wearing his ludicrous wings, trying to turn himself into a bird? At the end of the road he had even constructed a crude bird trap, large enough to take a condor or a small winged man, a cage the size of a garden shed tilted back on a trip balance of bamboo sticks.

■ Shielding his eyes from the glare, Sheppard climbed onto the bonnet of the truck and took his bearings. He had entered an unfamiliar part of Cocoa Beach, a maze of roads invaded by the forest. He was well within that zone of vibrant light he had seen from the Cessna, the dim lantern that seemed to extend outwards from the space center, illuminating everything it touched. The light was deeper but more resonant, as if every leaf and flower were a window into a furnace.

■ Facing him, along the line of shabby bars and stores, was a curious laundromat. Sandwiched between a boarded-up appliance store and a derelict cafeteria, it resembled a miniature temple, with a roof of gilded tiles, chromium doors and windows of finely etched glass. The whole structure was

suffused with a deep interior light, like some lamp-lit grotto in a street of shrines.

■ The same bizarre architecture was repeated in the nearby roads that lost themselves in the forest. A dry goods store, a filling station and a carwash glittered in the sunlight, apparently designed for some group of visiting space enthusiasts from Bangkok or Las Vegas. Overgrown by the tamarinds and Spanish moss, the gilded turrets and metaled windows formed a jeweled suburb in the forest.

■ Giving up his search for Martinsen, who by now could be hiding atop one of the Apollo gantries, Sheppard decided to return to his motel. He felt exhausted, as if his body were swathed in a heavy armour. He entered the pavilion beside the cafeteria, smiling at the extravagant interior of this modest laundromat. The washing machines sat within bowers of ironwork and gilded glass, a series of side chapels set aside for the worship of the space engineers' overalls and denims.

■ A ruby light glimmered around Sheppard, as if the pavilion were vibrating above a mild ground-quake. Sheppard touched the glassy wall with one hand, surprised to find that his palm seemed to merge with the surface, as if both were images being projected onto a screen. His fingers trembled, a hundred outlines superimposed upon one another. His feet drummed against the floor, sending the same rapid eddies through his legs and hips, as if he were being transformed into a holographic image, an infinity of replicas of himself. In the mirror above the cashier's metal desk, now a Byzantine throne, he glowed like an archangel. He picked up a glass paperweight from the desk, a tremulous jewel of vibrating coral that suddenly flushed within its own red sea. The ruby light that radiated from every surface within the laundromat was charged by his own bloodstream as it merged into the flicker of multiplying images.

■ Staring at his translucent hands, Sheppard left the pavilion and set off along the street through the intense sunlight. Beyond the tilting fences he could see the drained swimming pools of Cocoa Beach, each a complex geometry of light and shadow, canted decks encoding the secret entrances to another dimension. He had entered a city of yantras, cosmic dials sunk into the earth outside each house and motel for the benefit of devout time travelers.

■ The streets were deserted, but behind him he heard a familiar laboured pad. The old retriever plodded along the sidewalk, its coat shedding a tremulous golden fur. Sheppard stared at it, for a moment certain that he was seeing the unicorn Elaine had described in her last letter. He looked down at his wrists, at his incandescent fingers. The sun was annealing plates of copper light to his skin, dressing his arms and shoulders in a coronation armor. Time was condensing around him, a thousand replicas of himself from the past and future had invaded the present and clasped themselves to him.

■ Wings of light hung from his shoulders, feathered into a golden plumage drawn from the sun, the reborn ghosts of his once and future selves, conscripted to join him here in the streets of Cocoa Beach.

■ Startled by Sheppard, an old woman stared at him from the door of a shack beside the boat house. Brittle hands felt her blue-rinsed hair, she found herself transformed from a shabby crone into a powdered beauty from the forgotten Versailles of her youth, her thousand younger selves from every day of her life gladly recruited to her side, flushing her withered cheeks and warming her stick-like hands. Her elderly husband gazed at her from his rocker chair, recognizing her for the first time in decades, himself transformed into a conquistador half-asleep

beside a magical sea.

■ Sheppard waved to them, and to the tramps and derelicts emerging into the sunlight from their cabins and motel rooms, drowsy angels each awaking to his own youth. The flow of light through the air had begun to slow, layers of time overlaid each other, laminae of past and future fused together. Soon the tide of photons would be still, space and time would set forever.

■ Eager to become part of this magnetic world, Sheppard raised his wings and turned to face the sun.

■ "Were you trying to fly?"

■ Sheppard sat against the wall beside his bed, arms held tight like crippled wings around his knees. Nearby in the darkened bedroom were the familiar pieces of furniture, the Marey and Magritte reproductions pinned to the dressing-table mirror, the projector ready to screen its black coil of film onto the wall above his head.

■ Yet the room seemed strange, a cabin allocated to him aboard a mysterious liner, with this concerned young psychologist sitting at the foot of the bed. He remembered her jeep in the dusty road, the loudhailer blaring at the elderly couple and the other derelicts as they were all about to rise into the air, a flight of angels. Suddenly a humdrum world had returned, his past and future selves had fled from him, he found himself standing in a street of shabby bars and shacks, a scarecrow with an old dog. Stunned, the tramps and the old couple had pinched their dry cheeks and faded back to their dark bedrooms.

■ So this was present time. Without realizing it, he had spent all his life in this grey, teased-out zone. However, he still held the paperweight in his hand. Though inert now, raised to the light it began to glow again, summoning its brief past and limitless future to its own side.

■ Sheppard smiled at himself, remembering the translucent wings—an illusion, of course, that blur of multiple selves that shimmered from his arms and shoulders, like an immense electric plumage. But perhaps at some time in the future he became a winged man, a glass bird ready to be snared by Martinsen? He saw himself caged in the condor traps, dreaming of the sun. . .

■ Anne Godwin was shaking her head to herself. She had turned from Sheppard and was examining with evident distaste the pornographic photographs pinned to the wardrobe doors. The glossy prints were overlaid by geometric diagrams which this strange tenant of the motel had penciled across the copulating women, a secondary anatomy.

■ "So this is your laboratory? We've been watching you for days. Who are you, anyway?"

■ Sheppard looked up from his wrists, remembering the golden fluid that had coursed through the now somber veins.

■ "Roger Sheppard." On an impulse he added: "I'm an astronaut."

■ "Really?" Like a concerned nurse, she sat on the edge of the bed, tempted to touch Sheppard's forehead. "It's surprising how many of you come to Cape Kennedy—bearing in mind that the space program ended thirty years ago."

■ "It hasn't ended." Quietly, Sheppard did his best to correct this attractive but confused young woman. He wanted her to leave, but already he saw that she might be useful. Besides, he was keen to help her, and set her free from this grey world. "In fact, there are thousands of people involved in a new program—we're at the beginnings of the first true Space Age."

■ "Not the second? So the Apollo flights were. . .?"

■ "Misconceived." Sheppard gestured at the Marey chronograms on the dressing-table mirror, the blurred time-lapse photos so like the images he had seen of himself before Anne Godwin's arrival. "Space exploration is a branch of applied geometry, with many affinities to pornography."

■ "That sounds sinister." She gave a small shudder. "These photographs of yours look like the recipe for a special kind of madness. You shouldn't go out during the day. Sunlight inflames the eyes—and the mind."

■ Sheppard pressed his face against the cool wall, wondering how to get rid of this over-concerned young psychologist. His eyes ran along the sills of light between the plastic blinds. He no longer feared the sun, and was eager to get away from this dark room. His real self belonged to the bright world outside. Sitting here, he felt like a static image in a single frame hanging from the coil of film in the projector on the bedside table. There was a sense of stop-frame about the whole of his past life—his childhood and schooldays, McGill and Cambridge, the junior partnership in Vancouver, his courtship of Elaine, together seemed like so many clips run at the wrong speed. The dreams and ambitions of everyday life, the small hopes and failures, were attempts to bring these separated elements into a single whole again. Emotions were the stress lines in this overstretched web of events.

■ "Are you all right? Poor man, can't you breathe?"

■ Sheppard became aware of Anne Godwin's hand on his shoulder. He had clenched his fingers so tightly around the paperweight that his fist was white. He relaxed his grip and showed her the glassy flower.

■ Casually, he said: "There's some curious architecture here—filling stations and laundromats like Siamese temples. Have you seen them?"

■ She avoided his gaze. "Yes, to the north of Cocoa Beach. But I keep away from there." She added reluctantly: "There's a strange light by the Space Center, one doesn't know whether to believe one's eyes." She weighed the flower in her small hand, the fingers still bruised by Martinsen's wing mirror. "That's where you found this? It's like a fossil of the future."

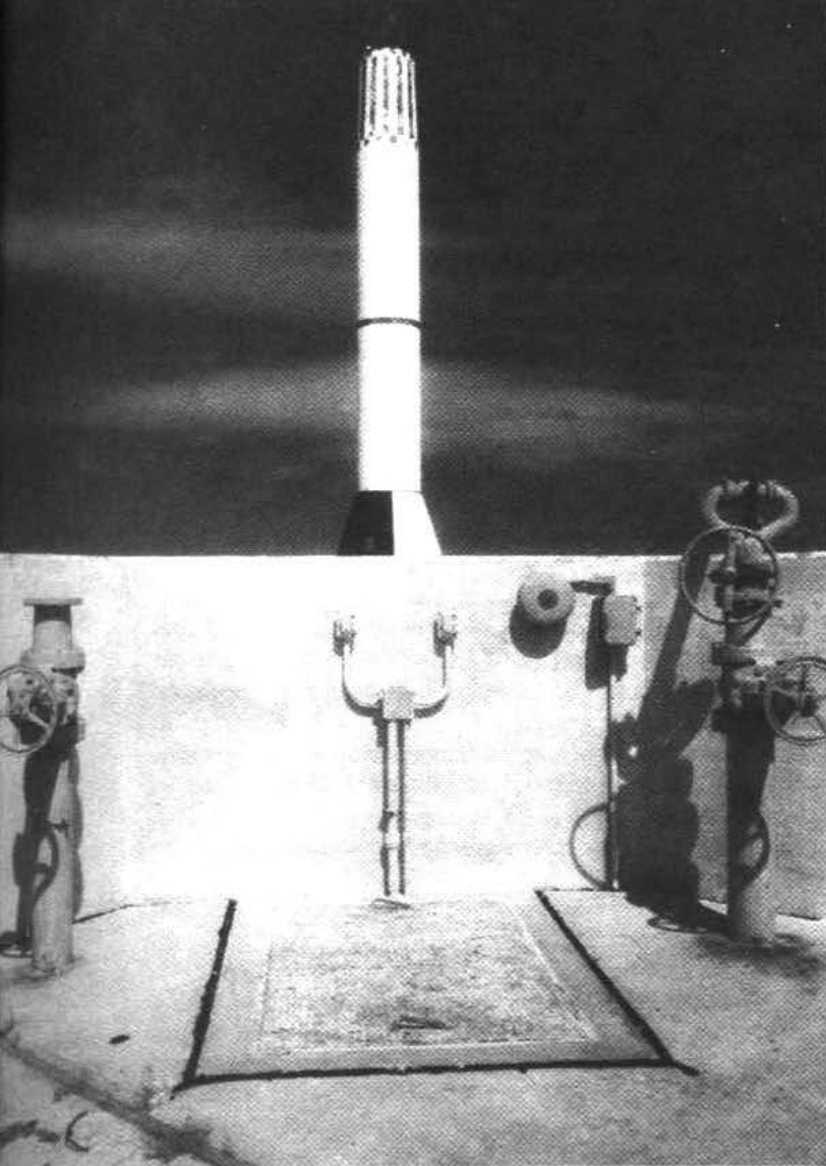
■ "It is." Sheppard reached out and took it back. He needed the security of the piece, it reminded him of the luminous world from which this young woman had disturbed him. Perhaps she would join him there? He looked up at her strong forehead and high-bridged nose, a cut-prow that could out-stare the time-winds, and at her broad shoulders, strong enough to bear a gilded plumage. He felt a sudden urge to examine her, star her in a new video film, explore the planes of her body like a pilot touching the ailerons and fuselage of an unfamiliar aircraft.

■ He stood up and stepped to the wardrobe. Without thinking, he began to compare the naked figure of his wife with the anatomy of the young woman sitting on his bed, the contours of her breasts and thighs, the triangles of her neck and pubis.

■ "Look, do you mind?" She stood between Sheppard and the photographs. "I'm not going to be annexed into this experiment of yours. Anyway, the police are coming to search for that aircraft. Now, what is all this?"

■ "I'm sorry." Sheppard caught himself. Modestly, he pointed to the elements of his "kit," the film strips, chronograms and pornographic photos, the Magritte reproduction. "It's a machine, of a kind. A time machine. It's powered by that empty swimming pool outside. I'm trying to construct a metaphor to bring my wife back to life."

■ "Your wife—when did she die?"



"...he could see the drained swimming pools of Cocoa Beach, each a complex geometry of light and shadow, canted decks encoding the secret entrances to another dimension." Photo by Ana Barrado

■ "Three months ago. But she's here, in the forest, somewhere near the Space Center. That was her doctor you saw the other evening, he's trying to turn into a bird." Before Anne Godwin could protest Sheppard took her arm and beckoned her to the door of the cabin. "Come on, I'll show you how the pool works. Don't worry, you'll be outside for only ten minutes—we've all been too frightened of the sun."

■ She held his elbow when they reached the edge of the empty pool, her face beginning to fret in the harsh light. The floor of the pool was strewn with leaves and discarded sunglasses, in which the diagram of a bird was clearly visible.

■ Sheppard breathed freely in the gold-lit air. There were no kites in the sky, but to the north of Cocoa Beach he could see the man-powered aircraft circling the forest, its flimsy wings floating on the thermals. He climbed down the chromium ladder into the shallow end of the pool, then helped the nervous young woman after him.

■ "This is the key to it all," he explained, as she watched him intently, eyes shielded from the terrifying glare. He felt almost light-headed as he gestured proudly at the angular geometry of white tile and shadow. "It's an engine, Anne, of a unique type. It's no coincidence that the Space Center is surrounded

by empty swimming pools." Aware of a sudden intimacy with this young psychologist, and certain that she would not report him to the police, he decided to take her into his confidence. As they walked down the inclined floor to the deep end he held her shoulders. Below their feet cracked the black lenses of dozens of discarded sunglasses, some of the thousands thrown into the drained swimming pools of Cocoa Beach like coins into a Roman fountain.

■ "Anne, there's a door out of this pool, I'm trying to find it, a side door for all of us to escape through. This space sickness—it's really about time, not space, like all the Apollo flights. We think of it as a kind of madness, but in fact it may be part of a contingency plan laid down millions of years ago, a real space program, a chance to escape into a world beyond time. Thirty years ago we opened a door in the universe. . ."

■ He was sitting on the floor of the drained pool among the broken sunglasses, his back to the high wall of the deep end, talking rapidly to himself as Anne Godwin ran up the sloping floor for the medical valise in her jeep. In his white hands he held the glass paperweight, his blood and the sun charging the flower into a red blaze.

■ Later, as he rested with her in his bedroom at the motel, and during their days together in the coming week, Sheppard explained to her his attempt to rescue his wife, to find a key to everything going on around them.

■ "Anne, throw away your watch. Fling back the blinds. Think of the universe as a simultaneous structure. Everything that's ever happened, all the events that *will* ever happen, are taking place together. We can die, and yet still live, at the same time. Our sense of our own identity, the stream of things going on around us, are a kind of optical illusion. Our eyes are too close together. Those strange temples in the forest, the marvelous birds and animals—you've seen them too. We've all got to embrace the sun, I want your children to live here, and Elaine. . ."

■ "Roger—" Anne moved his hand from her left breast. For minutes, as he spoke, Sheppard had been obsessively feeling its curvatures, like a thief trying to crack a safe. She stared at the naked body of this obsessive man, the white skin alternating at the elbows and neck with areas of black sunburn, a geometry of light and shade as ambiguous as that of the drained swimming pool.

■ "Roger, she died 3 months ago. You showed me a copy of the death certificate."

■ "Yes, she died," Sheppard agreed. "But only in a sense. She's here, somewhere, in the total time. No one who has ever lived can ever really die. I'm going to find her, I know she's waiting here for me to bring her back to life. . ." He gestured modestly to the photographs around the bedroom. "It may not look much, but this is a metaphor that's going to work."

■ During that week, Anne Godwin did her best to help Sheppard construct his "machine." All day she submitted to the Polaroid camera, to the films of her body which Sheppard projected onto the wall above the bed, to the endless pornographic positions in which she arranged her thighs and pubis. Sheppard gazed for hours through his stop-frame focus, as if he would find among these images an anatomical door, one of the keys in a combination whose other tumblers were the Marey chronograms, the surrealist paintings and the drained swimming pool in the ever-brighter sunlight outside. In the evenings Sheppard would take her out into the dusk and pose her beside the empty pool, naked from the waist, a dream-woman in a Delvaux landscape.

■ Meanwhile, Sheppard's duel with Martinsen continued in the skies above Cape Kennedy. After a storm the drowned Cessna was washed up onto the beach, sections of the wing and tailplane, parts of the cabin and undercarriage. The reappearance of the aircraft drove both men into a frenzy of activity. The bird motifs multiplied around the streets of Cocoa Beach, aerosoled onto the flaking storefronts. The outlines of giant birds covered the beach, their talons gripping the fragments of the Cessna.

■ And all the while the light continued to grow brighter, radiating outwards from the gantries of the Space Center, inflaming the trees and flowers and paving the dusty sidewalks with a carpet of diamonds. For Anne, this sinister halo that lay over Cocoa Beach seemed to try to sear itself into her retinas. Nervous of windows, she submitted herself to Sheppard during these last days. It was only when he tried to suffocate her, in a confused attempt to release her past and future selves from their prison, that she escaped from the motel and set off for the sheriff at Titusville.

■ As the siren of the police car faded through the forest, Sheppard rested against the steering wheel of the Plymouth. He had reached the old NASA causeway across the Banana River, barely in time to turn off on to a disused slip road. He unclenched his fists, uneasily aware that his hands still stung from his struggle with Anne Godwin. If only he had been given more time to warn the young woman that he was trying to help her, to free her from that transient, time-locked flesh he had caressed so affectionately.

■ Restarting the engine, Sheppard drove along the slip road, already an uneven jungle path. Here on Merrit Island, almost within the sweeping shadows of the great gantries, the forest seemed ablaze with light, a submarine world in which each leaf and branch hung weightlessly around him. Relics of the first Space Age emerged from the undergrowth like overlit ghosts—a spherical fuel tank stitched into a jacket of flowering lianas, rocket launchers collapsed at the feet of derelict gantries, an immense tracked vehicle six storeys high like an iron hotel, whose unwound treads formed two notched metal roads through the forest.

■ Six hundred yards ahead, when the path petered out below a collapsed palisade of palm trunks, Sheppard switched off the engine and stepped from the car. Now that he was well within the perimeter of the Space Center he found that the process of time fusion was even more advanced. The rotting palms lay beside him, but alive again, the rich scrolls of their bark bright with the jade years of youth, glowing with the copper hues of their forest maturity, elegant in the grey marquetry of their declining age.

■ Through a break in the canopy Sheppard saw the Apollo 12 gantry rising through the high oaks like the blade of a giant sundial. Its shadow lay across a silver inlet of the Banana River. Remembering his flight in the Cessna, Sheppard estimated that the nightclub was little more than a mile to the northwest. He set off on foot through the forest, stepping from one log to the next, avoiding the curtains of Spanish moss that hung out their beguiling frescoes. He crossed a small glade beside a shallow stream, where a large alligator basked contentedly in a glow of self-generated light, smiling to itself as its golden jaws nuzzled its past and future selves. Vivid ferns sprang from the damp humus, ornate leaves stamped from foil, layer upon layer of copper and verdigris annealed together. Even the modest ground ivy seemed to have glutted itself on the corpses of long-vanished astronauts. This was a

world nourished by time.

■ Bird signs marked the trees, Picasso doves scrawled on every trunk as if some overworked removal manager was preparing the entire forest for flight. There were huge traps, set out in the narrow clearings and clearly designed to snare a prey other than birds. Standing by one of the trip-balanced hutches, Sheppard noticed that they all pointed towards the Apollo gantries. So Martinsen was now frightened, not of Sheppard, but of some aerial creature about to emerge from the heart of the Space Center.

■ Sheppard tossed a loose branch onto the sensitive balance of the trap. There was a flicker of sprung bamboo, and the heavy hutch fell to the ground in a cloud of leaves, sending a glimmer of light reverberating among the trees. Almost at once there was a flurry of activity from a cove of glowing palmettos a hundred yards away. As Sheppard waited, hidden behind the trap, a running figure approached, a bearded man in a ragged bird costume, half-Crusoe, half-Indian brave, bright macaw feathers tied to his wrists and an aviator's goggles on his forehead.

■ He raced up to the trap and stared at it in a distraught way. Relieved to find it empty, he brushed the tattered feathers from his eyes and peered at the canopy overhead, as if expecting to see his quarry perched on a nearby branch.

■ "Elaine . . .!"

■ Martinsen's cry was a pathetic moan. Unsure how to calm the neurosurgeon, Sheppard stood up.

■ "Elaine isn't here, doctor—"

■ Martinsen flinched back, his bearded face as small as a child's. He stared at Sheppard, barely managing to control himself. His eyes roved across the glowing ground and foliage, and he flicked nervously at the blurred edges of his fingers, clearly terrified of these ghosts of his other selves now clinging to him. He gestured warningly to Sheppard, pointing to the multiple outlines of his arms and legs that formed a glowing armor.

■ "Sheppard, keep moving. I heard a noise—have you seen Elaine?"

■ "She's dead, doctor."

■ "Even the dead can dream!" Martinsen nodded to Sheppard, his body shaking as if with fever. He pointed to the bird traps. "She dreams of flying. I've put these here, to catch her if she tries to escape."

■ "Doctor . . ." Sheppard approached the exhausted physician. "Let her fly, if she wants to, let her dream. And let her wake . . ."

■ "Sheppard!" Martinsen stepped back, appalled by Sheppard's electric hand raised towards him. "She's trying to come back from the dead!"

■ Before Sheppard could reach him, the neurosurgeon turned away. He smoothed his feathers and darted through the palms, and with a hoot of pain and anger disappeared into the forest.

■ Sheppard let him go. He knew now why Martinsen had flown his kites, and filled the forest with the images of birds. He had been preparing the whole of the Space Center for Elaine, transforming the jungle into an aviary where she might be at home. Terrified by the sight of this apparently winged woman waking from her deathbed, he hoped that somehow he could keep her within the magical realm of the Cape Kennedy forest.

■ Leaving the traps, Sheppard set off through the trees, his eyes fixed on the great gantries now only a few hundred yards away. He could feel the time winds playing on his skin,

annealing his other selves onto his arms and shoulders, the transformation of himself once again into that angelic being who strode through the shabby streets of Cocoa Beach. He crossed a concrete runway and entered an area of deeper forest, an emerald world furnished with extravagant frescoes, a palace without walls.

■ He had almost ceased to breathe. Here, at the center of the space grounds, he could feel time rapidly engorging itself. The infinite pasts and futures of the forest had fused together. A long-tailed parakeet paused among the branches over his head, an electric emblem of itself more magnificent than a peacock. A jeweled snake hung from a bough, gathering to it all the embroidered skins it had once shed.

■ An inlet of the Banana River slid through the trees, a silver tongue lying passively at his feet. On the bank 50 yards away was the nightclub he had seen from the Cessna, its luminous facade glowing against the foliage.

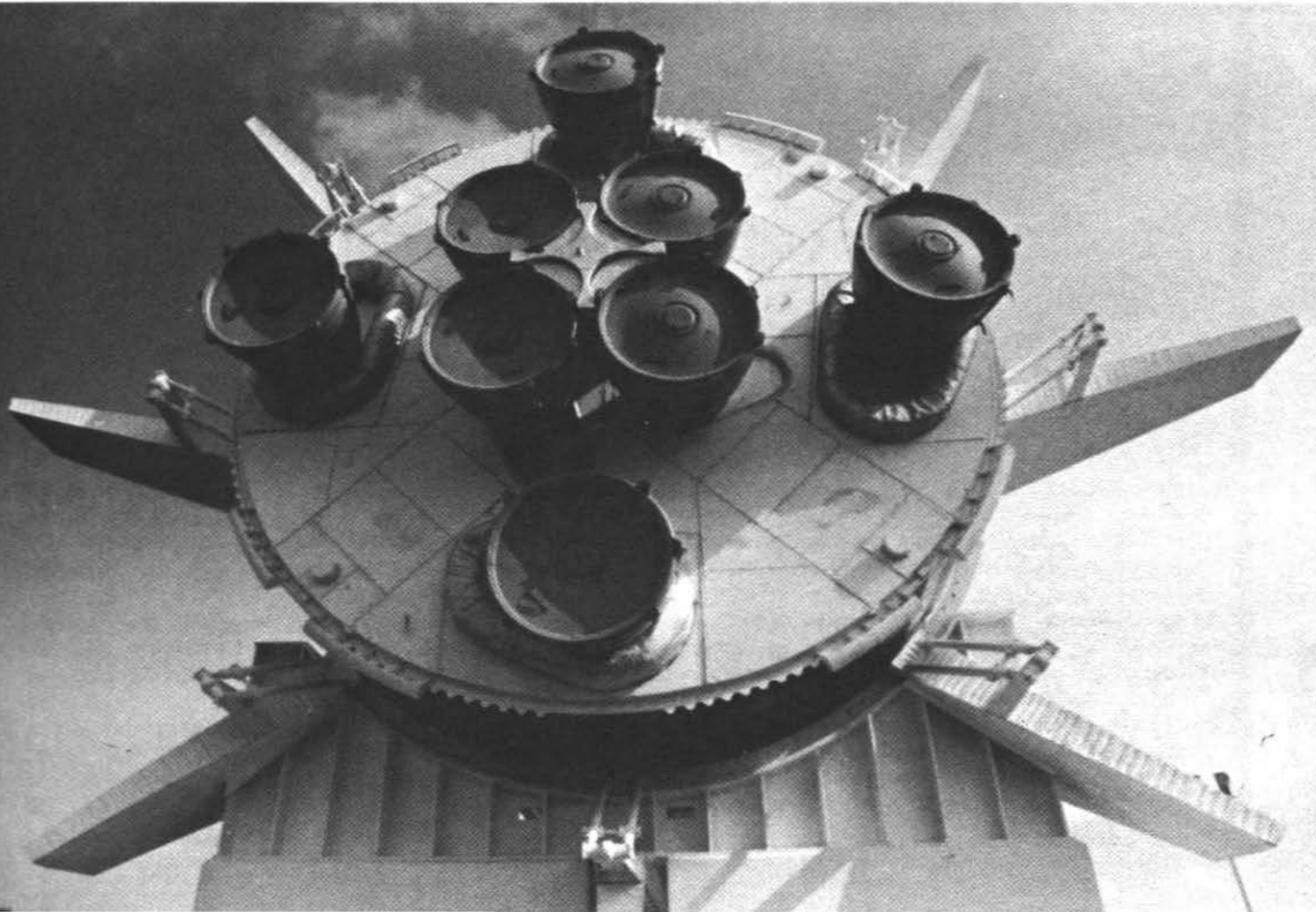
■ Sheppard hesitated by the water's edge, and then stepped onto its hard surface. He felt the brittle corrugations under his feet, as if he were walking across a floor of frosted glass. Without time, nothing could disturb the water. On the quartz-like grass below the nightclub a flock of orioles had begun to rise from the ground. They hung silently in the air, their golden fans lit by the sun.

■ Sheppard stepped ashore and walked up the slope towards them. A giant butterfly spread its harlequin wings against the air, halted in midflight. Avoiding it, Sheppard strode towards the entrance to the nightclub, where the man-powered glider sat on the grass, its propeller a bright sword. An unfamiliar bird crouched on the canopy, a rare species of quetzal or toucan, only recently a modest starling. It stared at its prey, a small lizard sitting on the steps, now a confident iguana armored within all its selves. Like everything in the forest, both had become ornamental creatures drained of malice.

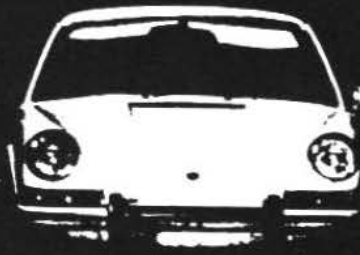
■ Through the crystal doors Sheppard peered into the glowing bower of the nightclub. Already he could see that this exotic pavilion had once been no more than a park keeper's lodge, some bird watcher's weekend hide transformed by the light of its gathering identities into this miniature casino. The magic casements revealed a small but opulent chamber, a circle of well-upholstered electric chairs beside a kitchen like the side chapel of a chromium cathedral. Along the rear wall was a set of disused cages left here years earlier by a local ornithologist.

■ Sheppard unlatched the doors and stepped into the airless interior. A musty and unpleasant odor hung around him, not the spoor of birds but of some unclaimed carcass stored too

"He had almost ceased to breathe. Here, at the center of the space grounds, he could feel time rapidly engorging itself."
Photo by Ana Barrado



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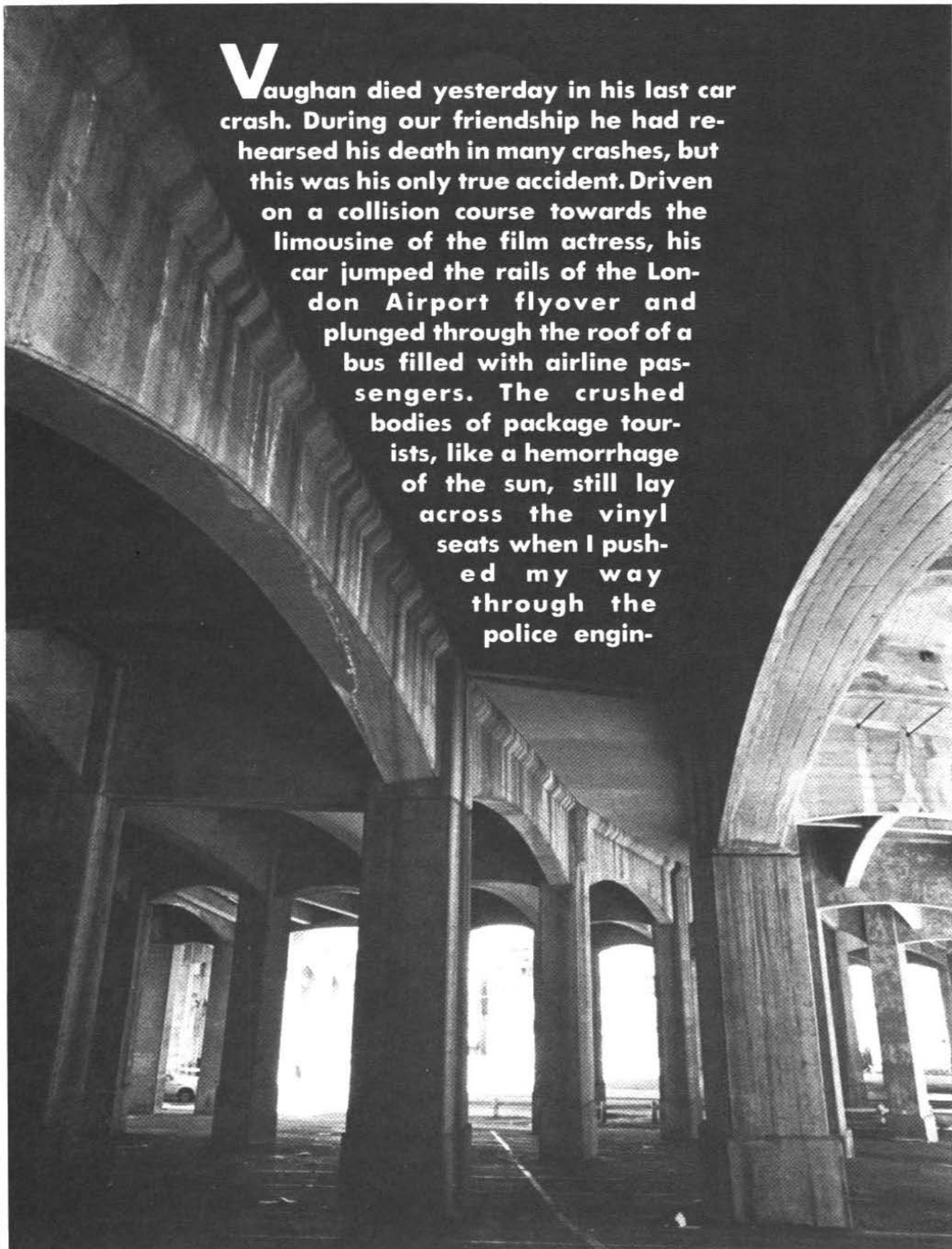
CRASH

Photo by Ken Werner

CRASH (EXCERPT)



Vaughan died yesterday in his last car crash. During our friendship he had rehearsed his death in many crashes, but this was his only true accident. Driven on a collision course towards the limousine of the film actress, his car jumped the rails of the London Airport flyover and plunged through the roof of a bus filled with airline passengers. The crushed bodies of package tourists, like a hemorrhage of the sun, still lay across the vinyl seats when I pushed my way through the police engin-



eers an hour later. Holding the arm of her chauffeur, the film actress Elizabeth Taylor, with whom Vaughan had dreamed of dying for so many months, stood alone under the revolving ambulance lights. As I knelt over Vaughan's body she placed a gloved hand to her throat.

■ Could she see, in Vaughan's posture, the formula of the death which he had devised for her? During the last weeks of his life Vaughan thought of nothing else but her death, a coronation of wounds he had staged with the devotion of an Earl Marshal. The walls of his apartment near the film studios at Shepperton were covered with the photographs he had taken through his zoom lens each morning as she left her hotel in London, from the pedestrian bridges above the westbound motorways, and from the roof of the multi-storey car park at the studios. The magnified details of her knees and hands, of the inner surface of her thighs and the left apex of her mouth, I uneasily prepared for Vaughan on the copying machine in my office, handing him the packages of prints as if they were the installments of a death warrant. At his apartment I watched him matching the details of her body with the photographs of grotesque wounds in a textbook of plastic surgery.

■ In his vision of a car crash with the actress, Vaughan was obsessed by many wounds and impacts—by the dying chromium and collapsing bulkheads of their two cars meeting head-on in complex collisions endlessly repeated in slow-motion films, by the identical wounds inflicted on their bodies, by the image of windshield glass frosting around her face as she broke its tinted surface like a death-born Aphrodite, by the compound fractures of their thighs impacted against their handbrake mountings, and above all by the wounds to their genitalia, her uterus pierced by the heraldic beak of the manufacturer's medallion, his semen emptying across the luminescent dials that registered forever the last temperature and fuel levels of the engine.

■ It was only at these times, as he described this last crash to me, that Vaughan was calm. He talked of these wounds and collisions with the erotic tenderness of a long-separated lover. Searching through the photographs in his apartment, he half turned towards me, so that his heavy groin quietened me with its profile of an almost erect penis. He knew that as long as he provoked me with his own sex, which he used casually as if he might discard it for ever at any moment, I would never leave him.

■ Ten days ago, as he stole my car from the garage of my apartment house, Vaughan hurtled up the concrete ramp, an ugly machine sprung from a trap. Yesterday his body lay under the police arc lights at the foot of the flyover, veiled by a delicate lacework of blood. The broken postures of his legs and arms, the bloody geometry of his face, seemed to parody the photographs of crash injuries that covered the walls of his apartment. I looked down for the last time at his huge groin, engorged with blood. Twenty yards away, illuminated by the revolving lamps, the actress hovered on the arm of her chauffeur. Vaughan had dreamed of dying at the moment of her orgasm.

■ Before his death Vaughan had taken part in many crashes. As I think of Vaughan I see him in the stolen cars he drove and damaged, the surfaces of deformed metal and plastic that for ever embraced him. Two months earlier I found him on the lower deck of the airport flyover after the first rehearsal of his own death. A taxi driver helped two shaken air hostesses from a small car into which Vaughan had collided as he lurched from the mouth of a concealed

access road. As I ran across to Vaughan I saw him through the fractured windshield of the white convertible he had taken from the car park of the Oceanic Terminal. His exhausted face, with its scarred mouth, was lit by broken rainbows. I pulled the dented passenger door from its frame. Vaughan sat on the glass-covered seat, studying his own posture with a complacent gaze. His hands, palms upwards at his sides, were covered with blood from his injured kneecaps. He examined the vomit staining the lapels of his leather jacket, and reached forward to touch the globes of semen clinging to the instrument binnacle. I tried to lift him from the car, but his tight buttocks were clamped together as if they had seized while forcing the last drops of fluid from his seminal vesicles. On the seat beside him were the torn photographs of the film actress which I had reproduced for him that morning at my office. Magnified sections of lip and eyebrow, elbow and cleavage formed a broken mosaic.

■ For Vaughan the car crash and his own sexuality had made their final marriage. I remember him at night with nervous young women in the crushed rear compartments of abandoned cars in breakers' yards, and their photographs in the postures of uneasy sex acts. Their tight faces and strained thighs were lit by his polaroid flash, like startled survivors of a submarine disaster. These aspiring whores, whom Vaughan met in the all-night cafes and supermarkets of London Airport, were the first cousins of the patients illustrated in his surgical textbooks. During his studied courtship of injured women, Vaughan was obsessed with the buboes of gas bacillus infections, by facial injuries and genital wounds.

■ Through Vaughan I discovered the true significance of the automobile crash, the meaning of whiplash injuries and roll-over, the ecstasies of head-on collisions. Together we visited the Road Research Laboratory 20 miles to the west of London, and watched the calibrated vehicles crashing into the concrete target blocks. Later, in his apartment, Vaughan screened slow-motion films of test collisions that he had photographed with his cine-camera. Sitting in the darkness of the floor cushions, we watched the silent impacts flicker on the wall above our heads. The repeated sequences of crashing cars first calmed and then aroused me. Cruising alone on the motorway under the yellow glare of the sodium lights, I thought of myself at the controls of these impacting vehicles.

■ During the months that followed, Vaughan and I spent many hours driving along the express highways on the northern perimeter of the airport. On the calm summer evenings these fast boulevards became a zone of nightmare collisions. Listening to the police broadcasts on Vaughan's radio, we moved from one accident to the next. Often we stopped under arc lights that flared over the sites of major collisions, watching while firemen and police engineers worked with acetylene torches and lifting tackle to free unconscious wives trapped beside their dead husbands, or waited as a passing doctor fumbled with a dying man pinned below an inverted truck. Sometimes Vaughan was pulled back by the other spectators, and fought for his cameras with the ambulance attendants. Above all, Vaughan waited for head-on collisions with the concrete pillars of the motorway overpasses, the melancholy conjunction formed by a crushed vehicle abandoned on the grass verge and the serene motion sculpture of the concrete.

■ Once we were the first to reach the crashed car of an

injured woman driver. A middle-aged cashier at the airport duty-free liquor store, she sat unsteadily in the crushed compartment, fragments of the tinted windshield set in her forehead like jewels. As a police car approached, its emergency beacon pulsing along the overhead motorway, Vaughan ran back for his camera and flash equipment. Taking off my tie, I searched helplessly for the woman's wounds. She stared at me without speaking, and lay on her side across the seat. I watched the blood irrigate her white blouse. When Vaughan had taken the last of his pictures he knelt down inside the car and held her face carefully in his hands, whispering into her ear. Together we helped to lift her on to the ambulance trolley.

■ On our way to Vaughan's apartment he recognized an airport whore waiting in the forecourt of a motorway restaurant, a part-time cinema usherette for ever worrying

about her small son's defective hearing aid. As they sat behind me she complained to Vaughan about my nervous driving, but he was watching her movements with an abstracted gaze, almost encouraging her to gesture with her hands and knees. On the deserted roof of a Northolt multi-storey car park I waited by the balustrade. In the rear seat of the car Vaughan arranged her limbs in the posture of the dying cashier. His strong body, crouched across her in the reflected light of passing headlamps, assumed a series of stylized positions.

■ Vaughan unfolded for me all his obsessions with the mysterious eroticism of wounds: the perverse logic of bloodsoaked instrument panels, seatbelts smeared with excrement, sun visors lined with brain tissue. For Vaughan each crashed car set off a tremor of excitement, in the complex geometries of a dented fender, in the unexpected

"Trying to exhaust himself, Vaughan devised a terrifying almanac of imaginary automobile disasters and insane wounds—the lungs of elderly men punctured by door handles, the chests of young women impaled by steering columns..." Photo by Richard Peterson





"...in the complex geometries of a dented fender, in the unexpected variations of crushed radiator grilles..."

*Photo by
Richard Peterson*

variations of crushed radiator grilles, in the grotesque overhang of an instrument panel forced on to a driver's crotch as if in some calibrated act of machine fellatio. The intimate time and space of a single human being had been fossilized forever in this web of chromium knives and frosted glass.

■ A week after the funeral of the woman cashier, as we drove at night along the western perimeter of the airport, Vaughan swerved onto the verge and struck a large mongrel dog. The impact of its body, like a padded hammer, and the shower of glass as the animal was carried over the roof, convinced me that we were about to die in a crash. Vaughan never stopped. I watched him accelerate away, his scarred face held close to the punctured windshield, angrily brushing the beads of frosted glass from his cheeks. Already his acts of violence had become so random that I was no more than a captive spectator. Yet the next morning, on the roof of the airport car park where we abandoned the car, Vaughan calmly pointed out to me the deep dents in the bonnet and roof. He stared at an airliner filled with tourists lifting into the western sky, his sallow face puckering like a wistful child's. The long triangular grooves on the car had been formed within the death of an unknown creature, its vanished identity abstracted in terms of the geometry of this vehicle. How much more mysterious would be our own deaths, and those of the famous and powerful?

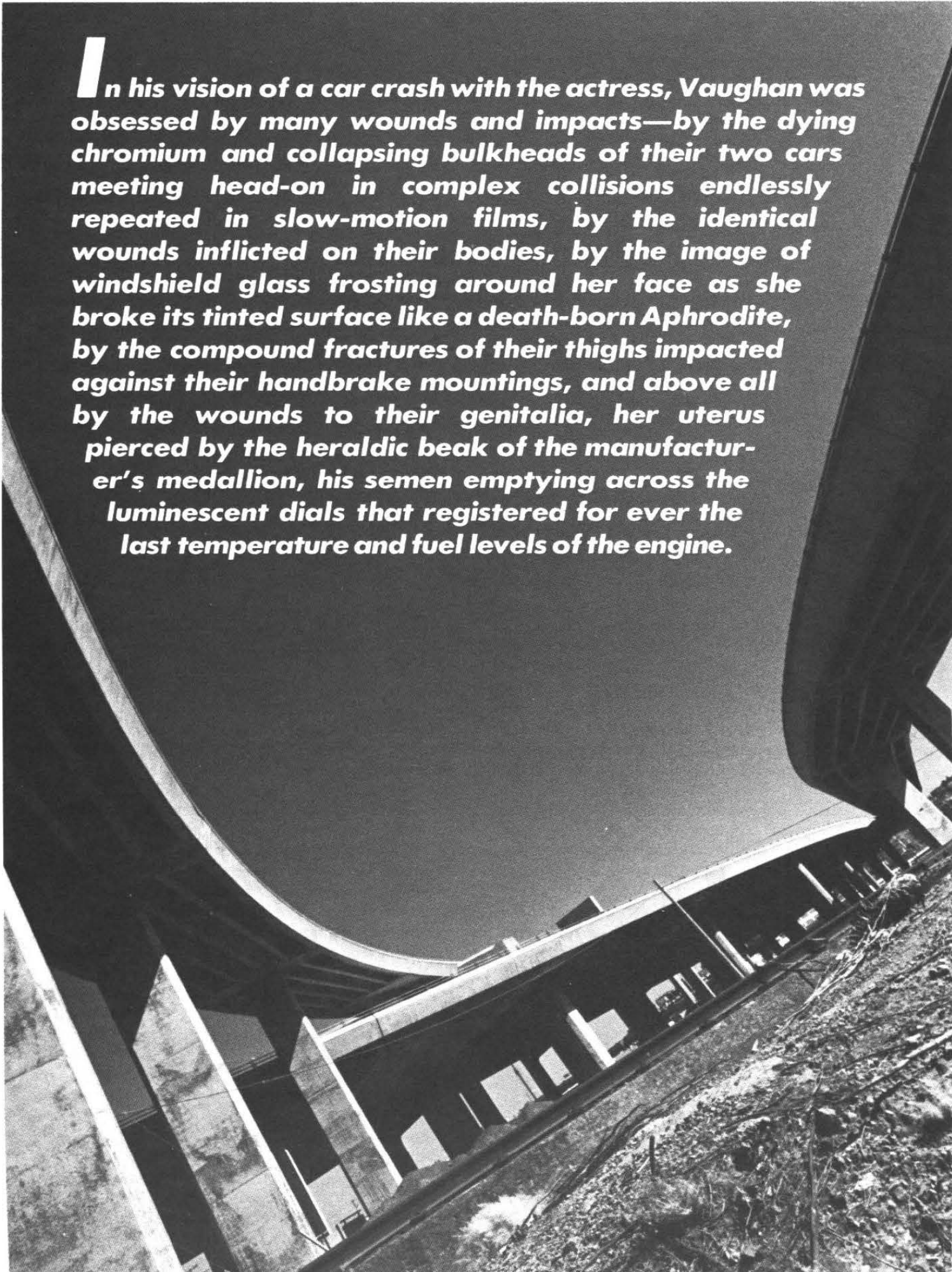
■ Even this first death seemed timid compared with the others in which Vaughan took part, and with those imaginary deaths that filled his mind. Trying to exhaust himself, Vaughan devised a terrifying almanac of imaginary automobile disasters and insane wounds—the lungs of elderly men punctured by door handles, the chests of young women impaled by steering columns, the cheeks of handsome youths pierced by the chromium latches of quarter lights. For him these wounds were the keys to a new sexuality born

of the perverse technology. The images of these wounds hung in the gallery of his mind like exhibits in the museum of a slaughterhouse.

■ Thinking of Vaughan now, drowning in his own blood under the police arc lights, I remember the countless imaginary disasters he described as we cruised together along expressways. He dreamed of ambassadorial limousines crashing into jack-knifing butane tankers, of taxis filled with celebrating children colliding head-on below the bright display windows of deserted supermarkets. He dreamed of alienated brothers and sisters, by chance meeting each other on collision courses on the access roads of petrochemical plants, their unconscious incest made explicit in this colliding metal, in the hemorrhages of their brain tissue flowering beneath the aluminized compression chambers and reaction vessels. Vaughan devised the massive rear-end collisions of sworn enemies, hate-deaths celebrated in the engine fuel burning in wayside ditches, paintwork boiling through the dull afternoon sunlight of provincial towns. He visualized the specialized crashes of escaping criminals, of off-duty hotel receptionists trapped between their steering wheels and the laps of their lovers whom they were masturbating. He thought of the crashes of honeymoon couples, seated together after their impacts with the rear suspension units of runaway sugar tankers. He thought of the crashes of automobile stylists, the most abstract of all possible deaths, wounded in their cars with promiscuous laboratory technicians.

■ Vaughan elaborated endless variations on these collisions, thinking first of a repetition of head-on collisions: a child molester and an overworked doctor reenacting their deaths first in head-on collision and then in roll-over; the retired prostitute crashing into a concrete motorway parapet, her overweight body propelled through the frac-

In his vision of a car crash with the actress, Vaughan was obsessed by many wounds and impacts—by the dying chromium and collapsing bulkheads of their two cars meeting head-on in complex collisions endlessly repeated in slow-motion films, by the identical wounds inflicted on their bodies, by the image of windshield glass frosting around her face as she broke its tinted surface like a death-born Aphrodite, by the compound fractures of their thighs impacted against their handbrake mountings, and above all by the wounds to their genitalia, her uterus pierced by the heraldic beak of the manufacturer's medallion, his semen emptying across the luminescent dials that registered for ever the last temperature and fuel levels of the engine.



tured windshield, menopausal loins torn on the chromium bonnet mascot. Her blood would cross the over-white concrete of the evening embankment, haunting forever the mind of a police mechanic who carried the pieces of her body in a yellow plastic shroud. Alternatively, Vaughan saw her hit by a reversing truck in a motorway fueling area, crushed against the nearside door of her car as she bent down to loosen her right shoe, the contours of her body buried within the bloody mould of the door panel. He saw her hurtling through the rails of the flyover and dying as Vaughan himself would later die, plunging through the roof of an airline coach, its cargo of complacent destinations multiplied by the death of this myopic middle-aged woman. He saw her hit by a speeding taxi as she stepped out of her car to relieve herself in a wayside latrine, her body whirled a hundred feet away in a spray of urine and blood.

■ I think now of the other crashes we visualized, absurd deaths of the wounded, maimed and distraught. I think of the crashes of psychopaths, implausible accidents carried out with venom and self-disgust, vicious multiple collisions contrived in stolen cars on evening freeways among tired office workers. I think of the absurd crashes of neurasthenic housewives returning from their VD clinics, hitting parked cars in suburban high streets. I think of the crashes of excited schizophrenics colliding head-on into stalled laundry vans in one-way streets; of manic-depressives crushed while making pointless U-turns on motorway access roads; of luckless paranoids driving at full speed into the brick walls at the ends of known culs-de-sac; of sadistic charge nurses decapitated in inverted crashes on complex interchanges; of lesbian supermarket manageresses burning to death in the collapsed frames of their midget cars before the stoical eyes of middle-aged firemen; of autistic children crushed in rear-end collisions, their eyes less wounded in death; of buses filled with mental defectives drowning together stoically in roadside industrial canals.

■ Long before Vaughan died I had begun to think of my own death. With whom would I die, and in what role—psychopath, neurasthenic, absconding criminal? Vaughan dreamed endlessly of the deaths of the famous, inventing imaginary crashes for them. Around the deaths of James Dean and Albert Camus, Jayne Mansfield and John Kennedy he had woven elaborate fantasies. His imagination was a target gallery of screen actresses, politicians, business tycoons and television executives. Vaughan followed them everywhere with his camera, zoom lens watching from the observation platform of the Oceanic Terminal at the airport, from hotel mezzanine balconies and studio car parks. For each of them Vaughan devised an optimum auto death. Onassis and his wife would die in a recreation of the Dealey Plaza assassination. He saw Reagan in a complex rear-end collision, dying a stylized death that expressed Vaughan's obsession with Reagan's genital organs, like his obsession with the exquisite transits of the screen actress's pubis across the vinyl seat covers of hired limousines.

■ After his last attempt to kill my wife Catherine, I knew that Vaughan had retired finally into his own skull. In this overlit realm ruled by violence and technology he was now driving for ever at a hundred miles an hour along an empty motorway, past deserted filling stations on the edges of wide fields, waiting for a single oncoming car. In his mind Vaughan saw the whole world dying in a simultaneous automobile disaster, millions of vehicles hurled together in a terminal congress of spurting loins and engine coolant.

■ I remember my first minor collision in a deserted hotel car park. Disturbed by a police patrol, we had forced ourselves through a hurried sex act. Reversing out of the park, I struck an unmarked tree. Catherine vomited over my seat. This pool of vomit with its clots of blood like liquid rubies, as viscous and discreet as everything produced by Catherine, still contains for me the essence of the erotic delirium of the car crash, more exciting than her own rectal and vaginal mucus, as refined as the excrement of a fairy queen, or the minuscule globes of liquid that formed beside the bubbles of her contact lenses. In this magic pool, lifting from her throat like a rare discharge of fluid from the mouth of a remote and mysterious shrine, I saw my own reflection, a mirror of blood, semen and vomit, distilled from a mouth whose contours only a few minutes before had drawn steadily against my penis.

■ Now that Vaughan has died, we will leave with the others who gathered around him, like a crowd drawn to an injured cripple whose deformed postures reveal the secret formulas of their minds and lives. All of us who knew Vaughan accept the perverse eroticism of the car crash, as painful as the drawing of an exposed organ through the aperture of a surgical wound. I have watched copulating couples moving along darkened freeways at night, men and women on the verge of orgasm, their cars speeding in a series of inviting trajectories towards the flashing headlamps of the oncoming traffic stream. Young men alone behind the wheels of their first cars, near-wrecks picked up in scrapyards, masturbate as they move on worn tires to aimless destinations. After a near collision at a traffic intersection semen jolts across a cracked speedometer dial. Later, the dried residues of that same semen are brushed by the lacquered hair of the first young woman who lies across his lap with her mouth over his penis, one hand on the wheel hurtling the car through the darkness towards a multi-level interchange, the swerving brakes drawing the semen from him as he grazes the tailgate of an articulated truck loaded with color television sets, his left hand vibrating her clitoris towards orgasm as the headlamps of the truck flare warningly in his rearview mirror. Later still, he watches as a friend takes a teenage girl in the rear seat. Greasy mechanic's hands expose her buttocks to the advertisement hoardings that hurl past them. The wet highways flash by in the glare of headlamps and the scream of brake pads. The shaft of his penis glistens above the girl as he strikes at the frayed plastic roof of the car, marking the yellow fabric with his smegma.

■ The last ambulance had left. An hour earlier the film actress had been steered towards her limousine. In the evening light the white concrete of the collision corridor below the flyover resembled a secret airstrip from which mysterious machines would take off into a metalized sky. Vaughan's glass aeroplane flew somewhere above the heads of the bored spectators moving back to their cars, above the tired policemen gathering together the crushed suitcases and handbags of the airline tourists. I thought of Vaughan's body, colder now, its rectal temperature following the same downward gradients as those of the other victims of the crash. Across the night air these gradients fell like streamers from the office towers and apartment houses of the city, and from the warm mucosa of the film actress in her hotel suite.

■ I drove back towards the airport. The lights along Western Avenue illuminated the speeding cars, moving together towards their celebration of wounds. ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

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A discharged Broadmoor patient

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13

Breakdown," recalling his wife's

1

The use of the *indefinite* article encapsulates all the ambiguities that surround the putative but as yet undiscovered document, *Notes Towards a Mental Breakdown*, of which this 18-word synopsis is the only extant fragment. Deceptively candid and straightforward, the synopsis is clearly an important clue in our understanding of the events that led to the tragic death of Judith Loughlin in her hotel bedroom at Gatwick Airport. There is no doubt that the role of the still unidentified author was a central one, that of the protagonist in a drama that might well have elicited the admiration of the Atrides. The self-effacing and too unemphatic 'A' must be regarded not merely as an overt attempt at evasion but, on the unconscious level, as an early intimation of the author's desire to proclaim his guilt.

2

There is no evidence that the patient was discharged. Recent inspection of the in-patients' records at Springfield Hospital (cf. footnote 3) indicates that Dr. Robert Loughlin has been in continuous detention in the Unit of Criminal Psychopathy since his committal at Kingston Crown Court on May 18, 1975. For the first three weeks after admission Dr. Loughlin was under heavy sedation (1.5 g. amylobarbitol, 2.5 g. largactil daily, serotonin and protein-reaction suppressor m.v.d. (an excessive dosage, bearing in mind that Dr. Loughlin was non-violent and suffering from severe alcoholic depression). Apart from the continuous surveillance by the nursing staff, any attempt at escape would have been made impossible by

the extensive burns to the patient's hands and feet. During the period up to the present day only one visitor has called, a former colleague at the London Clinic, the neurologist Dr. James Douglas, honorary secretary of the Royal College of Physicians Flying Club. It is possible that he may have given Dr. Loughlin, with his obsessional interest in man-powered flight, the illusion that he had flown from the hospital on Douglas's back. Alternatively, 'discharged' may be a screen memory of the revolver shot that wounded the Gatwick security guard.

3

Unconfirmed. Dr. Loughlin had at no time in his ten-year career been either a patient or a member of the staff at Broadmoor Hospital. The reference to Broadmoor must therefore be taken as an indirect admission of the author's criminal motives or a confused plea of diminished responsibility on the grounds of temporary madness. Yet nothing suggests that Dr. Loughlin considered himself either guilty of his wife's death or at any time insane. From the remaining documents—tape recordings made in Suite B17 of the Inn on the Park Hotel (part of the floor occupied by the millionaire aviation pioneer Howard Hughes and his entourage during a visit to London) and cine-films taken of the runways at an abandoned USAAF base near Mildenhall—it is clear that Dr. Loughlin believed he was taking part in a ritual of profound spiritual significance that would release his wife forever from the tragedy of her inoperable pancreatic carcinoma and its rapidly advancing cerebral metastases. Indeed, the inspiration for this strange psychodrama may have come from the former Broadmoor laboratory technician and amateur dramatics coach, Leonora Carrington, whom Loughlin met at Elstree Flying Club, and with whom he had a brief but significant affair.

5**6****7****8****9****compiles "Notes Towards a Mental****14****15****16****17****18****murder, his trial and exoneration.****4**

A remarkable feature of Dr. Loughlin's confinement at Springfield is how little he conforms to the stereotype of 'patient.' Most of his fellow inmates at the Unit of Criminal Psychopathy are under mild sedation or some form of loose restraint, but Loughlin's behavior is closer to that of a member of staff. He has informal access to all the facilities of the Unit, and with his medical training and powerful physique often stands in as an auxiliary nurse, even on occasion diagnosing minor ailments and supervising the administration of drugs. Characteristic of Loughlin is the high level of his general activity. He is forever moving about on errands, many of them of barely apparent significance, as if preparing for some important event in the future (or, conceivably, in the past). Much of his thought and energy is occupied by the construction of what seems to be conceptual flying machines, using his bed, desk and personal cutlery. He has twice re-arranged the entire stock of books in the library into a complex blueprint spread across the floor. Recently, when his earnest attempts to streamline all the furniture in the day-room unsettled the other patients, Dr. Grumman attempted to get to the root of this obsession. He encouraged Loughlin to write about his experiences as a weekend pilot. For the first time Loughlin was prepared to consider any aspect of his past, and immediately came up with a title, *Notes Towards a Mental Breakdown*. A typewriter has been procured.

5

What method Dr. Loughlin employed in the preparation of this document has not been revealed, or indeed whether a single word exists other than the title. Given the powerful

repressive forces at work, it seems likely that the author will employ any method other than that of straightforward declarative narration. A clue may be found in Loughlin's previous experience as editor of the *Proceedings of the Institute of Neurosurgery*, and the habit of meticulous attention to editorial detail which is almost all he brought with him to Springfield of his past life. One manifestation of this obsession is his custom of annotating the books in the hospital library with copious footnotes. Several pages of the 1972 edition of *The British Pharmacopoeia Codex*, particularly those referring to anti-carcinogenetic drugs, have been so annotated that every word has been footnoted with imaginary aviation references.

6

Why Loughlin chose this term, with its suggestion of a preparatory sketch, to describe the most important and traumatic events of his life remains unclear. However, it is now known that this was not the only such document that he prepared. Two years earlier, during the first of his marital difficulties, Loughlin had kept a speculative daily diary, describing in minute detail the events of his personal and professional life. It seems that he was already aware of the erratic nature of his behavior and of the recurrent fugues, each lasting several days, from which he would emerge in an increasingly dissociated state. At one point, after his wife's first nervous collapse, Loughlin secretly hired a private investigator to follow him, posing as her lover. Mr. R.W. Butterworth of the Advance Detection Agency testified at Kingston Crown Court that he followed Loughlin and Leonora Carrington as they drove at random around eastern Suffolk, visiting one abandoned airfield after another. In his February 1975 Diaries (a few weeks before his wife's death) Loughlin describes his attempt to hire the main No. 2 runway at London Airport: "'Don't you understand, man, I only need it for half an hour. There's a special

cargo going out.' Airport manager totally baffled. 'What, for heaven's sake?' But I couldn't tell him. I didn't know then. "

7

Implicit in Loughlin's use of the preposition is the sense that he deliberately moved to meet his breakdown, constructing it of his own volition. This is confirmed by his behavior in the months leading to his wife's death. After an initial period of calm solicitude, of sustained reassurance in the face of her inevitable relapse, he seems suddenly to have made an extraordinary internal decision. Turning his back on any form of passive stoicism, Loughlin appears to have decided on a radically new course of action to save his wife, literally within the extreme metaphor of his own insanity. His wife's subsequent murder, his own breakdown and the entire period of his incarceration at Springfield must thus be regarded as a terminal metaphor, a labyrinth building itself from within which he began at last to unravel by writing *Notes Towards a Mental Breakdown*.

8

Again (cf. footnote 1) the use of the indefinite article underlines Loughlin's distance from his own crisis, which he now (January 1975) regarded as a complex of events and possibilities existing outside himself. Leaving his wife—who was bedridden in their Hendon apartment, cared for by Dr. Douglas, her old friend and former lover—Loughlin embarked on a series of extended excursions around London and the Home Counties. Usually accompanied by Leonora Carrington, he visited the Mullard radio-observatory near Cambridge and the huge complex of early warning radar installations on the Suffolk coast. For some reason, empty swimming-pools and multi-storey car-parks exerted a particular fascination. All these he seems to have approached as the constituents of "A" mental breakdown which he might choose to recruit at a later date.

9

How far the events of this period (January to March, 1975) were mentalised by Loughlin is hard to decide. To some extent all the factors surrounding Judith Loughlin's death—even the identity of her husband—may be said to be fictions of an overworked imagination, as meaningless and as meaningful as the elaborate but ultimately metaphorical footnotes in *BP Codex*. Was Judith Loughlin suffering from cancer of the pancreas? What was the role of the young lexicographer and ice-dance champion, Richard Northrop, whom Loughlin treated at the London Clinic for migraine? The unmistakable elements of some kind of homo-erotic involvement hover in the background of their relationship. It may be that the apparent physical closeness of the two men masks the fact that they were one and the same man. Their holiday together, the three distressing weeks spent at the Gatwick hotel, the brilliant but neurasthenic young man accompanied by the disintegrating older doctor, and the shot fired at the airport security guard, inevitably recall Rimbaud and Verlaine, but

Loughlin may well have passed the time there on his own waiting for his wife to appear with her lover, devising the identity of the lexicographer as a psychic "detonator." It is known that he spent much of his spare time stumbling around the airport ice-rink.

10

A vital role seems to have been played during these last days by the series of paintings by Max Ernst entitled *Garden Airplane Traps*, pictures of low walls, like the brick-courses of an uncompleted maze across which long wings have crashed, from whose joints visceral growths are blossoming. In the last entry of his diary, the day before his wife's death, March 27, 1975, Loughlin wrote with deceptive calm: "Ernst said it all in his comment on these paintings, the model for everything I've tried to do . . .

"Voracious gardens in turn devoured by a vegetation which springs from the debris of trapped airplanes . . . Everything is astonishing, heartbreaking and possible . . . with my eyes I see the nymph Echo . . ."

Shortly before writing out these lines he had returned to his Hendon apartment to find that his wife had set off for Gatwick Airport with Dr Douglas, intending to catch the 3:15 pm flight to Geneva the following day. After calling Richard Northrop, Loughlin drove straight to Elstree Flying Club.

11

The extent to which Loughlin retains any real "recall" of the events leading to his wife's death is doubtful. On occasions his memory is lucid and unbroken, but it soon becomes evident that he has re-mythologized the entire episode at Gatwick, as revealed in the following taped conversation between himself and Dr. Grumman.

GRUMMAN: You say that you then drove to Elstree. Why?
LOUGHLIN: I had rented an aircraft there—a Piper Twin Comanche.

GRUMMAN: I see. Anyway, you then flew across London and on down to Gatwick, where you paralyzed the airport for an hour by buzzing all the BEA jets parked on the ground.

LOUGHLIN: It was more meaningful than that. I knew that if I could find Judith's plane I could somehow fuse my aircraft with hers, in a kind of transfiguring . . .

GRUMMAN: . . . crash?

LOUGHLIN: I was convinced that then I could fly her to safety. It was the only way she would survive her cancer.

GRUMMAN: What actually happened?

LOUGHLIN: I landed and skidded into the nose-wheel of a VC10. Richard Northrop pulled me out. We had some sort of disagreement—he resented my dependence on him, and my involvement with Judith—and then the security guard was accidentally shot.

12

Although there is no doubt that Judith Loughlin had been

Apocalypse. A disquieting feature of this annual exhibition—to which the patients themselves were not invited—was the marked preoccupation of the paintings with the theme of world cataclysm, as if these long-incarcerated patients had sensed some seismic upheaval within the minds of their doctors and nurses. As Catherine Austen walked around the converted gymnasium these bizarre images, with their fusion of Eniwetok and Luna Park, Freud and Elizabeth Taylor, reminded her of the slides of exposed spinal levels in Travis's office. They hung on the enameled walls like the codes of insoluble dreams, the keys to a nightmare in which she had begun to play a more willing and calculated role. Primly she buttoned her white coat as Dr Nathan approached, holding his gold-tipped cigarette to one nostril. "Ah, Dr Austen ... What do you think of them? I see there's War in Hell."

Notes Towards a Mental Breakdown. The noise from the cine films of induced psychoses rose from the lecture theater below Travis's office. Keeping his back to the window behind his desk, he assembled the terminal documents he had collected with so much effort during the previous months: (1) Spectroheliogram of the sun; (2) Front elevation of balcony units, Hilton Hotel, London; (3) Transverse section through a Pre-Cambrian Trilobite; (4) "Chronograms" by E.J. Marey; (5) Photograph taken at noon, August 7th, 1945, of the sand-sea; Qattara Depression, Egypt; (6) Reproduction of Max Ernst's "Garden Airplane Traps"; (7) Fusing sequences for "Little Boy" and "Fat Boy," Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bombs. When he had finished Travis turned to the window. As usual, the white Pontiac had found a place in the crowded parking

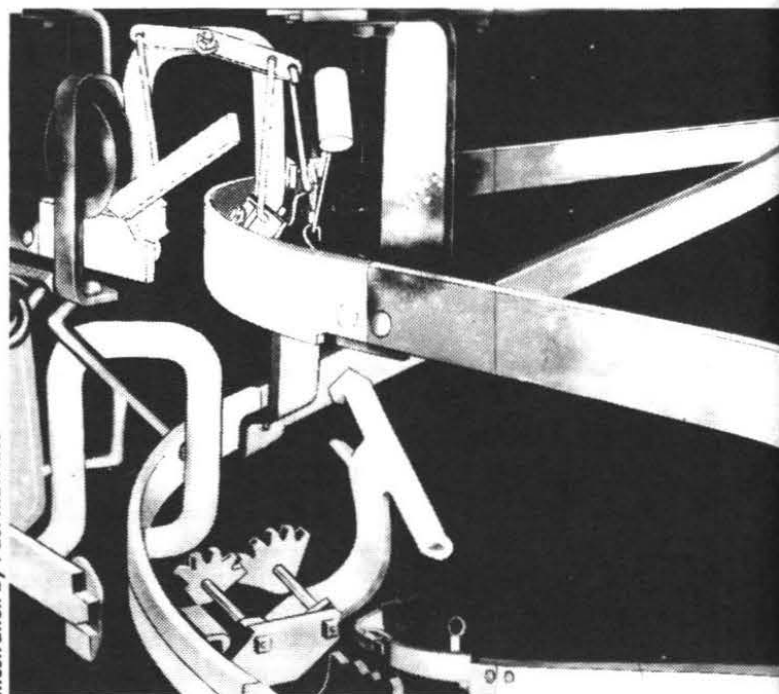


Illustration by Paul Mavrides

lot directly below him. The two occupants watched him through the tinted windshield.

Internal Landscapes. Controlling the tremor in his left hand, Travis studied the thin-shouldered man sitting opposite him. Through the transom the light from the empty corridor shone into the darkened office. His face was partly hidden by the peak of his flying cap, but Travis recognized the bruised features of the bomber pilot whose photographs, torn from the pages of *Newsweek* and *Paris-Match*, had been strewn around the bedroom of the shabby hotel in Earls Court. His eyes stared at Travis, their focus sustained only by a continuous effort. For some reason the planes of his face failed to intersect, as if their true resolution took place in some as yet invisible dimension, or required elements other than those provided by his own character and musculature. Why had he come to the hospital, seeking out Travis among the 30 physicians? Travis had tried to speak to him, but the tall man made no reply, standing by the instrument cabinet like a tattered mannequin. His immature but at the same time aged face seemed as rigid as a plaster mask. For months Travis had seen his solitary figure, shoulders hunched inside the flying jacket, in more and more newsreels, as an extra in war films, and then as a patient in an elegant ophthalmic film on nystagmus—the series of giant geometric models, like sections of abstract landscapes, had made him uneasily aware that their long-delayed confrontation would soon take place.

The Weapons Range. Travis stopped the car at the end

of the lane. In the sunlight he could see the remains of the outer perimeter fence, and beyond this a rusting quonset and the iron-stained roofs of the bunkers. He crossed the ditch and walked towards the fence, within 5 minutes found an opening. A disused runway moved through the grass. Partly concealed by the sunlight, the camouflage patterns across the complex of towers and bunkers 400 yards away revealed half-familiar contours—the model of a face, a posture, a neural interval. A unique event would take place here. Without thinking, Travis murmured, “Elizabeth Taylor.” Abruptly there was a blare of sound above the trees.

Dissociation: Who Laughed at Nagasaki? Travis ran across the broken concrete to the perimeter fence. The helicopter plunged towards him, engine roaring through the trees, its fans churning up a storm of leaves and paper. Twenty yards from the fence Travis stumbled among the coils of barbed wire. The helicopter was banking sharply, the pilot crouched over the controls. As Travis ran forward the shadows of the diving machine flickered around him like cryptic ideograms. Then the craft pulled away and flew off across the bunkers. When Travis reached the car, holding the torn knee of his trousers, he saw the young woman in the white dress walking down the lane. Her disfigured face looked back at him with indulgent eyes. Travis started to call to her, but stopped himself. Exhausted, he vomited across the roof of the car.

Serial Deaths. During this period, as he sat in the rear seat of the Pontiac, Travis was preoccupied by his separation from the normal tokens of life he had accepted for so long. His wife, the patients at the hospital (resistance agents in the “world war” he hoped to launch), his undecided affair with Catherine Austen—these became as fragmentary as the faces of Elizabeth Taylor and Sigmund Freud on the advertising hoardings, as unreal as the war the film companies had started in Vietnam. As he moved deeper into his own psychosis, whose onset he had recognized during his year at the hospital, he welcomed this journey into a familiar land, zones of twilight. *At dawn, after driving all night, they reached the suburbs of Hell. The pale flares from the petrochemical plants illuminated the wet cobbles. No one would meet them there.* His 2 companions, the bomber pilot at the wheel in the faded flying suit and the beautiful young woman with radiation burns, never spoke to him. Now and then the young woman would look round at him with a faint smile on her deformed mouth. Deliberately, Travis made no response, hesitant to commit himself into her hands. Who were they, these strange twins, couriers from his own unconscious? For hours they drove through the endless suburbs of the city. The hoardings multiplied around them, walling the streets with giant replicas of napalm bombings in Vietnam, the serial deaths of Elizabeth Taylor and Marilyn Monroe terraced in the landscapes of Dien Bien Phu and the Mekong Delta.

Casualties Union. At the young woman’s suggestion, Travis joined the C.U., and with a group of 30 housewives practiced the simulation of wounds. Later they would tour with Red Cross demonstration teams. Massive cerebral damage and abdominal bleeding in automobile accidents could be imitated within half an hour, aided by the application of suitable colored resins. Convincing radiation burns required

careful preparation, and might involve some 3 to 4 hours of makeup. Death, by contrast, was a matter of lying prone. Later, in the apartment they had taken overlooking the zoo, Travis washed the wounds off his hands and face. This curious pantomime, overlaid by the summer evening stench of the animals, seemed performed solely to pacify his 2 companions. In the bathroom mirror he could see the tall figure of the pilot, his slim face with its lost eyes hidden below the peaked cap, and the young woman in the white dress watching him from the lounge. Her intelligent face, like that of a student, occasionally showed a sudden nervous reflex of hostility. Already Travis found it difficult not to think of her continuously. When would she speak to him? Perhaps, like himself, she realized that his instructions would come from other levels?

Pirate Radio. There were a number of secret transmissions to which Travis listened: (1) medullary: images of dunes and craters, pools of ash that contained the terraced faces of Freud, Eatherly, and Garbo; (2) thoracic; the rusting shells of U-boats beached in the cove at Tsingtao, near the ruined German forts where the Chinese guides smeared bloody handprints on the caisson walls; (3) sacral; V.J.-Day, the bodies of Japanese troops in the paddy fields at night. The next day, as he walked back to Shanghai, the peasants were planting rice among the swaying legs. Memories of others than himself, together these messages moved to some kind of focus. The dead face of the bomber pilot hovered by the door, projection of World War III’s unknown soldier. His presence exhausted Travis.

Marey’s Chronograms. Dr Nathan passed the illustration across his desk to Margaret Travis. “Marey’s Chronograms are multiple-exposure photographs in which the element of time is visible—the walking human figure, for example, represented as a series of dune-like lumps.” Dr Nathan accepted a cigarette from Catherine Austen, who had sauntered forward from the incubator at the rear of the office. Ignoring her quizzical eye, he continued, “Your husband’s brilliant feat was to reverse the process. Using a series of photographs of the most commonplace objects—this office, let us say, a panorama of New York skyscrapers, the naked body of a woman, the face of a catatonic patient—he treated them as if they already were chronograms and *extracted* the element of time.” Dr Nathan lit his cigarette with care. “The results were extraordinary. A very different world was revealed. The familiar surroundings of our lives, even our smallest gestures, were seen to have totally altered meanings. As for the reclining figure of a film star, or this hospital . . .”

“Was my husband a doctor, or a patient?” Dr Nathan nodded sagely, glancing over his fingertips at Catherine Austen. What had Travis seen in those time-filled forbidding eyes? “Mrs Travis, I’m not sure if the question is valid any longer. These matters involve a relativity of a very different kind. What we are concerned with now are the implications—in particular, the complex of ideas and events represented by World War III. Not the political and military possibility, but the inner identity of such a notion. For us, perhaps, World War III is now little more than a sinister pop art display, but for your husband it has become an expression of the failure of his psyche to accept the fact of its own

consciousness, and of his revolt against the present continuum of time and space. Dr Austen may disagree, but it seems to me that his intention is to start World War III, though not, of course, in the usual sense of the term. The blitzkriegs will be fought out on the spinal battlefields, in terms of the postures we assume, of our traumas mimetized in the angle of a wall or balcony."

Zoom Lens. Dr Nathan stopped. Reluctantly, his eyes turned across the room to the portrait camera mounted on its tripod by the consulting couch. How could he explain to this sensitive and elusive woman that her own body, with its endlessly familiar geometry, its landscapes of touch and feeling, was their only defence against her husband's all-too-plain intentions? Above all, how could he invite her to pose for what she would no doubt regard as a set of obscene photographs?

The Skin Area. After their meeting, at the exhibition of war wounds at the Royal Society of Medicine's new conference hall, Travis and Catherine Austen returned to the apartment overlooking the zoo. In the lift Travis avoided her hands as she tried to embrace him. He led her into the bedroom. Mouth pursed, she watched as he showed her the set of Enneper's models. "What are they?" She touched the interlocking cubes and cones, mathematical models of pseudo-space. "Fusing sequences, Catherine—for a doomsday weapon." Later, the sexual act between them became a hasty eucharist of the angular dimensions of the apartment. In the postures they assumed, in the contours of thigh and thorax, Travis explored the geometry and volumetric time of the bedroom, and later of the curvilinear dome of the Festival Hall, the jutting balconies of the London Hilton, and lastly of the abandoned weapons range. Here the circular target areas became identified in Travis's mind with the concealed breasts of the young woman with radiation burns. Searching for her, he and Catherine Austen drove around the darkening countryside, lost among the labyrinth of hoardings. The faces of Sigmund Freud and Jeanne Moreau presided over their last bitter hours.

Neoplasm. Later, escaping from Catherine Austen, and from the forbidding figure of the bomber pilot, who now watched him from the roof of the lion house, Travis took refuge in a small suburban house among the reservoirs of Staines and Shepperton. He sat in the empty sitting-room overlooking the shabby garden. From the white bungalow beyond the clapboard fence his middle-aged neighbor dying of cancer watched him through the long afternoons. Her handsome face veiled by the laced curtains resembled that of a skull. All day she would pace around the small bedroom. At the end of the second month, when the doctor's visits became more frequent, she undressed by the window, exposing her emaciated body through the veiled curtains. Each day, as he watched from the cubular room, he saw different aspects of her eroded body, the black breasts reminding him of the eyes of the bomber pilot, the abdominal scars like the radiation burns of the young woman. After her death he followed the funeral cars among the reservoirs in the white Pontiac.

The Lost Symmetry of the Blastosphere. "This reluc-

tance to accept the fact of his own consciousness", Dr Nathan wrote, "may reflect certain positional difficulties in the immediate context of time and space. The right-angle spiral of a stairwell may remind him of similar biases within the chemistry of the biological kingdom. This can be carried to remarkable lengths—for example, the jutting balconies of the Hilton Hotel had become identified with the lost gill-slits of the dying film actress, Elizabeth Taylor. Much of Travis's thought concerns what he terms "the lost symmetry of the blastosphere"—the primitive precursor of the embryo that is the last structure to preserve perfect symmetry in all planes. It occurred to Travis that our own bodies may conceal the rudiments of a symmetry not only about the vertical axis but also the horizontal. One recalls Goethe's notion that the skull is formed of modified vertebrae—similarly, the bones of the pelvis may constitute the remains of a lost sacral skull. The resemblance between histologies of lung and kidney has long been noted. Other correspondences of respiratory and urino-genital function come to mind, enshrined both in popular mythology (the supposed equivalence in size of nose and penis) and in psychoanalytic symbolism (the "eyes" are a common code for the testicles). In conclusion, it seems that Travis's extreme sensitivity to the volumes and geometry of the world around him, and their immediate translation into psychological terms, may reflect a belated attempt to return to a symmetrical world, one that will recapture the perfect symmetry of the blastosphere, and the acceptance of the "Mythology of the Amniotic Return." In his mind World War III represents the final self-destruction and imbalance of an asymmetric world, the last suicidal spasm of the dextro-rotatory helix, DNA. The human organism is an atrocity exhibition at which he is an unwilling spectator..."

Eurydice in a Used-car Lot. Margaret Travis paused in the empty foyer of the cinema, looking at the photographs in the display frames. In the dim light beyond the curtains she saw the dark-suited figure of Captain Webster, the muffled velvet veiling his handsome eyes. The last few weeks had been a nightmare—Webster with his long-range camera and obscene questions. He seemed to take a certain sardonic pleasure in compiling this one-man Kinsey Report on her ... positions, planes, where and when Travis placed his hands on her body—why didn't he ask Catherine Austen? As for wanting to magnify the photographs and paste them up on enormous hoardings, ostensibly to save her from Travis ... She glanced at the stills in the display frames, of this elegant and poetic film in which Cocteau had brought together all the myths of his own journey of return. On an impulse, to annoy Webster, she stepped through the side exit and walked away past a small yard of cars with numbered windshields. Perhaps she would make her descent here. Eurydice in a used-car lot?

The Concentration City. In the night air they passed the shells of concrete towers, blockhouses half buried in rubble, giant conduits filled with tires, overhead causeways crossing broken roads. Travis followed the bomber pilot and the young woman along the faded gravel. They walked across the foundation of a guard-house into the weapons range. The concrete aisles stretched into the darkness across the airfield. *In the suburbs of Hell Travis walked in the flaring light of the petrochemical plants. The ruins of abandoned cinemas stood at the street corners, faded hoardings facing them across the empty streets. In a*

EDITOR'S NOTE. *From abundant internal evidence it seems clear that the text printed below is the index to the unpublished and perhaps suppressed autobiography of a man who may well have been one of the most remarkable figures of the 20th century. Yet of his existence nothing is publicly known, although his life and work appear to have exerted a profound influence on the events of the past 50 years. Physician and philosopher, man of action and patron of the arts, sometime claimant to the English throne and founder of a new religion, Henry Rhodes Hamilton was evidently the intimate of the greatest men and women of our age. After World War II he founded a new movement of spiritual regeneration, but private scandal and public concern at his growing megalomania, culminating in his proclamation of himself as a*

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new divinity, seem to have led to his downfall. Incarcerated within an unspecified government institution, he presumably spent his last years writing his autobiography, of which this index is the only surviving fragment.

A substantial mystery still remains. Is it conceivable that all traces of his activities could be erased from our records of the period? Is the suppressed autobiography itself a disguised roman a clef, in which the fictional hero exposes the secret identities of his historical contemporaries? And what is the true role of the indexer himself, clearly a close friend of the writer, who first suggested that he embark on his autobiography? This ambiguous and shadowy figure has taken the unusual step of indexing himself into his own index. Perhaps the entire compilation is nothing more than a figment of the overwrought imagination of some deranged lexicographer. Alternatively, the index may be wholly genuine, and the only glimpse we have into a world hidden from us by a gigantic conspiracy, of which Henry Rhodes Hamilton is the greatest victim.

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WHY I WANT TO FUCK RONALD REAGAN



At the 1980 Republican Nominating Convention during which Ronald Reagan was selected as the Presidential contender, hundreds of copies of the following leaflet were distributed, causing bewilderment and perplexed scrutiny (it bore the official seal of the Republican party; some ex-situationists were responsible for this black-humor *critique*). But it had been written 13 years before, in 1967. J. G. Ballard's accurate prophesy of Reagan as a future U.S. President in this excerpt from *The Atrocity Exhibition* was not an accident of arbitrary choice, but an intuitive leap based upon his analysis of the accelerating effects of mass media on society and politics.

Since the rise of television, Hollywood studios have set the major social trends for the U.S. and most of the world. Today, the media-zation of daily life is widely accepted—without, however, being analyzed, understood, and, if necessary, *resisted*. Note the resigned tone of this quotation from a recent *Newsweek*:
"Increasingly our politics has become the politics of impersonation ... the marketing of sheer illusions ... the sitcom politics everyone so enjoys. Cliché that it is by now, it is surely no accident that an accomplished actor sits in the White House ..."

It may be that for most people "reality" and "truth" are now outmoded concepts, whose functional usefulness has been crushed under sheer weight of numbers of images, illusions, sitcoms, advertisements and roles proffered by media everywhere. When the most powerful "role" in the world is occupied by a "B-grade actor," and this role is accepted by the vast majority of people as credible and real, obviously the most fundamental distinctions between illusion and reality no longer matter ... And, by extension, those who settle for this parodic state of affairs deserve what they get—which, at worst, may be their own annihilation sparked by a "limited nuclear war" ...

The marketing of illusions (accompanied by deeply humorous analysis of their psychosexual genesis) continues to be a major subject of investigation by J. G. Ballard ...

Official Republican 1980 Presidential Survey



Conducted by the National Republican Congressional Committee • P.O. Box 2837 • Washington, D.C. 20013

During these assassination fantasies

Ronald Reagan and the conceptual auto-disaster. Numerous studies have been conducted upon patients in terminal paresis (G.P.I.), placing Reagan in a series of simulated auto-crashes, e.g. multiple pile-ups, head-on collisions, motorcade attacks (fantasies of Presidential assassinations remained a continuing pre-occupation, subjects showing a marked polymorphic fixation on windshields and rear-trunk assemblies). Powerful erotic fantasies of an anal-sadistic character surrounded the image of the Presidential contender. Subjects were required to construct the optimum auto-disaster victim by placing a replica of Reagan's head on the unretouched photographs of crash fatalities. In 82 per cent of cases massive rear-end collisions were selected with a preference for expressed faecal matter and rectal haemorrhages. Further tests were conducted to define the optimum model-year. These indicate that a three-year model lapse with child victims provide the maximum audience excitation (confirmed by manufacturers' studies of the optimum auto-disaster). It is hoped to construct a rectal modulus of Reagan and the auto-disaster of maximized audience arousal.

Tallis became increasingly obsessed

Motion picture studies of Ronald Reagan reveal characteristic patterns of facial tonus and musculature associated with homo-erotic behaviour. The continuing tension of buccal sphincters and the recessive tongue role tally with earlier studies of facial rigidity (cf., Adolf Hitler, Nixon). Slow-motion cine films of campaign speeches exercised a marked erotic effect upon an audience of spastic children. Even with mature adults the verbal material was found to have minimal effect, as demonstrated by substitution of an edited tape giving diametrically opposed opinions. Parallel films of rectal images revealed a sharp upsurge in anti-Semitic and concentration camp fantasies (cf., anal-sadistic fantasies in deprived children induced by rectal stimulation).

with the pudenda of the Presidential contender

Incidence of orgasms in fantasies of sexual intercourse with Ronald Reagan. Patients were provided with assembly kit photographs of sexual partners during intercourse. In each case Reagan's face was superimposed upon the original partner. Vaginal intercourse with 'Reagan' proved uniformly disappointing, producing orgasm in 2 per cent of subjects. Axillary, buccal, navel, aural and orbital modes produced proximal erections. The preferred mode of entry overwhelmingly proved to be the rectal. After a preliminary course in anatomy it was found that caecum and transverse colon also provided excellent sites for excitation. In an extreme 12 per cent of cases, the simulated anus of post-colostomy surgery generated spontaneous orgasm in 98 per cent of penetrations. Multiple-track cine films were constructed of 'Reagan' in intercourse during (a) campaign speeches, (b) rear-end auto-

collisions with one and three-year-old model changes, (c) with rear exhaust assemblies, (d) with Vietnamese child-atrocity victims.

mediated to him by a thousand television screens.

Sexual fantasies in connection with Ronald Reagan. The genitalia of the Presidential contender exercised a continuing fascination. A series of imaginary genitalia were constructed using (a) the mouth-parts of Jacqueline Kennedy, (b) a Cadillac rear-exhaust vent, (c) the assembly kit prepucce of President Johnson, (d) a child-victim of sexual assault. In 89 per cent of cases, the constructed genitalia generated a high incidence of self-induced orgasm. Tests indicate the masturbatory nature of the Presidential contender's posture. Dolls consisting of plastic models of Reagan's alternate genitalia were found to have a disturbing effect on deprived children.

The motion picture studies of Ronald Reagan

Reagan's hair style. Studies were conducted on the marked fascination exercised by the Presidential contender's hair style. 65 per cent of male subjects made positive connections between the hair-style and their own pubic hair. A series of optimum hair-styles were constructed.

created a scenario of the conceptual orgasm,

The conceptual role of Reagan. Fragments of Reagan's cinetized postures were used in the construction of model psychodramas in which the Reagan-figure played the role of husband, doctor, insurance salesman, marriage counsellor, etc. The failure of these roles to express any meaning reveals the non-functional character of Reagan. Reagan's success therefore indicates society's periodic need to re-conceptualize its political leaders. Reagan thus appears as a series of posture concepts, basic equations which re-formulate the roles of aggression and anality.

a unique ontology of violence and disaster.

Reagan's personality. The profound anality of the Presidential contender may be expected to dominate the United States in the coming years. By contrast, the late J. F. Kennedy remained the prototype of the oral object, usually conceived in pre-pubertal terms. In further studies sadistic psychopaths were given the task of devising sex fantasies involving Reagan. Results confirm the probability of Presidential figures being perceived primarily in genital terms; the face of L. B. Johnson is clearly genital in significant appearance—the nasal prepucce, scrotal jaw, etc. Faces were seen as either circumcised (J.F.K., Khrushchev) or uncircumcised (L.B.J., Adenauer). In assembly-kit tests Reagan's face was uniformly perceived as a penile erection. Patients were encouraged to devise the optimum sex-death of Ronald Reagan.

PLAN FOR ASSASSINATION OF JACQUELINE KENNEDY



In his dream of Zapruder frame 235

Motion picture studies of four female subjects who have achieved world-wide celebrity (Brigitte Bardot, Jacqueline Kennedy, Madame Chiang Kai Shek, Princess Margaret), reveal common patterns of posture, facial tonus, pupil and respiratory responses. Leg stance was taken as a significant indicator of sexual arousal. The intra-pateller distance (estimated) varied from a maximum 24.9 (Jacqueline Kennedy) to a minimum 22 cm. (Madame Chiang). Infrared studies reveal conspicuous heat emission from the axillary fossae at rates which tallied with general psychomotor acceleration.

Tallis was increasingly preoccupied

Assassination fantasies in tabes dorsalis (general paralysis of the insane). The choice of victim in these fantasies was taken as the most significant yardstick. All considerations of motive and responsibility were eliminated from the questionnaire. The patients were deliberately restricted in their choice to female victims. Results (percentile of 272 patients): Jacqueline Kennedy 62%, Madame Chiang 14%, Jeanne Moreau 13%, Princess Margaret 11%. A montage photograph was constructed on the basis of these replies which showed an 'optimum' victim. (Left orbit and zygomatic arch of Mrs Kennedy, exposed nasal septum of Miss Moreau, etc.). This photograph was subsequently shown to disturbed children with positive results. Choice of assassination site varied from Dealey Plaza 49% to Isle du Levant 2%. The weapon of preference was the Mannlicher-Carcano. A motorcade was selected in the overwhelming majority of cases as the ideal target mode with the Lincoln Continental as the vehicle of preference. On the basis of these studies a model of the most effective assassination-complex was devised. The presence of Madame Chiang in Dealey Plaza was an unresolved element.

by the figure of the President's wife.

Involuntary orgasms during the cleaning of automobiles. Studies reveal an increasing incidence of sexual climaxes among persons cleaning automobiles. In many cases the subject remained unaware of the discharge of semen across the polished paintwork and complained to his spouse about birds. One isolated case reported to a psychiatric after-care unit involved the first definitive sexual congress with a rear exhaust assembly. It is believed that the act was conscious. Consultations with manufacturers have led to modifications of rear trim and styling, in order to neutralize these erogenous zones, or if possible transfer them to more socially acceptable areas within the passenger compartment. The steering assembly has been selected as a suitable focus for sexual arousal.

The planes of her face, like the

The arousal potential of automobile styling has been widely examined for several decades by the automotive industry. However, in the study under consideration involving 152 subjects, all known to have experienced more than 3 involuntary orgasms with their automobiles, the car of preference

was found to be (1) Buick Riviera, (2) Chrysler Imperial, (3) Chevrolet Impala. However, a small minority (2 subjects) expressed a significant preference for the Lincoln Continental, if possible in the adapted presidential version. (Q.v. conspiracy theories.) Both subjects had purchased cars of this make and experienced continuing erotic fantasies in connection with the trunk mouldings. Both preferred the automobile inclined on a downward ramp.

cars of the abandoned motorcade

Cine-films as group therapy. Patients were encouraged to form a film production unit, and were given full freedom as to choice of subject matter, cast and technique. In all cases explicitly pornographic films were made. Two films in particular were examined: (1) A montage sequence using portions of the faces of (a) Madame Ky, (b) Jeanne Moreau, (c) Jacqueline Kennedy (Johnson oath-taking). The use of a concealed stroboscopic device produced a major optical flutter in the audience, culminating in psychomotor disturbances and aggressive attacks directed against the still photographs of the subjects hung from the walls of the theater. (2) A film of automobile accidents devised as a cinematic version of Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed*. By chance it was found that slow-motion sequences of this film had a marked sedative effect, reducing blood pressure, respiration and pulse rates. Hypnagogic images were produced freely by patients. The film was also found to have a marked erotic content.

mediated to him the complete silence

Mouth-parts. In the first study, portions were removed from photographs of 3 well-known figures: Madame Chiang, Elizabeth Taylor, Jacqueline Kennedy. Patients were asked to fill in the missing areas. Mouth-parts provided a particular focus for aggression, sexual fantasies and retributive fears. In a subsequent test the original portion containing the mouth was replaced and the remainder of the face removed. Again particular attention was focused on the mouth-parts. Images of the mouth-parts of Madame Chiang and Jacqueline Kennedy had a notable hypotensive role. An optimum mouth-image of Madame Chiang and Mrs Kennedy was constructed.

of the plaza, the geometry of a murder

Sexual behavior of witnesses in Dealey Plaza. Detailed studies were conducted of the 552 witnesses in Dealey Plaza on November 22nd (Warren Report). Data indicate a significant upswing in (a) frequency of sexual intercourse, (b) incidence of polyperversion behavior. These results accord with earlier studies of the sexual behavior of spectators at major automobile accidents (=minimum of one death). Correspondences between the 2 groups studied indicate that for the majority of the spectators the events in Dealey Plaza were unconsciously perceived as those of a massive multiple-sex auto disaster, with consequent liberation of aggressive and polymorphously perverse drives. The role of Mrs Kennedy, and of her stained clothing, requires no further analysis.

"But I won't cry till it's all over." ■■■■■■■■■■



Illustration by Paul Mavrides

2:15 PM



Lloret de Mar, Apartamentos California — I am looking into a silent world. Through the viewfinder of this cine-camera, set at its maximum field, I can see the Hotel Coral Playa three hundred yards along the beach, covered by a desert light so glazed that it would embalm Pharaoh. It's hard to believe that the sea is only a few feet to the right of frame—with this dense powdery light we could be at Karnak, in that tourist hotel by the necropolis where Helen befriended her Stuttgart dentist and first set in train this epic of the amateur cinema. The ultimate home movie, perhaps, but so far everything has gone well, thanks to \$2,500's worth of Nikon Zoomatic and an obliging Barcelona camera specialist. Renting this apartment was the only difficult moment—delivering a second key to my door, did the suspicious Swedish manager catch a glimpse of the complex tripods and clamps I was assembling by the bedroom window? Like the barrette of some sinister assassination weapon, which it is in a way. But this second-rate apartment building provides the only suitable vantage point. The 15-storey facade of the Coral Playa must exactly fill the opening sequence—in an hour the automatic zoom will carry me along the carretera, past the hundreds of parked cars and beached speedboats, to within three feet of my target within the bedroom of our tenth-floor hotel suite. A miracle of Japanese lens-cutting. Thinking of the electrifying image, worthy of Bergman or Polanski, that will be the climax of this film almost derails my mind. I listen to the faint susurrus of the zoom motor, the sound of well-bred Osaka matrons at a flower-arrangement course. Despite everything, the degrading but exciting months of anger and suspicion, I feel the first hint of an erection.

2:19 PM



Already I am closer to the Coral Playa, the equivalent of perhaps 200 yards away. For the first time, I can pick out our own suite, Helen's black water-skis arranged like runes on the balcony. Now and then something flicks through the afternoon light, a bottle-top or cigarette packet flung from one of the unseen apartment blocks on the left. Lying here on a raised couch in this darkened bedroom it is hard to believe that the Coral Playa exists at all except as a figment of this viewfinder. But the rectilinear facade of the hotel is sharper. The fifteen floors are each taking on a separate identity. There are differences of tone, subtle declensions of balcony geometry that hint at the personalities of the people behind them. The varying angles of the shutters, the beach umbrellas and bikinis hanging on improvised lines, constitute an elaborate personal notation, a complex of ciphers that would send a semiologist into trance. Almost no sky surrounds the hotel, and half the lurid electrographic sign on the roof has been cut away. The image of the hotel's facade, its 150 balconies, is an increasingly abstract entity. As yet there is no sign of

movement—Helen will still be on the bed where I left her, a towel around her head, reading her shower-damp copy of *American Vogue* as I set off ostensibly for Barcelona. The guests are still finishing their gaspacho and paella in the hotel restaurant. In the main ground-floor entrance I can identify several of my neighbors sitting in the armchairs and talking to the lobby clerks. They resemble bored marionettes, unable to sustain their roles in this drama in which I have cast them. My main concern is with the two balconies of our suite and the cluster of adjacent rooms. Already the dark interiors are beginning to lighten, I can just distinguish the internal doors that lead to bathrooms and corridors...

Wait...! While my attention is fixed on my own bedroom, impatient for Helen to make her first appearance as the star of this film, I almost fail to notice that a man in a red bathrobe is standing on a balcony five floors above. An American journalist named Anderson, he is looking down at the entrance drive, where a black Mustang has pulled into one of the diagonal parking spaces. The overheated carapace is about to flow like tar, and for a moment I am too distracted to notice the young man hefting flippers and snorkel from the rear seat. Rade-makers! Panicking, I realize that the young Danish heart surgeon has returned half an hour earlier than I estimated. My zoom may close in on a shot bolt!

2:24 PM



I have calmed myself, straightened the damaged blind and realigned the tripod. In the last few minutes the scene before me has been totally transformed. Rademaekers has gone straight to the American's room, where he wanders about gesticulating with the flippers. Drink in hand, he seems unlikely to be visiting Helen in the next hour. The Nikon purrs smoothly, carrying me ever nearer the Coral Playa. Little more than an apparent hundred yards from me, the hotel has become a hive of activity as the guests return from the dining room and prepare for siesta. Already I recognize dozens of my neighbors in their bedrooms, the men taking off their shoes, the women testing the beachtowels on the balconies and examining their teeth in the dressing-table mirrors. These commonplace but almost meaningless activities have an extraordinary fascination, for years I have watched them in a hundred hotels. For once I am glad that Helen has failed to make her entrance. With her entrenched rationality, her over-calculated approach to life in general and the needs of her sexuality in particular, she has always failed to understand the real significance of my obsession with the private behavior of my neighbors. She cannot grasp that this aimless minor traffic around their bodies, the applications of sun-oil, the dabbing of scent into this or that fossa, represent a continuing authentication of their physical selves, a non-vocal gossip about their armpits and pudenda that no kinaesthetic language, beyond those provided by the instructions on a deodorant or lady-shaver, has yet been found to express. Fifty units of intense private activity, they edge closer to me. On the second floor the young wife of a Marseilles lawyer undresses to reveal a

breastless brown body like a catamite's, sits in bed with the sheet over her knees forming a white pyramid, a geometry of remarkable chasteness from which I move my eyes only when I notice that, at last, the central balcony of the film has been mounted by my wife.

2:28 PM 

A shame that there is no soundtrack. Rather than the Polanski or Fellini of the home movie I shall have to become its D.W. Griffith. With his architectural obsessions he would have appreciated the special merits of this film. I am now looking at the facade of the Coral Playa from a distance of fifty yards. Half a dozen floors are visible, a cluster of balconies at whose center stands my wife. Wayward and erotic, faithless spouse but excellent traveling companion, she is gazing, uncannily, straight towards my camera. The powdery light has cleared, and every detail of the hotel is exposed with the vividness of an hallucination—the rust stains leaking from the balcony rails, the drying swim suits and discarded paperbacks on the balcony tables, the unfamiliar brands of towel picked up in some provincial Mono-Prix. Oblivious of this plethora of detail swarming around her, Helen is brushing her hair with a reflex hand, revealing the strong muscles of her neck and making the greatest play with her profile for the benefit of the audience watching her from the balconies above and below. For all this attention, she is dressed discreetly in my white toweling robe, no doubt a signal to someone of my absence. Moving my eyes from her, I notice that on the surrounding balconies stands the full complement of her admirers, that troupe of beach-partners one of whom will play the supporting role in this film. Penelope with her suitors, and I with my Nikon-bow. Even the ever-faithful Argus is there in the bedroom behind her, the dented but still inflated rubber sea-lion which Helen bought me, with cruel irony, two years ago at Venice Lido, and which I, refusing to be outdone, have cared for devotedly ever since, much to her exasperation. . .

2:32 PM 

Helen has loosened my beach robe, exposing the entire upper hemisphere of her right breast. There is a quickening of heads and eyes. I feel a familiar surge of excitement as I make a last inventory of my rivals. Rademaekers, the pedantic Danish surgeon who took her snorkelling yesterday, has returned to his room three floors diagonally above ours. Even as he hunts for a clean shirt in his wardrobe he is still holding one of the flippers, like a sea-born land creature clinging obsessively to an obsolete organ. I eliminate him, and move to his neighbor, a thirty-year-old Brighton antique dealer, whose speedboat, during our first week, sat reversing in the shallows ten yards from the beach where Helen and I lay under our umbrellas. Engaging but unscrupulous, he too is taking in his opposition—principally Fradier, the Paris comic-strip publisher two floors above, leaning on his balcony rail beside his attractive wife while openly admiring Helen. But Fradier is moving out of frame, and by the logic of this film can be dropped from the cast list. As the camera moves nearer I approach the main stage of this vertical drama—a tier of fifteen balconies distributed among five floors, Helen at the center. Two floors below her, bare chested in the fierce sunlight, is a minor Italian film actor who arrived only yesterday, bringing with him an anthology of dubious sexual techniques which he had already displayed for Helen in the hotel

bar after dinner. His profession would make him my chief suspect, but he too is about to move out of frame, exiting from this reductive fable. . .

Helen is scrutinizing her eyes in a lacquered hand mirror. She plucks a stray hair from her brow line with the ruthlessness she always applies to her own body. Even thirty feet away, hovering in the air like an invisible angel, I find this violence unnerving. I realize that I have only been fully at ease with my wife while watching her through the viewfinder of a camera—even within the private space of our various hotel rooms I prefer her seen through a lens, emblematic of my own needs and fantasies rather than existing in her own right. At one time this rightly outraged her, but recently she has begun to play along with my obsession. For hours I watch her, picking her nose and arguing with me about something as I lie on the bed with a camera to my eye, fascinated by the shifting geometries of her thighs and shoulders, the diagrams of her face.

Helen has left the balcony. She tosses the mirror on to the bed, gazes with a pensive frown at the fading but still cheerful expression on the face of the sea-lion, and walks straight through the suite to the front door. Almost before I stifle a shout she has disappeared into the corridor. For the moment I am paralyzed. Under my beach-robe she is naked.











2:36 PM 

Where is she? The camera is closing with the Coral Playa at an unsettling speed. I wonder if the Nikon engineers have at last overreached themselves. I seem to be no more than ten feet from the facade of the hotel, I can almost reach out and touch the balconies. Only three of the suites are now in frame, our own sandwiched between the Lawrences above us, an affable English couple from Manchester, and a forty-year-old Irish pharmacologist below with whom we have made no contact. These three have involuntarily gate-crashed their way into my film. Meanwhile Helen could be anywhere in the hotel, with Rademaekers or the antique dealer, even with the comic-strip publisher if Mme Fradier has left for the beach. Fumbling with the tripod, I am about to realign the camera when Helen reappears, standing in the center of the Lawrences' sitting-room. Barefoot, hands in the pockets of my white beach-robe, she is talking to Lawrence, a handsome, sandy-haired accountant wearing nothing more than a string swim-slip over his ample crotch. But where is his wife? Is she in the hotel pool, or hidden from me by the lowered bedroom shutter, joining in the conversation through the open door? Confused by this unlikely tryst, I am ready to stop the camera when Lawrence and Helen embrace. I catch my breath, but their kiss is merely a light peck. With a wave, Helen takes a magazine from him and steps into the corridor. Thirty seconds later, as Lawrence wanders around the sitting-room patting his groin, Helen re-enters our suite. After a pause, she leaves the door ajar. Her actions are calm and unrushed, but totally conspiratorial. With aching relief, my loins are at full cock long before the heavily built figure of the Irish pharmacologist steps deferentially into the sitting-room and locks the door behind him.

2:42 PM 

Reverie of pain, lust and, above all, child-like hate, in which the slights and antagonisms of a lifetime are subsumed in this unresolvable confrontation between fear and desire, the need and refusal to face the basilisk stare of Helen's sexuality. . . all



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INTRODUCTION TO CRASH



"Over our lives preside the great twin leitmotifs of the 20th century—sex and paranoia." Supplementing the fictional investigations of *Crash*, Ballard in this essay further explicates the "nightmare marriage between sex and technology" taking place in our modern society—of the unfulfillable consumer, the unattainable superstar, and the imperfectible commodity. Our infantile world resembles one rapidly discarded stage set after another, and perhaps sudden violence—with a permanent effect—can supply a fixed meaning to a life ruled by shifting identities, transient delusions, and fickle desires.

This introduction to the French edition of *Crash* was first published in French by Calmann-Levy in 1974. It appeared in the original English in *Foundation* no. 9, November, 1975.

The marriage of reason and nightmare which has dominated the 20th century has given birth to an ever more ambiguous world. Across the communications landscape move the specters of sinister technologies and the dreams that money can buy. Thermonuclear weapons systems and soft drink commercials coexist in an overlit realm ruled by advertising and pseudoevents, science and pornography. Over our lives preside the great twin leitmotifs of the 20th century—sex and paranoia. Despite McLuhan's delight in high-speed information mosaics we are still reminded of Freud's profound pessimism in *Civilization and its Discontents*. Voyeurism, self-disgust, the infantile basis of our dreams and longings—these diseases of the psyche have now culminated in the most terrifying casualty of the century: the death of affect.

■ This demise of feeling and emotion has paved the way for all our most real and tender pleasures—in the excitements of pain and mutilation; in sex as the perfect arena, like a culture bed of sterile pus, for all the veronicas of our own perversions; in our moral freedom to pursue our own psychopathology as a game; and in our apparently limitless powers for conceptualization—what our children have to fear is not the cars on the highways of tomorrow but our own pleasure in calculating the most elegant parameters of their deaths.

■ To document the uneasy pleasures of living within this glaucous paradise has more and more become the role of science fiction. I firmly believe that science fiction, far from being an unimportant minor offshoot, in fact represents the main literary tradition of the 20th century, and certainly its oldest—a tradition of imaginative response to science and technology that runs in an intact line through H.G. Wells, Aldous Huxley, the writers of modern American science fiction, to such present-day innovators as William Burroughs.

■ The main "fact" of the 20th century is the concept of the unlimited possibility. This predicate of science and technol-

ogy enshrines the notion of a moratorium on the past—the irrelevancy and even death of the past—and the limitless alternatives available to the present. What links the first flight of the Wright brothers to the invention of the Pill is the social and sexual philosophy of the ejector seat.

■ Given this immense continent of possibility, few literatures would seem better equipped to deal with their subject matter than science fiction. No other form of fiction has the vocabulary of ideas and images to deal with the present, let alone the future. The dominant characteristic of the modern mainstream novel is its sense of individual isolation, its mood of introspection and alienation, a state of mind always assumed to be the hallmark of the 20th century consciousness.

■ Far from it. On the contrary, it seems to me that this is a psychology that belongs entirely to the 19th century, part of a reaction against the massive restraints of bourgeois society, the monolithic character of Victorianism and the tyranny of the paterfamilias, secure in his financial and sexual authority. Apart from its marked retrospective bias and its obsession with the subjective nature of experience, its real subject matter is the rationalization of guilt and estrangement. Its elements are introspection, pessimism and sophistication. Yet if anything befits the 20th century it is optimism, the iconography of mass merchandising, naivety and a guilt-free enjoyment of all the mind's possibilities.

■ The kind of imagination that now manifests itself in science fiction is not something new. Homer, Shakespeare and Milton all invented new worlds to comment on this one. The split of science fiction into a separate and somewhat disreputable genre is a recent development. It is connected with the near disappearance of dramatic and philosophical poetry and the slow shrinking of the traditional novel as it concerns itself more and more exclusively with the nuances of human relationships. Among those areas neglected by the traditional novel are, above all, the dynamics of human societies (the traditional novel tends to depict society as

static), and man's place in the universe. However crudely or naively, science fiction at least attempts to place a philosophical and metaphysical frame around the most important events within our lives and consciousness.

■ If I make this general defense of science fiction it is, obviously, because my own career as a writer has been involved with it for almost 20 years. From the very start, when I first turned to science fiction, I was convinced that the future was a better key to the present than the past. At the time, however, I was dissatisfied with science fiction's obsession with its two principal themes—outer space and the far future. As much for emblematic purposes as any theoretical or programmatic ones, I christened the new terrain I wished to explore *inner space*, that psychological domain (manifest, for example, in surrealist painting) where the inner world of the mind and the outer world of reality meet and fuse.

■ Primarily, I wanted to write a fiction about the present day. To do this in the context of the late 1950s, in a world where the call sign of Sputnik I could be heard on one's radio like the advance beacon of a new universe, required completely different techniques from those available to the 19th century novelist. In fact, I believe that if it were possible to scrap the whole of existing literature, and be forced to begin again without any knowledge of the past, all writers would find themselves inevitably producing something very close to science fiction.

■ Science and technology multiply around us. To an increasing extent they dictate the languages in which we speak and think. Either we use those languages, or we remain mute.

■ Yet, by an ironic paradox, modern science fiction became the first casualty of the changing world it anticipated and helped to create. The future envisaged by the science fiction of the 1940s and 1950s is already our past. Its dominant images, not merely of the first Moon flights and interplanetary voyages, but of our changing social and political relationships in a world governed by technology, now resemble huge pieces of discarded stage scenery. For me, this could be seen most touchingly in the film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which signified the end of the heroic period of modern science fiction—its lovingly imagined panoramas and costumes, its huge set pieces, reminded me of *Gone With the Wind*, a scientific pageant that became a kind of historical romance in reverse, a sealed world into which the hard light of contemporary reality was never allowed to penetrate.

■ Increasingly, our concepts of past, present and future are being forced to revise themselves. Just as the past itself, in social and psychological terms, became a casualty of Hiroshima and the nuclear age (almost by definition a period where we were all forced to think prospectively), so in its turn the future is ceasing to exist, devoured by the all-voracious present. We have annexed the future into our own present, as merely one of those manifold alternatives open to us. Options multiply around us, we live in an almost infantile world where any demand, any possibility, whether for lifestyles, travel, sexual roles and identities, can be satisfied instantly.

■ In addition, I feel that the balance between fiction and reality has changed significantly in the past decade. Increasingly their roles are reversed. We live in a world ruled by fictions of every kind—mass merchandising, advertising, politics conducted as a branch of advertising, the instant translation of science and technology into popular imagery, the



Illustration by Paul Mavrides

increasing blurring and intermingling of identities within the realm of consumer goods, the preempting of any free or original imaginative response to experience by the television screen. We live inside an enormous novel. For the writer in particular it is less and less necessary for him to invent the fictional content of his novel. The fiction is already there. The writer's task is to invent the reality.

■ In the past we have always assumed that the external world around us has represented reality, however confusing or uncertain, and that the inner world of our minds, its dreams, hopes, ambitions, represented the realm of fantasy and the imagination. These roles, too, it seems to me, have been reversed. The most prudent and effective method of dealing with the world around us is to assume that it is a complete fiction—conversely, the one small node of reality left to us is inside our own heads. Freud's classic distinction between the latent and manifest content of the dream, between the apparent and the real, now needs to be applied to the external world of so-called reality.

■ Given these transformations, what is the main task facing the writer? Can he, any longer, make use of the techniques and perspectives of the traditional 19th century novel, with its linear narrative, its measured chronology, its consular characters grandly inhabiting their domains within an ample time and space? Is his subject matter the sources of character and personality sunk deep in the past, the unhurried inspection of roots, the examination of the most subtle nuances of social behavior and personal relationships? Has the writer still the moral authority to invent a self-sufficient and self-enclosed world, to preside over his characters like an examiner, knowing all the questions in advance? Can he leave out anything he prefers not to understand, including his own motives, prejudices and psychopathology?

■ I feel myself that the writer's role, his authority and licence to act, has changed radically. I feel that, in a sense, the writer knows nothing any longer. He has no moral stance.

He offers the reader the contents of his own head, he offers a set of options and imaginative alternatives. His role is that of the scientist, whether on safari or in his laboratory, faced with a completely unknown terrain or subject. All he can do is to devise hypotheses and test them against the facts.

■ *Crash!* is such a book, an extreme metaphor for an extreme situation, a kit of desperate measures only for use in an extreme crisis. If I am right, and what I have done over the past few years is to rediscover the present for myself, *Crash!* takes up its position as a cataclysmic novel of the present day in line with my previous novels of world cataclysm set in the near or immediate future—*The Drowned World*, *The Drought* and *The Crystal World*.

■ *Crash!*, of course, is not concerned with an imaginary disaster, however imminent, but with a pandemic cataclysm institutionalized in all industrial societies that kills hundreds of thousands of people each year and injures millions. Do we see, in the car crash, a sinister portent of a nightmare marriage between sex and technology? Will modern technology provide us with hitherto undreamed-of means for tapping our own psychopathologies? Is this harnessing of our innate perversity conceivably of benefit to us? Is there some deviant logic unfolding more powerful than that provided by reason?

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

■ Needless to say, the ultimate role of *Crash!* is cautionary, a warning against that brutal, erotic and overlit realm that beckons more and more persuasively to us from the margins of the technological landscape. ■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■

FICTIONS OF EVERY KIND



"Even the worst science fiction . . . is better than the best conventional fiction." In the following essay, Ballard advocates a new literature of relevance.

First appearance: Books and Bookmen, February, 1971.

Everything is becoming science fiction. From the margins of an almost invisible literature has sprung the intact reality of the 20th century. What the writers of modern science fiction invent today, you and I will do tomorrow—or, more exactly, in about 10 years' time, though the gap is narrowing. Science fiction is the most important fiction that has been written for the last 100 years. The compassion, imagination, lucidity and vision of H.G. Wells and his successors, and

above all their grasp of the real identity of the 20th century, dwarf the alienated and introverted fantasies of James Joyce, Eliot and the writers of the so-called Modern Movement, a 19th century offshoot of bourgeois rejection. Given its subject matter, its eager acceptance of naiveté, optimism and possibility, the role and importance of science fiction can only increase. I believe that the reading of science fiction should be compulsory. Fortunately, compulsion will not be

necessary, as more and more people are reading it voluntarily. Even the worst science fiction is better—using as the yardstick of merit the mere survival of its readers and their imaginations—than the best conventional fiction. The future is a better key to the present than the past.

■ Above all, science fiction is likely to be the only form of literature which will cross the gap between the dying narrative fiction of the present and the cassette and videotape fictions of the near future. What can Saul Bellow and John Updike do that J. Walter Thompson, the world's largest advertising agency and its greatest producer of fiction, can't do better? At present science fiction is almost the only form of fiction which is thriving, and certainly the only fiction which has any influence on the world around it. The social novel is reaching fewer and fewer readers, for the clear reason that social relationships are no longer as important as the individual's relationship with the technological landscape of the late 20th century.

■ In essence, science fiction is a response to science and technology as perceived by the inhabitants of the consumer goods society, and recognizes that the role of the writer today has totally changed—he is now merely one of a huge army of people filling the environment with fictions of every kind. To survive, he must become far more analytic, approaching his subject matter like a scientist or engineer. If he is to produce fiction at all, he must out-imagine everyone else, scream louder, whisper more quietly. For the first time in the history of narrative fiction, it will require more than talent to become a writer. What special skills, proved against those of their fellow members of society, have Muriel Spark or Edna O'Brien, Kingsley Amis or Cyril Connolly? Sliding gradients point the way to their exits.

■ It is now some 15 years since the sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi, a powerful and original writer in his own right, remarked that the science fiction magazines produced in the suburbs of Los Angeles contained far more imagination and meaning than anything he could find in the literary periodicals of the day. Subsequent events have proved Paolozzi's sharp judgment correct in every respect. Fortunately, his own imagination has been able to work primarily within the visual arts, where the main tradition for the last century has been the tradition of the new. Within fiction, unhappily, the main tradition for all too long has been the tradition of the

old. Like the inmates of some declining institution, increasingly forgotten and ignored by the people outside, the leading writers and critics count the worn beads of their memories, intoning the names of the dead, dead who were not even the contemporaries of their own grandparents.

■ Meanwhile, science fiction, as my agent remarked to me recently in a pleasant tone, is spreading across the world like a cancer. A benign and tolerant cancer, like the culture of beaches. The time-lag of its acceptance narrows—I estimate it at present to be about 10 years. My guess is that the human being is a nervous and fearful creature, and nervous and fearful people detest change. However, as everyone becomes more confident, so they are prepared to accept change, the possibility of a life radically different from their own. Like green stamps given away at the supermarkets of chance and possibility, science fiction becomes the new currency of an ever-expanding future.

■ The one hazard facing science fiction, the Trojan horse being trundled towards its expanding ghetto—a high-rent area if there ever was one in fiction—is that faceless creature, literary criticism. Almost all the criticism of science fiction has been written by benevolent outsiders, who combine zeal with ignorance, like high-minded missionaries viewing the sex rites of a remarkably fertile aboriginal tribe and finding every laudable influence at work except the outstanding length of penis. The depth of penetration of the earnest couple, Lois and Stephen Rose (authors of *The Shattered Ring*), is that of a pair of practicing Christians who see in science fiction an attempt to place a new perspective on "man, nature, history and ultimate meaning." What they fail to realize is that science fiction is totally atheistic; those critics in the past who have found any mystical strains at work have been blinded by the camouflage. Science fiction is much more concerned with the significance of the gleam on an automobile instrument panel than on the deity's posterior—if Mother Nature has anything in science fiction, it is VD.

■ Most critics of science fiction trip into one of two pitfalls—either, like Kingsley Amis in *New Maps of Hell*, they try to ignore altogether the technological trappings and relate SF to the "mainstream" of social criticism, anti-utopian fantasies and the like (Amis's main prophecy for science fiction in 1957 and proved wholly wrong), or they



Illustrations by Paul Mavrides

attempt to apostrophize SF in terms of individual personalities, hopelessly rivaling the far-better financed efforts of American and British publishers to sell their fading wares by dressing their minor talents in the great-writer mantle. Science fiction has always been very much a corporate activity, its writers sharing a common pool of ideas, and the yardsticks of individual achievement do not measure the worth of the best writers, Bradbury, Asimov, Bernard Wolfe (*Limbo 90*) and Frederik Pohl. The anonymity of the majority of 20th-century writers of science fiction is the anonymity of modern technology; no more "great names" stand out than do in the design of consumer durables—or for that matter of Rheims Cathedral.

■ Who designed the 1971 Cadillac El Dorado, a complex of

visual, organic and psychological clues of infinitely more subtlety and relevance, stemming from a vastly older network of crafts and traditions than, say, the writings of Norman Mailer or the latest Weidenfeld or Cape miracle? The subject matter of SF is the subject matter of everyday life: the gleam on refrigerator cabinets, the contours of a wife's or husband's thighs passing the newsreel images on a color TV set, the conjunction of musculature and chromium artifact within an automobile interior, the unique postures of passengers on an airport escalator—all in all, close to the world of the Pop painters and sculptors, Paolozzi, Hamilton, Warhol, Wesselmann, Ruscha, among others. The great advantage of SF is that it can add one unique ingredient to this hot mix—words. Write! ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

TIME, MEMORY AND INNER SPACE



Here Ballard evocatively explores the relationship between childhood memories and adult creativity. A highly compressed yet complex essay, which originally appeared in *The Woman Journalist*, Spring 1963.

How far do the landscapes of one's childhood, as much as its emotional experiences, provide an inescapable background to all one's imaginative writing? Certainly my own earliest memories are of Shanghai during the annual long summer of floods, when the streets of the city were two or three feet deep in a brown silt-laden water, and where the surrounding countryside, in the center of the flood-table of the Yangtze, was an almost continuous mirror of drowned paddy fields and irrigation canals stirring sluggishly in the hot sunlight. On reflection it seems to me that the image of an immense half-submerged city overgrown by tropical vegetation, which forms the centerpiece of *The Drowned World*, is in some way a fusion of my childhood memories of Shanghai and those of my last 10 years in London.

■ One of the subjects of the novel is the journey of return made by the principal characters from the 20th century back into the paradisaical sun-filled world of a second Triassic age, and their gradually mounting awareness of the ambivalent motives propelling them into the emerging past. They realize that the uterine sea around them, the dark womb of the ocean mother, is as much the graveyard of their own individuality as it is the source of their lives, and perhaps their fears reflect my own uneasiness in reenacting the experiences of childhood and attempting to explore such dangerous ground.

■ Among the characteristic fauna of the Triassic age were the crocodiles and alligators, amphibian creatures at home in both the aquatic and terrestrial worlds, who symbolize for the hero of the novel the submerged dangers of his quest. Even now I can vividly remember the enormous ancient alligator housed in a narrow concrete pit, half-filled with

cigarette packets and ice-cream cartons in the reptile house at the Shanghai Zoo, who seemed to have been jerked forward reluctantly, so many tens of millions of years into the 20th century.

■ In many respects this fusion of past and present experiences, and of such disparate elements as the modern office buildings of central London and an alligator in a Chinese zoo, resembles the mechanisms by which dreams are constructed, and perhaps the great value of fantasy as a literary form is its ability to bring together apparently unconnected and dissimilar ideas. To a large extent all fantasy serves this purpose, but I believe that speculative fantasy, as I prefer to call the more serious fringe of science fiction, is an especially potent method of using one's imagination to construct a paradoxical universe where dream and reality become fused together, each retaining its own distinctive quality and yet in some way assuming the role of its opposite, and where by an undeniable logic black simultaneously becomes white.

■ Without in any way suggesting that the act of writing is a form of creative self-analysis, I feel that the writer of fantasy has a marked tendency to select images and ideas which directly reflect the internal landscapes of his mind, and the reader of fantasy must interpret them on this level, distinguishing between the manifest content, which may seem obscure, meaningless or nightmarish, and the latent content, the private vocabulary of symbols drawn by the narrative from the writer's mind. The dream worlds, synthetic landscapes and plasticity of visual forms invented by the writer of fantasy are external equivalents of the inner world of the psyche, and because these symbols take their impetus from the most formative and confused periods of our lives they

are often time-sculptures of terrifying ambiguity.

■ This zone I think of as "inner space," the internal landscape of tomorrow that is a transmuted image of the past, and one of the most fruitful areas for the imaginative writer. It is particularly rich in visual symbols, and I feel that this type of speculative fantasy plays a role very similar to that of surrealism in the graphic arts. The painters de Chirico, Dali and Max Ernst, among others, are in a sense the iconographers of inner space, all during their most creative periods concerned with the discovery of images in which internal and external reality meet and fuse. Dali, regrettably, is now in total critical eclipse, but his paintings, with their soft watches and minatory luminous beaches, are of almost magical potency, suffused by that curious ambivalence that

one can see elsewhere only on the serpentine faces in the paintings of Leonardo.

■ It is a curious thing that the landscapes of these painters, and of Dali in particular, are often referred to as dream-like, when in fact they must bear no resemblance to the vast majority of dreams, which in general take place within confined indoor settings, a cross between Kafka and Mrs Dale's Diary, and where fantastic images, such as singing flowers or sonic sculpture, appear as infrequently as they do in reality. This false identification, and the awareness that the landscapes and themes are reflections of some interior reality within our minds, is a pointer to the importance of speculative fantasy in the century of Hiroshima and Cape Canaveral.



LA JETEE

This film review of Chris Marker's La Jeteé, one of many Ballard has penned during his sub-career as freelance media critic, characteristically displays his dead-on instinct for the original. It first appeared in New Worlds, July 1966.

This strange and poetic film, a fusion of science fiction, psychological fable and photomontage, creates in its unique way a series of bizarre images of the inner landscapes of time. Apart from a brief three-second sequence—a young woman's hesitant smile, a moment of extraordinary poignancy, like a fragment of a child's dream—the 30-minute film is composed entirely of still photographs. Yet this succession of disconnected images is a perfect means of projecting the quantified memories and movements through time that are the film's subject matter.

■ The jetty of the title is the main observation platform at Orly Airport. The long pier reaches out across the concrete no-man's land, the departure point for other worlds. Giant jets rest on the apron beside the pier, metallic ciphers whose streamlining is a code for their passage through time. The light is powdery. The spectators on the observation platform have the appearance of mannequins. The hero is a small boy, visiting the airport with his parents. Suddenly there is a fragmented glimpse of a man falling. An accident has occurred, but while everyone is running to the dead man the small boy is looking instead at the face of a young woman by the rail. Something about this face, its expression of anxiety, regret and relief, and above all the obvious but unstated involvement of the young woman with the dead man, creates an image of extraordinary power in the boy's mind.

■ Years later, World War III breaks out. Paris is almost obliterated by an immense holocaust. A few survivors live on in the circular galleries below the Palais de Chaillot, like rats in some sort of abandoned test-maze warped out of its normal time. The victors, distinguished by the strange eye-pieces they wear, begin to conduct a series of experiments on the survivors, among them the hero, now a man of about

30. Faced with a destroyed world, the experimenters are hoping to send a man through time. They send the young man because of the powerful memory he carries of the pier at Orly. With luck he will home on to this. Other volunteers have gone insane, but the extraordinary strength of his memory carries him back to prewar Paris. The sequence of images here is the most remarkable in the film, the subject lying in a hammock in the underground corridor as if waiting for some inward sun to rise, a bizarre surgical mask over his eyes—in my experience, the only convincing act of time travel in the whole of science fiction.

■ Arriving in Paris, he wanders among the strange crowds, unable to make contact with anyone until he meets the young woman he had seen as a child at Orly Airport. They fall in love, but their relationship is marred by his sense of isolation in time, his awareness that he has committed some kind of psychological crime in pursuing this memory. As if trying to place himself in time, he takes the young woman to museums of paleontology, and they spend days among the fossil plants and animals. They visit Orly Airport, where he decides that he will not go back to the experimenters at Chaillot. At this moment three strange figures appear. Agents from an even more distant future, they are policing the time-ways, and have come to force him back. Rather than leave the young woman, he throws himself from the pier. The falling body is the one he glimpsed as a child.

■ This familiar theme is treated with remarkable finesse and imagination, its symbols and perspectives continually reinforcing the subject matter. Not once does it make use of the time-honored conventions of traditional science fiction. Creating its own conventions from scratch, it triumphantly succeeds where science fiction invariably fails.

Two ideas have made possible the potential extinction of mind control by man over man: 1) Surrealism; 2) the unconscious. Widespread understanding of these conceptual tools could make the world of reality subservient to the world of the imagination, rather than the present reversal. In this essay, first published in *New Worlds* no. 164, July 1966, as a book review of *Surrealism* by Patrick Waldberg, and *The History of Surrealist Painting* by Marcel Jean, Ballard expands upon these twin territories of revelation and mystery

The images of surrealism are the iconography of inner space. Popularly regarded as a lurid manifestation of fantastic art concerned with states of dream and hallucination, surrealism is in fact the first movement, in the words of Odilon Redon, to place "the logic of the visible at the service of the invisible." This calculated submission of the impulses and fantasies of our inner lives to the rigors of time and space, to the formal inquisition of the sciences, psychoanalysis preeminent among them, produces a heightened or alternate reality beyond and above those familiar to either our sight or our senses. What uniquely characterizes this fusion of the outer world of reality and the inner world of the psyche (which I have termed "inner space") is its redemptive and therapeutic power. To move through these landscapes is a journey of return to one's innermost being.

■ The pervasiveness of surrealism is proof enough of its success. The landscapes of the soul, the juxtaposition of the bizarre and familiar, and all the techniques of violent impact have become part of the stock-in-trade of publicity and the cinema, not to mention science fiction. If anything, surrealism has been hoist with the petard of its own undisputed mastery of self-advertisement. The real achievements of Ernst, Tanguy and Magritte have only just begun to emerge through the mêlée of megaphones and manifestos. Even in the case of a single painter, such as Salvador Dali, the exhibitionistic antics which the press have always regarded as "news" have consistently obscured the far more important implications of his work.

■ These contradictory elements reflect the dual origins of surrealism—on the one hand in Dada, a post-World War I movement not merely against war and society but against art and literature as well, out to perpetrate any enormity that would attract attention to its mission—the total destruction of so-called "civilized" values. The rise of Hitler, a madman beyond the wildest dreams even of the Dadaists, shut them up for good, although the influence of Dada can still be seen in "happenings," in the obscene tableau-sculptures of Keinholtz, and in the critical dictate of André Breton, the pope of surrealism, that "surrealism is pure psychic automatism." Far from it.

■ The other, and far older, source of surrealism is in the

symbolists and expressionists of the 19th century, and in those whom Marcel Jean calls "sages of dual civilization"—Sade, Lautréamont, Jarry and Apollinaire, synthesist poets well aware of the role of the sciences and the industrial societies in which they lived. Sade's erotic fantasies were matched by an acute scientific interest in the psychology and physiology of the human being. Lautréamont's "Song of Maldoror," almost the basic dream-text of surrealism, uses scientific images: "Beautiful as the fleshy wattle, conical in shape, furrowed by deep transverse lines, which rises up at the base of the turkey's upper beak—beautiful as the chance meeting on an operating table of a sewing machine and an umbrella." Apollinaire's erotic-scientific poetry is full of aircraft and the symbols of industrial society, while Jarry, in "The Passion Considered as an Uphill Bicycle Race," unites science, sport and Christianity in the happiest vein of anti-clerical humor.

■ This preoccupation with the analytic function of the sciences as a means of codifying and fractionating the inner experience of the senses is seen in the use surrealism made of discoveries in optics and photography—for example, in the physiologist E.J. Marey's Chronograms, multiple-exposure photographs in which the dimension of time is perceptible, *the moving figure of a man represented as a series of dune-like lumps*. Its interest in the peculiar time values of oceanic art, in the concealed dimensions hinted at by Rorschach tests, culminated in psychoanalysis. This, with its emphasis on the irrational and perverse, on the significance of apparently free or random associations, its symbolism and whole concept of the unconscious, was a complete mythology of the psyche—moreover, a functional mythology which could be used for the systematic exploration of the inner reality of our lives.

■ Something of the ferment of ideas that existed by 1924, when André Breton issued the First Surrealist Manifesto, can be seen from both these histories. What seems particularly extraordinary is the sheer volume of activity, the endless stream of experimental magazines, pamphlets, exhibitions and congresses, films and bizarre frolics, as well as a substantial body of paintings and sculpture, all produced by a comparatively small group (far smaller, for example,

than the number of writers in science fiction here [in England] and in the USA).

■ Equally, the movement is noted for the remarkable beauty of its women—Georgette Magritte, demure sphinx with the eyes of a tamed Mona Lisa; the peerless Meret Oppenheim, designer of the fur-lined cup and saucer; Dorothea Tanning, with her hieratic eyes; the mystic Leonora Carrington, painter of infinitely frail fantasies; and presiding above them all the madonna of Port Lligat, Gala Dali, ex-wife of the poet Paul Eluard, who described her before his death as the one “with the look that pierces walls.” One could write a book, let alone a review, about these extraordinary creatures—nymphs of another planet, in your orisons be all my dreams remembered.

■ Insofar as they have a direct bearing on the speculative fiction of the immediate future, the key documents of surrealism seem to me to be the following. Together they share an explicit preoccupation with the nature of that reality perceived by the inner eye, with our notions of identity and the metaphysics of our lives.

■ *de Chirico: The Disquieting Muses.* An undefined anxiety has begun to spread across the deserted square. The symmetry and regularity of the arcades conceal an intense inner violence; this is the face of catatonic withdrawal. The space within this painting, like the intervals within the arcades, contains an oppressive negative time. The smooth, egg-shaped heads of the mannequins lack all features and organs of sense, but instead are marked with cryptic signs. These mannequins are human beings from whom all transitional time has been eroded, they have been reduced to the essence of their own geometries.

■ *Max Ernst: The Elephant of Celebes.* A large cauldron with legs, sprouting a pipe that ends in a bull’s head. A decapitated woman gestures towards it, but the elephant is gazing at the sky. High in the clouds, fishes are floating. Ernst’s wise machine, hot cauldron of time and myth, is the tutelary deity of inner space, the benign minotaur of the labyrinth.

■ *Magritte: The Annunciation.* A rocky path leads among dusty olive trees. Suddenly a strange structure blocks our way. At first glance it seems to be some kind of pavilion. A white lattice hangs like a curtain over the dark facade. Two elongated chessmen stand to one side. Then we see that this is in no sense a pavilion where we may rest. This terrifying structure is a neuronic totem, its rounded and connected forms are a fragment of our own nervous systems, perhaps an insoluble code that contains the operating formulae for our own passage through time and space. The annunciation is that of a unique event, the first externalization of a neural interval.

■ *Dali: The Persistence of Memory.* The empty beach with its fused sand is a symbol of utter psychic alienation, of a final stasis of the soul. Clock time here is no longer valid, the watches have begun to melt and drip. Even the embryo, symbol of secret growth and possibility, is drained and limp. These are the residues of a remembered moment of time. The most remarkable elements are the two rectilinear objects, formalizations of sections of the beach and sea. The displacement of these two images through time, and their marriage with our own four-dimensional continuum, has warped them into the rigid and unyielding structures of our own consciousness. Likewise, the rectilinear structures of our own conscious reality are warped elements from some placid and harmonious future.

■ *Oscar Dominguez: Decalomania.* By crushing gouache

Dominguez produced evocative landscapes of porous rocks, drowned seas and corals. These coded terrains are models of the organic landscapes enshrined in our central nervous systems. Their closest equivalents in the outer world of reality are those to which we most respond—igneous rocks, dunes, drained deltas. Only these landscapes contain the psychological dimensions of nostalgia, memory and the emotions.

■ *Ernst: The Eye of Silence.* This spinal landscape, with its frenzied rocks towering into the air above the silent swamp, has attained an organic life more real than that of the solitary nymph sitting in the foreground. These rocks have the luminosity of organs freshly exposed to the light. The real landscapes of our world are seen for what they are—the palaces of flesh and bone that are the living facades enclosing our own subliminal consciousness.

■ The sensational elements in these paintings are merely a result of their use of the unfamiliar, their revelation of unexpected associations. If anything, surrealist painting has one dominant characteristic: a glassy isolation, as if all the objects in its landscapes had been drained of their emotional associations, the accretions of sentiment and common usage.

■ What they demonstrate conclusively is that our commonplace notions of reality—for example, the rooms we occupy, the rural and urban landscapes around us, the musculatures of our own bodies, the postures we assume—may have very different meanings by the time they reach the central nervous system. Conversely, the significance of the images projected from within the psyche may have no direct correlation at all to their apparent counterparts in the world outside us. This is commonplace enough as far as the more explicit symbols of the dream are concerned—the snakes, towers and mandalas whose identity Freud and Jung revealed. Surrealism, however, is the first systematic investigation of the significance of the most unsuspected aspects of both our inner and outer lives—the meaning, for example, of certain kinds of horizontal perspective, of curvilinear or soft forms as opposed to rectilinear ones, of the conjunction of two apparently unrelated postures.

■ The techniques of surrealism have a particular relevance at this moment, when the fictional elements in the world around us are multiplying to the point where it is almost impossible to distinguish between the “real” and the “false”—the terms no longer have any meaning. The faces of public figures are projected at us as if out of some endless global pantomime, they and the events in the world at large have the conviction and reality of those depicted on giant advertisement hoardings. The task of the arts seems more and more to be that of isolating the few elements of reality from this mélange of fictions, not some metaphorical “reality,” but simply the basic elements of cognition and posture that are the jigs and props of our consciousness.

■ Surrealism offers an ideal tool for exploring these ontological objectives: the meaning of time and space (for example, the particular significance of rectilinear forms in memory), of landscape and identity, the role of the senses and emotions within these frameworks. As Dali has remarked, after Freud’s explorations within the psyche it is now the outer world which will have to be eroticized and quantified. The mimetizing of past traumas and experiences, the discharging of fears and obsessions through states of landscape, architectural portraits of individuals—these more serious aspects of Dali’s work illustrate some of the

uses of surrealism. It offers a neutral zone or clearing house where the confused currencies of both the inner and outer worlds can be standardized against each other.

■ At the same time we should not forget the elements of magic and surprise that wait for us in this realm. In the words

of André Breton: "The confidences of madmen: I would spend my life in provoking them. They are people of scrupulous honesty, whose innocence is only equaled by mine. Columbus had to sail with madmen to discover America."



ALPHABETS OF UNREASON



Written history largely celebrates megalomaniacs and psychopaths whose fame and power obscures their insanity. In this remarkable book review of a new edition of *Mein Kampf*, Ballard draws conclusions applicable to most politicians-at-large—specialists adapted to prey upon people's guilt and desires. First appearance: *New Worlds*, no. 196, December, 1969.

The psychopath never dates. Hitler's contemporaries—Baldwin, Chamberlain, Herbert Hoover—seem pathetically fusty figures, with their frock coats and wing collars, closer to the world of Edison, Carnegie and the hansom cab than to the first fully evolved modern societies over which they presided, areas of national consciousness formed by mass-produced newspapers and consumer goods, advertising and telecommunications. By comparison Hitler is completely up to date, and would be equally at home in the '60s (and probably even more so in the '70s) as in the '20s. The whole apparatus of the Nazi superstate, its nightmare uniforms and propaganda, seems weirdly turned-on, providing just that element of manifest insanity to which we all respond in the H-bomb or Vietnam—perhaps one reason why the American and Russian space programs have failed to catch our imaginations is that this quality of explicit psychopathology is missing.

■ Certainly, Nazi society seems strangely prophetic of our own—the same maximizing of violence and sensation, the same alphabets of unreason and the fictionalizing of experience. Goebbels in his diaries remarks that he and the Nazi leaders had merely done in the realm of reality what Dostoevski had done in fiction. Interestingly, both Goebbels and Mussolini had written novels, in the days before they were able to get to grips with their real subject matter—one wonders if they would have bothered now, with the fiction waiting to be manipulated all around them.

■ Hitler's "novel," *Mein Kampf*, was written in 1924, nearly a decade before he came to power, but is a remarkably accurate prospectus of his intentions, not so much in terms of finite political and social aims as of the precise psychology he intended to impose on the German people and its European vassals. For this reason alone it is one of the most important books of the 20th century, and well worth reprinting, despite the grisly pleasures its anti-Semitic ravings will give to the present generation of racists.

■ How far does Hitler the man come through the pages of this book? In the newsreels Hitler tends to appear in two roles—one, the demagogic orator, ranting away in a state apparently close to neurotic hysteria; and two, a benevolent and slightly eccentric *kapellmeister* sentimentally reviewing his SS bodyguard, or beaming down at a picked chorus of blond-haired German infants. Both these strands are present in *Mein Kampf*—the hectoring, rhetorical style, shaking with hate and violence, interspersed with passages of deep sentimentality as the author rhapsodises to himself about the mystical beauty of the German landscape and its noble, simple-hearted peoples.

■ Apart from its autobiographical sections, the discovery by a small Austrian boy of his "Germanism," *Mein Kampf* contains three principal elements, the foundation stones, walls and pediment of a remarkably strong paranoid structure. First, there are Hitler's views on history and race, a quasibiological system which underpins the whole basis of his political thought and explains almost every action he ever committed. Second, there are his views on the strict practicalities of politics and the seizure of power, methods of political organization and propaganda. Third, there are his views on the political future of the united Germanies, its expansionist foreign policy and general attitude to the world around it.

■ The overall tone of *Mein Kampf* can be seen from Hitler's original title for the testament: *A Four-and-a-half Years' Struggle Against Lies, Stupidity and Cowardice: A Reckoning with the Destroyers of the Nazi Party Movement*. It was the publisher, Max Amann, who suggested the shorter and far less revealing *Mein Kampf*, and what a sigh he must have breathed when Hitler agreed. Hitler's own title would have been far too much of a giveaway, reminding the readers of the real sources of Hitler's anti-Semitic and racist notions.

■ Reading Hitler's paranoid rantings against the Jews, one is constantly struck by the biological rather than the political

are the first definite portrait of the inner landscape of our mid-century, using its own language and manipulative techniques, its own fantasies and nightmares, those of

Followers of obsolete unthinkable trades doodling in Etruscan, addicts of drugs not yet synthesized, investigators of infractions denounced by bland paranoid chess players, officials of unconstituted police states, brokers of exquisite dreams...

■ The landscapes are those of the exurban, man-made wilderness:

swamps and garbage heaps, alligators crawling around in broken bottles and tin cans, neon arabesques of motels, marooned pimps scream obscenities at passing cars from islands of rubbish.

■ The almost complete inability of the English critics to understand Burroughs is as much a social failure as a literary one, a refusal to recognize the materials of the present decade as acceptable for literary purposes until a lapse of a generation or so has given to a few brand names an appropriately discreet nostalgia. One result is the detachment of the English social novel from everyday life to a point where it is fast becoming a minor genre as unrelated to common experience as the country house detective story (by contrast, the great merit of science fiction has been its ability to assimilate rapidly the materials of the immediate present and future, although it is now failing in precisely those areas where the future has already become the past).

■ Whatever his reservations about some aspects of the mid-20th century, Burroughs accepts that it can be fully described only in terms of its own language, its own idioms and verbal lore. Dozens of different argots are now in common currency; most people speak at least three or four separate languages, and a verbal relativity exists as important as any of time and space. To use the stylistic conventions of the traditional oral novel—the sequential narrative, characters “in the round,” consecutive events, balloons of dialogue attached to “he said” and “she said”—is to perpetuate a set of conventions ideally suited to a period of great tales of adventure in the Conradian mode, or to an overformalized Jamesian society, but now valuable for little more than the bedtime story and the fable. To use these conventions to describe events in the present decade is to write a kind of historical novel in reverse, and it is interesting to see that the most original social novelists have already dropped these conventions. Kingsley Amis’s brilliant novel *One Fat Englishman* is not merely a cyclical work of immense subtlety which can be begun at any point—its portrait of the central

character is so fully realized and developed, his progress so nonlinear, that the pages of the book could be detached and shuffled.

■ Burroughs begins by accepting the full implications of his subject matter:

Well these are the simple facts of the case—There were at least two parasites one sexual the other cerebral working together the way parasites will— And why has no one ever asked “What is word?”— Why do you talk to yourself all the time?

■ Operation Rewrite, Burroughs’ own function as a writer, a role recognized by the narrative (there is no pretense that the book has some kind of independent existence), defines the subject matter of *The Ticket that Exploded*:

The Venusian invasion was known as “Operation Other Half,” that is, a parasitic invasion of the sexual area taking advantage, as all invasion plans must, of an already existing mucked up situation— The human organism is literally consisting of two halves from the beginning, word and all human sex is this unsanitary arrangement whereby two entities attempt to occupy the same three-dimensional coordinate points giving rise to the sordid latrine brawls which have characterized a planet based on “The Word”...

■ Far from being an arbitrary stunt, Burroughs’ cut-in method is thus seen as the most appropriate technique for this marriage of opposites, as well as underlining the role of recurrent images in all communication, fixed at the points of contact in the webs of language linking everything in our lives, from nostalgic reveries of “invisible passenger took my hands in dawn sleep of water, music— Broken towers intersect cigarette smoke memory of each other” to sinister bureaucratic memos and medicalese. Many of the portmanteau images in the book make no sense unless seen in terms of this merging of opposites, e.g., the composite character known as Mr Bradly Mr Martin, and a phrase such as “rectums merging” which shocked the reviewer in *The London Magazine* to ask “How?”—obviously the poor woman hadn’t the faintest idea what the book was about.

■ The characters who appear in the narrative may be externalized in “three-dimensional terms,” as Burroughs puts it, but only so long as they suit the purposes of the subject matter. The “reality” of the books is not some pallid reflection of a hypothetical external scene, its details and local color stitched into the narrative like poker-work, but the self-created verbal reality of the next sentence and paragraph, like a track-laying train free to move about in all directions on a single set of rails.



Photo by Bobby Adams

■ In turn, Burroughs' three novels are a comprehensive vision of the individual imagination's relationship to society at large (*Naked Lunch*), to sex (*The Soft Machine*) and to time and space (*The Ticket that Exploded*).

■ In *Naked Lunch* (i.e., the addict's fix), Burroughs compares organized society with that of its most extreme opposite, the invisible society of drug addicts. His implicit conclusion is that the two are not very different, certainly at the points where they make the closest contact—in prisons and psychiatric institutions. His police are all criminals and perverts, while his doctors, like the egregious Dr Benway of Islam Inc., are sadistic psychopaths whose main intention is to maim and disfigure their patients. Most of them, of course, are not aware of this, and their stated intentions may be the very opposite. Benway, a manipulator and coordinator of symbol systems, whose assignment in Annexia is T.D.—Total Demoralization—makes it his first task to abolish concentration camps, mass arrest, and “except under certain limited and special circumstances” the use of torture. When out of a job he keeps himself going by performing cut-rate abortions in subway toilets, “operating with one hand, beating the rats offa my patients with the other.” Likable and insouciant, Benway is full of ingenious ideas for uncovering the spies who infest every nook and cranny:

An agent is trained to deny his agent identity by asserting his cover story. So why not use psychic ju-jitsu and go along with him? Suggest that his cover story is his identity and that he has no other. His agent identity becomes unconscious, that is, out of control. . . .

■ However, questions of identity are highly relativistic. As one spy laments: “So I am a public agent and don't know who I work for, get my instructions from street signs, newspapers and pieces of conversation. . . .”

■ By contrast, the addicts form a fragmentary, hunted sect, only asking to be left alone and haunted by their visions of subway dawns, cheap hotels, empty amusement parks and friends who have committed suicide. “The fact of addiction imposes contact,” but in their relationships with one another they at least take no moral stand, and their illusions and ambitions are directed only at themselves. But for its continued comic richness—for much of the way it reads like the Lenny Bruce show rewritten by Dr Goebbels—*Naked Lunch* would be a profoundly pessimistic book, for Burroughs' conclusion is that the war between society and individual freedom, a freedom that consists simply of being *individual*, can never end, and that ultimately the only choice is between living in one's own nightmares or in other people's, for those who gain control of the system, like Benway and the Nazi creators of the death camps, merely impose their own fantasies on everyone else.

■ In *The Soft Machine* (the title is an explicit description of the sexual apparatus) Burroughs carries out a vast exploration of the nature of the sexual act, whose magic revivifies everything it touches. In this strange, hallucinatory world everything is translated into sexual terms, and the time is one when “everybody was raising some kinda awful life form in his bidet to fight the Sex Enemy.”

■ What appear to be the science fictional elements in *The Soft Machine* and, to a greater extent, in *The Ticket that Exploded*—there are Nova Police, and characters such as the Fluoroscopic Kid, the Subliminal Kid, the delightful Johnny Yen, errand boy from the death trauma, heavy metal addicts, Green boy-girls from the terminal sewers of Venus—in fact play a metaphorical role and are not intended to represent “three-dimensional” figures. These self-satirizing figments

are part of the casual vocabulary of the space age, shared by all people born after the year 1920, just as Mata Hari, the Mons Angel, and the dirty men's urinal to the north of Waterloo form part of the semi-comical vocabulary of an older generation. In so far as *The Ticket that Exploded* is a work of science fiction, it is on a far more serious level. The exploding ticket, i.e., the individual identity in extension through time and space, provides Burroughs with an endless source of brilliant images, of which “the photo flakes falling” is the most moving in the book—moments of spent time, each bearing an image of some experience, drifting down like snow on all our memories and lost hopes. The sad poetry of the concluding chapter of *The Ticket that Exploded*, as the whole apocalyptic landscape of Burroughs' world closes in upon itself, now and then flaring briefly like a dying volcano, is on par with Anna Livia Plurabelle's requiem for her river-husband in *Finnegans Wake*.

And zero time to the sick tracks— A long time between suns I held the stale overcoat— Sliding between light and shadow— Cross the wounded galaxies we intersect, poison of dead sun in your brain slowly fading— Migrants of ape in gasoline crack of history, explosive bio-advance out of space to neon. . . . Pass without doing our ticket— Mountain wind of Saturn in the morning sky— From the death trauma weary goodbye then.

■ For science fiction the lesson of Burroughs' work is plain. It is now nearly 40 years since the first Buck Rogers comic strip, and only two less than a century since the birth of science fiction's greatest modern practitioner, H.G. Wells, yet the genre is still dominated by largely the same set of conventions, the same repertory of ideas, and, worst of all, by the assumption that it is still possible to write accounts of interplanetary voyages in which the appeal is to realism rather than to fantasy (what one could call Campbell's Folly). Once it gets “off the ground” into space all science fiction is fantasy, and the more serious it tries to be, the more naturalistic, the greater its failure, as it completely lacks the moral authority and conviction of a literature won from experience.

■ Burroughs also illustrates that the whole of science fiction's imaginary universe has long since been absorbed into the general consciousness, and that most of its ideas are now valid only in a kind of marginal spoofing. Indeed, I seriously doubt whether science fiction is any longer the most important source of new ideas in the very medium it originally created. The main task facing science fiction writers now is to create a new set of conventions. Burroughs' methods of exploring time and space, for example, of creating their literary equivalents, are an object lesson.

■ However, Burroughs' contribution to science fiction is only a minor aspect of his achievement. In his trilogy, William Burroughs has fashioned, from our dreams and nightmares, the first authentic mythology of the age of Cape Canaveral, Hiroshima and Belsen. His novels are the terminal documents of the mid-20th century, scabrous and scarifying, a progress report from an inmate in the cosmic madhouse.

■ William Burroughs,

I'm with you in Rockland
where we wake up electrified out of the coma
by our own soul's airplanes
I'm with you in Rockland
in my dreams you walk dripping from
a sea journey on the highway across America
in tears to the door of my cottage
in the Western night





The case of Gary Gilmore far transcends the man's original crime—a relatively colorless robbery-murder. Much more significant was the enormous media coverage, culminating in an internationally publicized execution. (Even now the London Wax Museum recreates Gilmore's execution approximately 240 times a day.) This reflection on the psychology of voyeuristic violence was originally published in the Guardian, Nov. 15, 1979.

Ours is a season for assassins. How far does our fascination with Oswald and Charles Manson, Gary Gilmore and James Earl Ray play on the edgy dreams of other lonely psychopaths, encourage them to gamble their trigger fingers on a very special kind of late 20th-century celebrity? Will everyone in the future, to adapt Warhol, be infamous for 15 minutes? Given the immense glare of publicity, a virtual deification by the world's press and television, and the remarkable talents these rootless and half-educated men can show for manipulating the mass media, their actual crimes soon seem to sink to a lower, merely human, realm. ■ Lee Harvey Oswald, had he not been shot by Jack Ruby, would presumably now be up for parole, ready to play his part—as TV anchorman, or special assignment writer for *Guns and Ammo?*—in the election of yet another Kennedy. With luck, any would-be assassins in the future will give themselves away haggling with their agents for the biggest film advance and the right prime-time TV coverage.

■ *The Executioner's Song* is Norman Mailer's remarkable account of the crimes, trial and execution, in 1977, of Gary Gilmore, the first convicted murderer to be put to death in the United States after a 10-year moratorium. Dedicated to Mailer's agent, at first sight the book is off-putting, perhaps the last chapter in the very system of exploitation that Mailer criticizes.

■ Mailer never met Gilmore, and the 1,000-page text is based on a mass of extended interviews by Lawrence Schiller, an ex-*Life* photographer turned Hollywood entrepreneur. The result is a vast cast of largely minor characters and an excess of parallel narration never properly fused together, which makes nonsense of Mailer's attempt to call it a novel.

■ But in fact the repetitions and the flat documentary style allow Mailer to build up a masterly portrait of the murderer—Gilmore might well have been one of the morose GIs in *The Naked and the Dead*. Mailer brilliantly conveys Gilmore's eerie charm. By the time of his release from an Illinois penitentiary at the age of 35, Gilmore had spent 18 of the previous 22 years in prison and reform school. The illegitimate son of a sometime convict and a mother who resented him from earliest childhood, Gilmore had already tasted celebrity. During a prison riot in Illinois the local TV crew "selected" him as one of the leaders and put him on television to say a few words. His looks and the way he spoke attracted attention and the first fan mail from women admirers.

■ Returning to Provo, Utah, and a life of drugs, beer-

drinking and petty theft, he cold-bloodedly murdered a gas station attendant and a motel clerk for little more than the equivalent of £50, and was arrested almost immediately by the police. Sustained by his girlfriend Nicole, a remarkable young woman who would stand outside the jail, bellowing "Gary Gilmore, I love you!" over the walls, he accepted his death penalty and settled down to await his execution.

■ The police psychiatrists diagnosed Gilmore as a psychopathic personality, and he seems to have felt no anger or hostility towards the men he murdered, regarding them with the same total blankness that he felt for himself. Already in the death cell he was planning both Nicole's suicide and his own execution—he wanted to be shot in the dark with tracer bullets, so that he could watch them coming towards him.

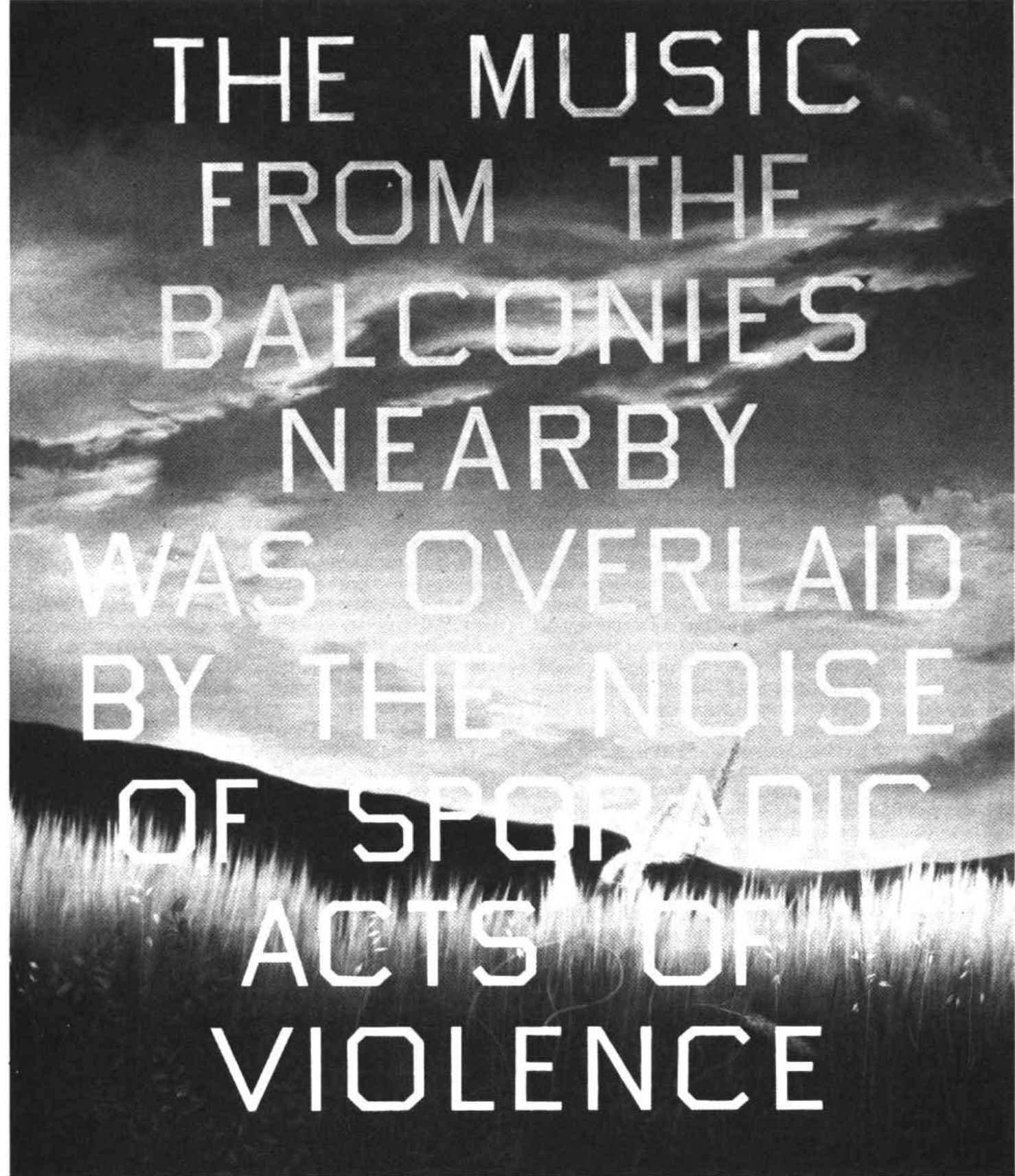
■ Even the horrendous conditions on Death Row, a long way from Cagney and George Raft, hardly affected him. Mailer vividly describes this depraved zoo, a bedlam of cries and rage, the condemned men exposing their genitalia through the bars, hurling cups of urine into the faces of any intruders.

■ Gilmore's refusal to appeal against his death penalty soon made him a local celebrity. The first curious journalists interviewed him, the advance guard of an army of hustlers and agents, veteran wheeler-dealers from the Manson and Ruby cases, film and TV executives who swarmed in from all over the world. Gilmore's own lawyer, who doubled as his literary agent, defended his right to die, claiming: "I think executions should be on prime-time TV." The first hard cash, \$500, was paid by the *Daily Express* ("When the British are here en masse," said one excited newsman, "the stamp is on the meat").

■ In a bizarre but impressive way, Gilmore expanded to fill the roles assigned him. One journalist noted that there was racist Gary, Country & Western Gary, artist manqué Gary, self-destructive Gary, Karma Gary and Gary the movie star. He quoted Shelley and Hermann Hesse, and would ask visitors, "Are you familiar with Nietzsche?"

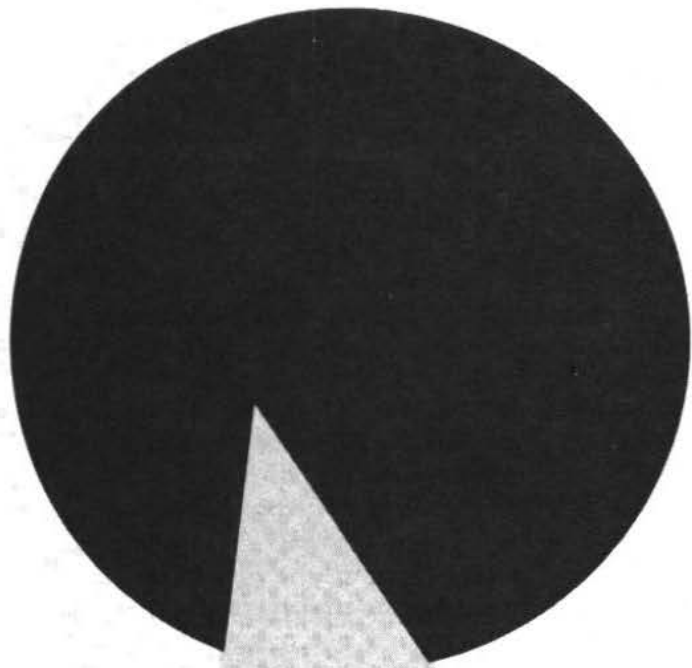
■ The end came as he wanted it. The climax, and greatest set-piece in the book, is Mailer's account of the last night before the execution, a virtuoso description of the deranged prison party held around the drugged Gilmore, wearing a comical Robin Hood hat and brandishing pornographic photos of his girlfriend, while a huge TV and press encampment waited outside the prison.

■ Soon after dawn the party ended. To the tune of "Una



THE MUSIC
FROM THE
BALCONIES
NEARBY
WAS OVERLAID
BY THE NOISE
OF SPORADIC
ACTS OF
VIOLENCE

"The Music From The Balconies . . . , 1984," Ed Ruscha's homage to J. G. Ballard's novel High-Rise. Oil on canvas, 99" x 81". Photo credit: Zindman/Fremont, NYC. Reproduced by permission of the Leo Castelli Gallery, NYC.



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FROM SHANGHAI TO SHEPPERTON



"The sort of pressures that make an imaginative writer . . . are so strong they must come from some source deep within the mind that's been forming itself since the very earliest days . . ."

*J.G. Ballard was born in Shanghai on November 15, 1930. This oral autobiography, reprinted from *Foundation*, no. 24, February 1982, was painstakingly reconstructed by David Pringle from a series of interviews with Ballard. The original questions were replaced by appropriate quotations, and all of it was re-edited to form a roughly chronological narrative. Not only is it of interest to those seeking details of Ballard's personal history, but more importantly, it illustrates the formation of a personal creative vision—how one chooses one's key influences is almost as important as what one eventually creates! Also revealed are the roles of chance and desire, as well as the seizing of every opportunity to enlarge one's destiny . . .*



**J.G.
Ballard
in
1936
in
Shanghai**

Shanghai was an American zone of influence. All the foreign nationals there lived an American style of life. They had American-style houses, air-conditioning and refrigerators, and American cars. I never saw an English car until I came to Britain in 1946. We had Coca-Cola—and American-style commercial radio stations. We used to listen to the radio a lot. Shanghai itself had about 10 English-language radio stations, and they were blaring out American programs and radio serials. (I think there were SF serials.) And of course there were American films on show in the cinemas which I went to from a very early age. I started

going to the movies when I was six or seven, something my own children didn't do (they had television). One had a peculiar cultural diet, in a way. I spent a great deal of time reading as a child—all the childhood classics, like *Alice in Wonderland*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver's Travels*, as well as American comics and the American mass magazines of the day, *Collier's*, *Life* and so on. I don't think I read any Jules Verne, though I certainly read H.G. Wells. There were popularized versions of Wells's novels in the American comic books, and those things called Big Little Books. I must have read a bit of science fiction in book form, but I

certainly didn't buy the SF magazines until much later, when I went to Canada.

■ Shanghai itself was one of the most extraordinary and bizarre places on earth, a place where anything went, completely without constraints. Every conceivable political and social crosscurrent was in collision there. War in all its forms was institutionalized in Shanghai, after the Sino-Japanese War began in 1937. I remember in '38 or '39 having to leave our house on the outskirts of the city, and move into a rented house in the center of Shanghai, because the Chinese and Japanese forces were firing shells whose trajectories went right overhead. . . . I remember seeing a lot of troops, and going out frequently to the battlefields around Shanghai where I saw dead soldiers lying around, dead horses in the canals and all that sort of thing. The Japanese were sitting around the city, and in fact occupied all but the International Settlement. Our house was on the western outskirts of Shanghai, actually outside the International Settlement and within the area controlled by the Japanese. The whole business of checkpoints and military occupation had been there since the earliest days I can remember. Huge armies engaged, naval forces came up the river, and large sections of the city were under air attack by Japanese bombers. This had been going on for years, so Pearl Harbor wasn't that big a surprise. . . .

■ My father was a chemist originally. He joined a big Manchester firm of textile manufacturers—this was before I was born—and he moved into the management field. They had a subsidiary in Shanghai of which he was the chairman and managing director throughout the 1930s and into the '40s. I was sent to the Cathedral School in Shanghai before the war. A very authoritarian English clergyman was the headmaster there, and he used to set lines. It's the most time-wasting enterprise one could imagine, but he would say "500 lines, Carruthers! 600 lines, Ballard!" for some small infringement. Five hundred lines was about 30 pages of a school exercise book. You were supposed to copy out school texts, and I remember starting to copy from a novel about the Spanish Armada. It was something like G.A. Henty, or it might have been Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* (I remember that. It has a marvelous last paragraph which has stayed with me all my life; the last paragraph of that novel is a fine piece of prose, and you ought to find echoes all over my fiction!) Anyway, I started copying out this high adventure narrative. I suddenly realized—I was only about nine or 10—that it was easier, and it would save a lot of effort, if I just made it up, which I did. So from then on I would make up my own narratives. I think the authoritarian clergyman must have scanned my lines because he reprimanded me by saying: "Ballard, next time you pick a book to copy your lines from don't pick some trashy novel like this!" He didn't realize I'd written it myself. I think there's a judgment on my whole life and career there—I've gone on writing within that sort of seditious framework! I went on writing little short stories and pieces, even when we were in the prison camp—just adventure stories and thrillers, my own variants on whatever I happened to be reading.

■ From that hour Ayacanora's power of song returned to her; and day by day, year after year, her voice rose up within that happy home, and soared, as on a skylark's wings, into the highest heaven, bearing with it the peaceful thoughts of the blind giant back to the paradises of the west, in the wake of the heroes who from that time forth sailed out to colonize another and a vaster England, to the Heaven-prospered cry of *Westward Ho!*

—Charles Kingsley, *Westward Ho!*, 1855 (final paragraph)

■ I remember the very first little book I produced. Of course it was never printed, but it was my first effort at a book. It was about how to play Contract Bridge. I learned to play the game at an early age, because Bridge-playing was all the rage. I must only have been about 11, because this was before the camp. My mother used to hold Bridge parties, almost every afternoon it seemed. To a child the bids conjure up a whole world of mystery because they don't seem to be related to anything. "One heart, two hearts, three diamonds, three no trumps, double, redouble—what the hell does all this mean?" I thought. I used to pace around upstairs listening to these bids, trying to extract some sort of logical meaning. I finally persuaded my mother to explain how Contract Bridge was played. I was so impressed by the discovery of what bidding meant—deciphering these cryptic and mysterious calls, particularly when I discovered they relate to the whole world of conventions so that they are a code within a code—that I wrote a book. I think I filled a school exercise book on the basic rules of Contract Bridge and what the main conventions were—I even had a section on "Psychic Bidding," which was pretty good for an 11-year-old! It was quite an effort of exposition. I haven't played Bridge for years and years now, though I used to play chess with my son before he left home. I've always been very interested in chess; it's more of a solitary man's game.

■ The Japanese didn't intern everybody simultaneously. It was staged, and I think it took six months or so before we were interned. We had very hot summers and cold winters in Shanghai, and I remember wearing light clothes when we arrived in the camp. Pearl Harbor was in December 1941, so it must have been the following summer. To me, the period of internment wasn't a huge surprise as my life had changed continuously. From a huge house with nine servants, a chauffeur-driven Packard and all the rest of it, I was suddenly living in a small room with my parents and sister. Although that may seem an enormous jump, in fact it was all part of a huge continuum of disorder. . . .

■ I have—I won't say *happy*—not unpleasant memories of the camp. I was young, and if you put 400 or 500 children together they have a good time whatever the circumstances. I can remember the acute shortage of food in the last year, and a general breakdown of facilities. Drinking water was no longer brought in by road tanker to the camp for the last year or more, once the tide turned against the Japanese. I remember a lot of the casual brutality and beatings-up that went on—but at the same time we children were playing a hundred and one games all the time! There was a great deal of illness, and about three-quarters of the people in the camp caught malaria, though not my family, thank God. My sister, who is seven years younger than me, nearly died of some kind of dysentery. I know my parents always had very much harsher memories of the camp than I did, because of course they knew the reality of the circumstances. Parents often starved themselves to feed their children. But I think it's true that the Japanese do like children and are very kindly towards them. The guards didn't abuse the children at all.

■ I saw it all from a child's eye, and didn't notice the danger. Right next to the camp was a large Japanese military airfield (I think it's now Shanghai International Airport). This was under constant attack in the last year or so from American bombers and low-flying fighters. The perimeter fence of the camp was in effect the perimeter of the airbase. We looked right out over the airfield. Although we had a curfew imposed by the Japanese during the air attacks, they became so

frequent—almost continuous towards the closing stages—that we were often out in the open with anti-aircraft shells bursting over our heads. I daresay my parents were driven frantic by all this, but children don't remember. It wasn't like a dream, because dreams often are unpleasant and full of anxiety. I had no sense of anxiety, I don't remember any fear, but I look back now and I think "My God, why didn't I turn and run!" I was totally involved but at the same time saved by the magic of childhood.

■ Most of the British nationals there were people from the professions, senior management personnel, and most had university training of various kinds. A school was started in the camp, and the headmaster was a missionary called Osborne (oddly enough, I discovered years later that he was the father of Martin Bax's wife, Judy—Martin Bax is the editor of *Ambit*). There were a lot of missionaries like him, who had been teaching all their professional lives. So a school was started and ran most of the time—though towards the end, when the Japanese wanted to penalize the adults in the camp, the first thing they did (with a sort of fiendish logic) was to close the school and impose a curfew. All the parents were stuck in their tiny little rooms, trapped with their noisy offspring! But I think that people like Osborne did a very good job, because I didn't feel when I got to England, despite very nearly three years in the camp, that I was much behind. I think in many areas I was absolutely up to scratch, for all the interruptions.

■ Outside a relatively few enclaves in Western Europe and the United States for the past few decades, the vast majority of the world has always lived the sort of life I lived in Shanghai, in that close proximity to violence, death, disease and the like. On the whole, we live enormously protected lives in Europe and the States, and children are particularly well protected here. In the historical sense of how most people have lived, my own life has probably been very close to . . . How can I put this? My life is probably much closer, in its proximity to death, disaster and destruction, to that of any Elizabethan poet or dramatist, than it is to that of most people living in this country today. If you'd been brought up in Renaissance Italy, say, or in France under the Ancien Régime, you'd probably have lived in a world very similar to that in which I was brought up. Most people in the world still do! Coming to England in 1946 was a shock that I've never recovered from. Even though Britain was directly involved in World War II—this island had been the springboard for the invasion of Europe—English life as a whole in '46 seemed enormously detached from reality. It seemed a world of self-enclosed little suburbs and village greens where nothing had ever happened.

■ My father stayed in China, and I came over with my mother and sister. We had friends who lived down in the West Country, near Plymouth, and my mother rented a house there for a couple of years. We lived in a sort of Daphne du Maurier-land—in fact, there was a little creek which was reputed to have been the source of inspiration for her novel *Frenchman's Creek*, only a few hundred yards away. There was indeed the remains of a great old wooden ship lying there in the mud: it's quite possible that it gave her the idea. It's full of little smugglers' coves and caves, that part of the world. . . In about 1948 my mother and sister went back to China, and—when I wasn't at school in Cambridge—I stayed with my grandparents near Birmingham. My mother came back from China, but my father was still there in '49 and he was caught by the communist advance

from the north. He was held in Shanghai for about a year after the communists arrived, but eventually he was released and was able to make his way to England. That was in 1950, and they bought a house in the Manchester area. By then I was at university. When he arrived here, my father became a consultant in the pharmaceutical field; he became director of European operations for an American pharmaceutical company, a big Boston firm—which he remained until his retirement, shortly before he died in 1966.

■ My mother's maiden name was Edna Johnstone. Her parents lived in West Bromwich, near Birmingham (I never met my father's parents: they lived in Blackburn in my father's youth). They were teachers of music. I remember my grandfather, with whom I stayed in the late '40s for about a year when my mother went back to China, as a very straightlaced, puritanical, Edwardian gentleman. My grandparents were in their 70s, I think, after the war, and were rabidly right-wing Conservatives. They were faced with the apocalypse of the post-war Labour Government, which shattered everything in their world. But in fact, according to my mother, my grandfather was a bit of a maverick. He shocked his very bourgeois family, round about the turn of the century, by forming his own band! It may be that the maverick tendencies of my own come through him. . .

■ A man of vigorous and stubborn temper, the Reverend Johnstone was one of those muscular clerics who intimidate their congregations not so much by the prospect of divine justice at some future date but by the threat of immediate physical retribution in the here and now. Well over six feet tall, his strong head topped by a fierce crown of grey hair, he towered over his parishioners from his pulpit, eyeing each of them in their pews like a bad-tempered headmaster obliged to take a junior form for one day and determined to inflict the maximum of benefit upon them.

—JG Ballard, *The Drought*, 1965 (Chapter 5)

■ I went to the Leys School in Cambridge for a couple of years in the late 1940s. I disliked it intensely, but I'd been through so many strange experiences before and during the war that it was just another strange experience that I coped with. I wasn't unhappy there, actually. I had a great deal more experience of life in general than almost all the boys that I met there. Although they'd lived in Britain during the war, they'd had very sheltered lives (the school had been evacuated to Scotland). I didn't have anything very much in common. The big saving for me was that the Leys School was in Cambridge itself. I'd sneak off to the Arts Cinema to see all the French films of the '40s. I'd go to the Cambridge Film Society and soak myself in *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* and all those experimental films of the '20s. And there were always art exhibitions of various kinds on in Cambridge. Also, I had two or three friends among the boys in the class above mine who went up to Cambridge University to read medicine, and through them I had an early entry into Cambridge undergraduate life. I used to visit the colleges. If I'd gone to a school out in a remote corner of Dorset or somewhere it would have been a bit of a strain, but being in Cambridge it was like being a member of a junior college there, which was a big help to me.

■ I became very interested in psychoanalysis while still at school, and read almost all the Freud I could lay my hands on. In fact my chief reason for reading medicine when I went up to King's College was that I wanted to become a psychiatrist—a sort of adolescent dream, but I was quite serious about it. England seemed a very strange country. Both the physical landscape and the social and psychological landscapes seemed fit subjects for analysis—extremely constrained and rigid and repressed compared with the sort of



Photo by Ana Barrado

background I had. To come from Shanghai, and from the war itself where everything had been shaken to its foundations, to come to England and find this narrow-minded puritanical world—this was the most repressed society I'd ever known! I became intensely interested in psychoanalysis and began to devour every library I could lay my hands on when I was 16 or 17. I read a good number of Freud's major works then, plus a lot of other works on psychoanalysis and psychiatry. Jung, of course, who was really a great imaginative novelist (in a sense, Freud is too!). But while I was still at school I was reading not just psychoanalytic texts but all the leading writers of the day—Kafka of course, and Hemingway—the strange sort of goulash of writers and poets that you read when you're that age.

■ I was already writing experimental fiction, what might be classed as avant-garde fiction. I'd been writing bits of fiction ever since I was quite a small child. I wanted to become a writer, there's no question about that, but I didn't see writing and a medical career as mutually exclusive. I wanted to study psychiatry professionally, and first of course I had to gain a medical degree—which was five years ahead, then two years doing the Diploma of Psychological Medicine: seven years in all. That seemed a lifetime away, and I took for granted that I would write my own fiction throughout this period. I didn't see myself as a professional writer; it didn't occur to me that I could become one just by *decision*. I was writing a lot of fiction—I don't say it was particularly naive—but it was very experimental and heavily

influenced by all the psychoanalysis I'd read, by all the Kafka and so on . . .

■ Popularly regarded as a lurid manifestation of fantastic art concerned with states of dream and hallucination, surrealism is in fact the first movement, in the words of Odilon Redon, to place "the logic of the visible at the service of the invisible." This calculated submission of the impulses and fantasies of our inner lives to the rigors of time and space, to the formal inquisition of the sciences, psychoanalysis preeminent among them, produces a heightened or alternate reality beyond and above those familiar to either our sight or our senses. What uniquely characterizes this fusion of the outer world of reality and the inner world of the psyche (which I have termed "inner space") is its redemptive and therapeutic power. To move through these landscapes is a journey of return to one's innermost being.

■ . . . At the same time we should not forget the elements of magic and surprise that wait for us in this realm. In the words of André Breton: "The confidences of madmen: I would spend my life in provoking them. They are people of scrupulous honesty, whose innocence is only equalled by mine. Columbus had to sail with madmen to discover America."

—JG Ballard, "The Coming of the Unconscious,"
New Worlds 164, July 1966

■ I'm almost certain I became interested in the surrealists at school, because I know that by the time I went up to King's I was already very interested, going to exhibitions and so on. I read medicine, and my interest in psychoanalysis abutted surrealism at all sorts of points. When I was in my early 20s, long before I started writing SF, I had reproductions of surrealist paintings pinned up wherever I was living. They were totally out of favor then and it was difficult to get hold of works by the surrealists. If there was an exhibition

somewhere or another—usually in a small commercial gallery in London—it wasn't well reviewed. If you wanted a reproduction of the latest painting by Dali or Magritte you stood a better chance of getting one in something like *The Daily Mirror* or *The Daily Mail* than you did in the serious papers. They were hardly mentioned in the columns of papers like *The Observer* or *The Times*—if they were, it was always in a derogatory way. I didn't give a damn about that; I was absolutely convinced that this was one of the most important schools of painting in the 20th century, one of the most important imaginative enterprises the century has embarked on. I felt that then and I still do.

■ Salvador Dali has still not been welcomed into the fold of critical respectability. Good—I'm glad in a way, and I don't think it matters a hoot. His recent exhibition in London was enormously successful, and I think that speaks for itself. There's a continuing public interest in Dali which makes the responses of the critical bureaucracy totally irrelevant, as they always have been. The triumph of the surrealists in the 1960s, when they really arrived for the first time, was a triumph of their own talents. No critic discovered the surrealists and persuaded the public that here was something worth looking at. They did it themselves. Their hour came, and quite rightly. I remember being interested in Francis Bacon in the very early '50s, when he was virtually unknown and painting most of his early masterpieces, and he was treated with the same sort of disdain that the surrealists received until about 15 years ago (and Dali still does receive). There's an enormous resistance here to certain categories of imaginative work, both in the visual arts and in the novel. This is a very puritanical country. The Protestant nonconformist hatred of the imagination—of symbolism as a whole, let's say—runs through the whole of English life, and a large section of American life too, for the same sort of reasons. Great works of the imagination, of the 19th and 20th centuries, are far too seditious of the bourgeois certainties.

■ But there were surrealist works in the Tate Gallery in the early 1950s. I remember seeing Delvaux there, along with a few de Chiricos and Ernsts and Dalis. They were in a sort of little dark anteroom. I know that before I went to Canada with the RAF, and when I came back, in the early years of my marriage, I was intensely interested in the surrealists—and in the Pop artists as they emerged. I don't think my attitude to the surrealists has changed. My whole imaginative response to them was fully fashioned by the time I started writing science fiction. And although the surrealists in particular were regarded as totally disreputable by the guardians of bourgeois culture there were still exhibitions. I remember going to an exhibition of new Magrittes in a little gallery near Berkeley Square—this was in something like 1955—which included many paintings of his which are now world-famous. They were openly derided, and not just by art critics: no literary reviewer would refer to the surrealists at all. When I wrote my first serious novel, *The Drowned World*, somebody at Gollancz suggested to me that I delete the reference to surrealist painters—this was 1962—because, it was felt, the references diminished my own novel by association. He regarded my novel as a serious piece of imaginative fiction, and by bringing in the surrealists, these references to Ernst and Dali and Delvaux, I diminished my novel. I refused of course. But that was 1962!

■ I wasn't acquainted with literary surrealism. The French texts probably weren't translated. I remember reading Edmund Wilson's *The Wound and the Bow* as a student, his



Ballard with himself in Cambridge, 1950, aged 19.

accounts of writers like Joyce and Hemingway. His chief interests were Eliot, Pound and so on. The Paris in which those writers for the most part lived was also inhabited by the surrealists, but they figured in the margins of the text, in the margins of the biographies of those writers. It was primarily the artists who were referred to. I've never really been interested in literary surrealism—in Jarry and Apollinaire, yes, but they're not, strictly speaking, surrealists.

■ J. Graham Ballard, who shares the first prize of £10 with D.S. Birley in the *Varsity Crime Story Competition* is now in his second year at King's and immersed in the less literary process of reading medicine.

■ He admitted to our reporter yesterday that he had in fact entered the competition more for the prize than anything else, although he had been encouraged to go on writing because of his success.

■ The idea for his short story, which deals with the problem of Malayan terrorism, he informs us, he had been thinking over for some time before hearing of the competition.

■ He has, in addition to writing short stories, also planned "mammoth novels" which "never get beyond the first page."

—Profile accompanying "The Violent Noon",
Varsity, 26th May 1951

■ I remember submitting one or two of my early short stories to *Horizon*. There weren't many places to be published then. There were very few magazines at all, and the experimental, impressionistic prose poetry I was writing—free-form—was the sort of thing that was just turned down without a second thought by people in charge. That very early story of mine ["The Violent Noon"], which won the Cambridge competition when I was 21, was done as almost a pastiche of a certain kind of Hemingwayesque short story. It certainly wasn't typical of the other material I was writing at the time. I wanted to win the competition, actually: that was my intention, but I knew that I wouldn't win unless I wrote a story of that kind.

■ I went to London University for a year after I left Cambridge and I read English. This makes me sound like a medieval scholar, moving from bench to bench, but it wasn't like that. I'd won this story competition, and I thought I'd studied enough medicine for my purposes. The next phase was the clinical phase. I'd been in and out of clinical hospitals as part of the two years I did at Cambridge, and I knew that clinical medicine was enormously demanding in time and energy. Young doctors work long hours, and though they may, over the years, accumulate an enormous amount of

fascinating material, they have no time for anything else. In a way I felt I'd completed the interesting phase of studying medicine. The preclinical phase is almost pure science; it's anatomy, physiology, pathology. I felt I'd already stocked my vocabulary enough for me to move on. I wanted to write—I felt the power of imagination pushing at the door of my mind and I wanted to open it.

■ My father said, with a chemist's logic, "Well, if you want to be a writer you should study English." So I went to London University, read English, and they turfed me out at the end of the year, deciding I hadn't got what it took to be a student of English Literature. I was then about 22. I went to work for an advertising agency called Digby Wills Ltd., where I wrote copy—for lemon juice, among other things. I was there for three or four months. Then I worked as an encyclopaedia salesman. That was fascinating, one of the most interesting periods in my life. It lasted about six months, I think. Simply going into so many people's homes, I was conducting my own Gallup survey of English life. An encyclopaedia salesman has to start at number one—knock, knock—and then go on to number two. You must knock on every door and try to get in. You have to overcome the feeling that because the lace curtains look a little intimidating you won't knock here—you must go in. And it's quite extraordinary, the variety of human lives... It was fascinating.

■ My father certainly disapproved totally of my wanting to become a writer (in exactly the way I would if one of my children wanted to be a writer!). He regarded it as not really a profession at all, didn't think one could make a sustained career out of it. It would take years to discover whether one had the sort of talent the world would pay attention to. In many senses, of course, he was absolutely right. But even with the benefit of hindsight I wouldn't change things. It would have been much easier for me if I had, say, graduated as a doctor. I then would have been financially secure, and given the sort of imaginative pressures I was feeling, I think I probably would have written—though nowhere near as much as I did. But I'm glad I approached it the way I did. I was a late starter, but that may have been necessary.

■ My mother agreed with my father, but I don't think either of them had much influence on me. I don't think parents do have as much influence on their children as people imagine. I have three children, a son and two daughters, all of whom are in their 20s now. I don't think I have any influence on them whatever. In fact, we agree about a great number of things, but where they disagree with me they follow their own paths.

■ My real problems began when I was thrown out of London University, because that had been a year's grace. I still wasn't ready to do anything remotely like becoming a professional writer. The opportunities didn't exist. My father gave me a small allowance, but it was *hard earned*. It was a tricky time. But the sort of pressures that make an imaginative writer, as opposed to say, a naturalistic novelist, the pressures are so strong they must come from some source deep within the mind that's been forming itself since the very earliest days. It's part of one's fundamental apparatus for dealing with reality. It's not in any way the exercise of some social art. One might almost say it's part of some neurological apparatus for coping with the experience of living—everything from the most humdrum event like crossing a room and opening a door to the most important and richest events in one's life, like being married and having

children. The whole spectrum of one's experience is obviously integrated with something deep in the mind, and if somebody feels that sort of pressure—this is obvious if you read the biographies of surrealist painters or imaginative writers in general—there's nothing really that's going to deflect him. It's like breathing...

■ There were periods, I suppose, when I just drifted. I was discovering London for the first time. I'd come down from Cambridge and had a year as a student. I lived in a very shabby, cheap bedsitter in South Kensington. I spent a lot of time in Chelsea, a world that's vanished now. It wasn't a bohemian phase, though. I was writing a lot of short fiction of various kinds, but I was still waiting for that discovery of science fiction. I think I would have made it if I'd not gone to Canada in fact, because round about the mid-'50s the SF magazines began to be distributed over here, and I'm sure I would have come across them.

■ I went into the Air Force on a strange sort of impulse, I think. I was suddenly keen to fly. I always have had a keenness to fly, all my life. It's a strange thing running through my mind, and I think it comes out in my writing. I've always been interested in aviation, and the 1950s was an exciting time. The first advanced postwar jets were appearing on the scene, supersonic travel was here to stay, the world was being changed by aviation. Also, in the field of weapons technology there was a whole new world, huge bombers carrying atomic weapons everywhere. I suddenly felt "I want to be part of this"—I was very young. I'd had a great deal of experience as a child and also as a medical student, but I needed something more. I wanted that experience and it was a chance also to get out of England, because the RAF's flight training was done in Canada. I'd been to Canada and the United States on a trip with my parents in 1939, but I only had hazy memories. I wanted to get out of England desperately. So after my basic training I went. I was sent to the RCAF flight-training base at Moosejaw, Saskatchewan, which is quite a place to be! That's where I discovered science fiction, in the magazine racks of the airbase cafeteria, and I've never looked back since!

■ Already one can see that science fiction, far from being an unimportant minor offshoot, in fact represents the main literary tradition of the 20th century—a tradition that runs in an intact line through Wells, Aldous Huxley, the writers of modern American SF, and such present day innovators as William Burroughs and Paolozzi.

■ The main "fact" of the 20th century is the concept of the unlimited future. This predicate of science and technology enshrines the notion of a moratorium on the past...

■ In the face of this immense continent of possibility, all literatures other than science fiction are doomed to irrelevance. None have the vocabulary of ideas and images to deal with the present, let alone the future...

—JG Ballard, "Salvador Dali: The Innocent as Paranoid,"
New Worlds 187, February 1969

■ "Passport to Eternity" was the first SF story I ever wrote—again, written as a kind of pastiche. I think I slightly embroidered it when I came to sell it to one of the American magazines some years later. But I was still in the RAF when I wrote that story. I wrote it at RAF Booker, which was a base for cashiered aircrew, for people being thrown out of the Air Force. We sat in this airfield, near High Wycombe, a sort of transit camp, straight out of Kafka in a way. There were great gloomy huts by the pines on the edge of these empty runways where we reject aircrew sat around, trying to keep warm by the one stove. They didn't bother to keep us warm, and there was nothing to do. There were two squadron leaders who were in charge of processing us, and they had to

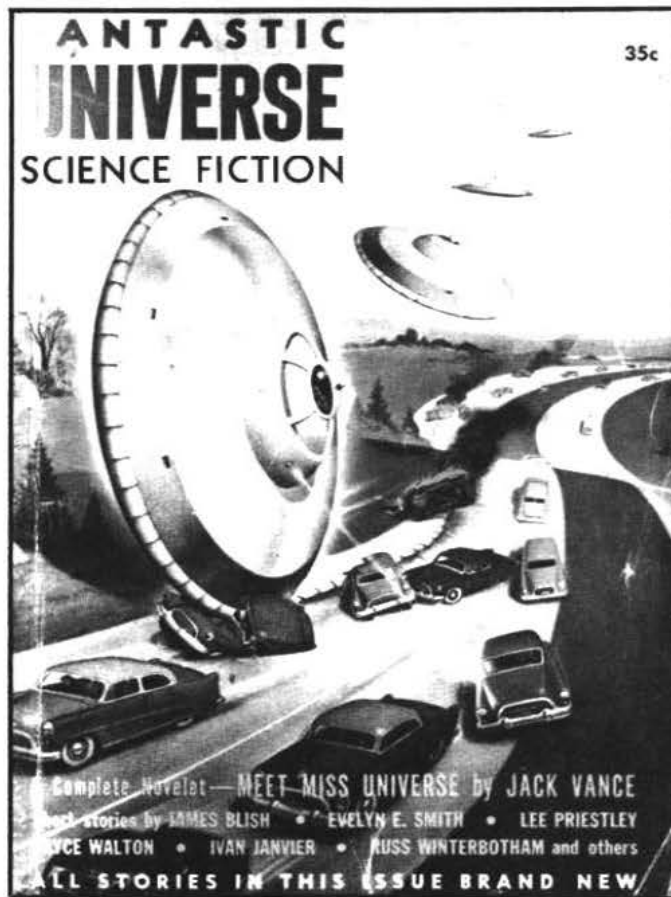
wait for various documents to arrive. As mine had to come from Canada, I spent a long time there. Weeks went by, and I sat around waiting for my name to be called. Suddenly a name would be called out, the man in question would go to meet these squadron leaders, and five minutes later he would be a civilian and leave the base forever. One didn't know when this was going to happen, so with all this spare time on my hands I thought "I'll write a science fiction story!" Which I did. I'd been reading all this stuff in Canada. For some reason, I wrote "Passport to Eternity," which was a sort of summary of it all in a way.

■ It was influenced by a story by Jack Vance, which I remember vividly from a magazine, called "Meet Miss Universe." That was a biological fantasy about a beauty contest; it impressed me enormously with its wit and cleverness and inventiveness—the best of that sort of American science fiction. As I say, "Passport to Eternity" was a summary of all the American SF I'd been reading over the past year in Canada. It's a kind of spoof, indistinguishable really from the American SF. It didn't occur to me to submit it—I don't know why, I think I had other problems on my mind. I already knew that I wanted to write a different kind of SF—that story may have been my first, but it isn't in any way typical. A few years later I typed it out again from the original typescript, the basic story unchanged, and sent it to—Cele Goldsmith, I suppose.

■ I wanted to write for the American magazines. It didn't occur to me to write for British ones, I don't think I even knew about *New Worlds*. The American magazines of the day were much more widely distributed. I'd been reading them in Canada, and I was familiar with the writers—the level of professionalism was far higher in the American magazines. The magazine that I admired most (sadly, I never had a story in it) was *Galaxy*. I admired it tremendously, and read every issue for a couple of years. *Astounding* was terribly heavy, it seemed to be mostly planet yarns, and the stories had very little wit. Wit was the great strength of *Galaxy*—there were stories by Sheckley there, and other things which I relished at the time, like Leiber's "The Big Time." My ambition was to be published in *Galaxy*. I think I submitted some stories, but they all came back. When I wrote "Prima Belladonna" I knew that I couldn't adopt an American manner and tone of voice, and I didn't want to. I couldn't use an American location for Vermilion Sands, although nominally, in some respects, it is American. . . . I was forced to invent a kind of international version of a decaying resort in the desert. Thank God I had to, because if I'd been able to use Palm Springs or wherever I would have slipped into a lot of clichés, all the conventional clichés of the American landscape. I had to invent my own landscape, and I invented something which was much truer to myself and also much closer to the surrealists (who were my main inspiration). In fact, I had to invent my own America.

■ I got married in '55, I suppose. Time went by very rapidly, with the baby around. . . . I worked in a couple of libraries for about six months—Richmond Borough Library, or Sheen Public Libraries, I can't really remember. But I spent a lot of time writing, and of course I had a young wife and child. . . . The period of greatest financial stringency was after I got married, that was the difficult period.

■ After winning the annual short story competition at Cambridge in 1951 he wrote his first novel, a completely unreadable pastiche of *Finnegans Wake* and *The Adventures of Engelbrecht*. James Joyce still remains the wordmaster, but it wasn't until he turned to science fiction that he found a medium where he could exploit his



imagination, being less concerned with the popular scientific approach than using it as a springboard into the surreal and fantastic.

■ Outwardly, at any rate, he lives quietly in Chiswick with his wife and baby son Jimmie. He admits that though she doesn't actually write his stories his wife has as much to do with their final production as he has himself. She hopes to have his novel *You and Me and the Continuum* finished by the end of this year.

■ . . . Of the genre in general he says "Writers who interest me are Poe, Wyndham Lewis and Bernard Wolfe, whose *Limbo 90* I think the most interesting science fiction novel so far published."

—Profile in *New Worlds* 54, December 1956

■ I think I did write some pastiches of *The Adventures of Engelbrecht*, though I was gilding the lily a little to refer to it as my first novel. When you're 21 or 22, 30-consecutive pages feel like a novel! I'd accumulated a great mass of experimental prose, certainly heavily influenced by *Finnegans Wake* and *Engelbrecht*. Maurice Richardson's book was, I won't say a big influence on me, but I loved it. It's a marvelous book, with terrific panache and swing—very nicely illustrated in the published edition. Moorcock's a great admirer of it too, I'm glad to say. Richardson wrote a science fiction story in fact, which was published in *Horizon*, Connolly's magazine. A fine SF story. I met him for the one and only time about two weeks before he died, and I'm glad I did because I was able to tell him, for what it was worth, how much I admired his *Engelbrecht*, and that SF story he wrote in the '40s (the only one, he said).

■ As for this *You and Me and the Continuum*—I did write a sort of experimental novel, nothing like the subsequent story of that name or any of the *Atrocity Exhibition* stories. At the time I wrote the story "You and Me and the Continuum," in 1956, I'd completely forgotten this—ten years in

your 20s and early 30s is a long time—but the phrase must have stuck in my mind. That was a long time ago. I can't really remember. I suppose it was fiction of an impressionistic nature, no attempt at straightforward narrative or storytelling—a highly stylized mixture of dramatic dialogue, in some ways rather like a film script, with interludes of prose poetry, a very hot, steaming confection with bits and pieces from all quarters. The sort of thing you produce if you're a great devotee of *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake* when young. . . . Of course, Joyce was a totally different sort of writer. I think I simply hadn't found the narrative conventions which would carry my real interests, and when I stumbled on science fiction I realized "Ah!—this is the right vehicle for my imagination." Remember, in the early '50s I was writing against a background of English and American fiction at the height of the naturalistic novel, in which I felt no sympathy whatsoever. I can't remember who the dominant English writers of the day were—most of them have vanished into oblivion. Not just the novel, but criticism and the English cinema—I had no interest in that whatever. I read on what I'd call the international menu, not the English menu.

■ I was as impressed by Wolfe's *Limbo 90* when I reread it a year or so ago as I was when I first read it in 1954 or '55. It certainly was one of the books that encouraged me to write SF. Much as I admired Ray Bradbury—he was almost alone among SF writers of the day—I didn't feel that my own SF would follow in Bradbury's direction at all. It was tremendously encouraging to read *Limbo 90* and see a powerful imagination given full rein. I was impressed by the power of the central imaginative idea, and Wolfe's lucid intelligence at work. It stands head and shoulders above anything else, in a similar vein, by any science fiction writers I've read. To some extent it reminds me of the huge disservice which American writers of the old *Analog* school, Campbell chief among them, have rendered to the cause of SF. They virtually seized a monopoly interest in a social and political SF, which they reduced to a series of comic strips. Wolfe's novel is a sophisticated, anti-utopian piece of fiction which stands comparison with anything written by mainstream writers of the mid-20th century. It may not be as great a book as *1984* or *Brave New World*, but it's certainly worth judging by the same yardstick.

■ I was about to start writing SF myself. *Limbo 90* was a great encouragement to me, because here was a writer who had the courage to follow his own imagination to the limit, without any concern for the commercial constraints and conventions that I felt severely handicapped the American and British writers of the early '50s (they only went so far and then stopped). Wolfe's novel has a literary and imaginative dimension that's explored for its own sake. I was struck by the huge vitality of the thing, and by his central image—self-amputation as a metaphor for the castration complex, with the whole apparatus of neurotic aggression, wars themselves, struggles for power and so on, flowing from that. I think he brilliantly sustained the idea both on the imaginative level and on the conscious and intellectual level. That's something that's very rare in anti-utopian fiction, where you tend to get one or the other. I think the book was above the heads of most SF readers of the 1950s. It's a shame that it's out of print.

■ Jim Ballard sent me a story, "Escapement," in the summer of 1956, when I was editing *New Worlds SF* and *Science Fantasy*, which I liked and offered to buy. He then followed it up with a personal visit to my office, bringing with him a fantasy story titled "Prima Belladonna," which I liked even better. The chemicals had begun to

catalyze. In a very short time, stories were flowing steadily from the versatile mind of Jim Ballard. . . .

—from "Preface" by E.J. Carnell, *J.G. Ballard: A Bibliography*, compiled by James Goddard, 1970

■ I remember submitting stories to Carnell's magazines only out of desperation. And of course he bought the very first one. I think "Prima Belladonna" was the first I wrote, although it may not have been the first I submitted. Whatever the case, it and "Escapement" went to him within weeks if not days. . . . In fact, I'm certain it was "Prima Belladonna" because I remember getting a very, very encouraging letter from him, which he wouldn't have sent if it had been "Escapement" (that was rather a humdrum story). He wrote to me saying "Extraordinary story, with fascinating ideas—I'm going to publish it and will pay you £2 a thousand. . . ." I was amazed. I was 25, married by then of course, and it was an extraordinary event. To have your first published work in a commercial magazine. . . . I was overjoyed. I sent him the next story, which I'm almost certain was "Escapement," and he took that and I was well away. I never thought about submitting stories anywhere else for years, simply because Ted Carnell was sitting there. He never rejected a single story, ever. He must have taken 30 or 40 from me. In one or two cases he suggested alterations, that certain sections could be expanded, and I think I always took up his suggestions, expanded a particular scene or made something slightly clearer. But he never really wanted any rewriting. The only things he sometimes changed were the titles, but not too often. There was a little story called "Track 12"—that was his title, not mine. We had an argument over that, because he'd just taken "Manhole 69" without querying what *that* meant. . . . I can't remember my original title in fact, but it contained the word *Atlantis*, as the story is all about a drowning, and he said "We can't use this title that includes the word *Atlantis* because that suggests a different kind of story to our readers."

■ After I'd written about three or four stories he suggested "Why don't you come into the office—we can meet." I went along. He had offices somewhere near the agents A.P. Watt, just around the corner from the Strand. He had rather a big comfortable basement office full of SF posters and artwork for the magazine. I liked him enormously. He struck me as a very likable, sensitive and intelligent man, whose mind was above all the pettiness in the SF world. I think he recognized what I was on about from a very early age and he encouraged me to go on writing in my own way.

■ In 1957 Ted said "I can get you a job on one of the journals upstairs." In fact it was round the corner at McLaren's offices, where all these technical and trade journals were published. I jumped at it. I worked there for six months, and then somehow I heard that there was a vacancy as assistant editor on *Chemistry and Industry*, at a much better salary, and I went there. That was a very good choice—apart from anything else, because of all the scientific journals which came into the offices and I devoured. And the hours were pretty lax. I was even able to do a bit of writing in the office, which was a big help. *Chemistry and Industry* was published by the Society of Chemical Industry, in Belgrave Square. I was there for three or four years as assistant editor. I did practically everything. The editor was a chemist but he was not a journalist and he knew nothing about magazine production. This was a weekly journal, of about 50 pages, including a mass of formulas and tabular material. It was quite an enterprise, and I enjoyed it. I did all the basic

subbing, marking copy up for the typesetter, dealing with the printers, doing make-up and paste-up, dealing with the artists who drew the scientific formulas. I used to go on works visits, visits to laboratories and research institutes. I wrote a few articles—scientific reporting—and I reviewed scientific books. But most of it was straight production. I enjoyed being at the center of a huge information flow. A leading scientific journal like *Chemistry and Industry* is on the mailing list of every conceivable scientific body in the world. I think one of the reasons my fiction of the early '60s has a high science content is because I was immersed in scientific papers of all kinds continually.

■ The exhibition "This is Tomorrow" was staged at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1956. The exhibition consisted of a dozen stands, on each of which a different team of architect/painter/sculptor had collaborated. Richard Hamilton was teamed with John McHale (now an associate of Buckminster Fuller) and John Voelker; together they produced an environment which has been

called the first genuine work of Pop. It combined a large-scale use of popular imagery with an imaginative exploitation of perception techniques. Prominent were a 16-ft robot—with flashing eyes and teeth—making off with an unconscious starlet; a photo blow-up of Marilyn Monroe; a gigantic Guinness bottle. These large objects were placed at the rear of the exhibit... Another section of floor—part of a SF capsule—was painted with fluorescent red paint... In a tall chamber some of Marcel Duchamp's rotor-reliefs spun in a setting which was itself compounded of optical illusion. Smells drifted about the whole exhibit; several movies were projected at once while a jukebox played in front of a huge collage of film posters which curved round like a cinerama screen.

■ To a large extent this concept grew out of the activities of the ICA's Independent Group in which Hamilton had been a notable participant along with Eduardo Paolozzi, the architects Peter and Alison Smithson and the critics Peter Reyner Banham and Lawrence Alloway...

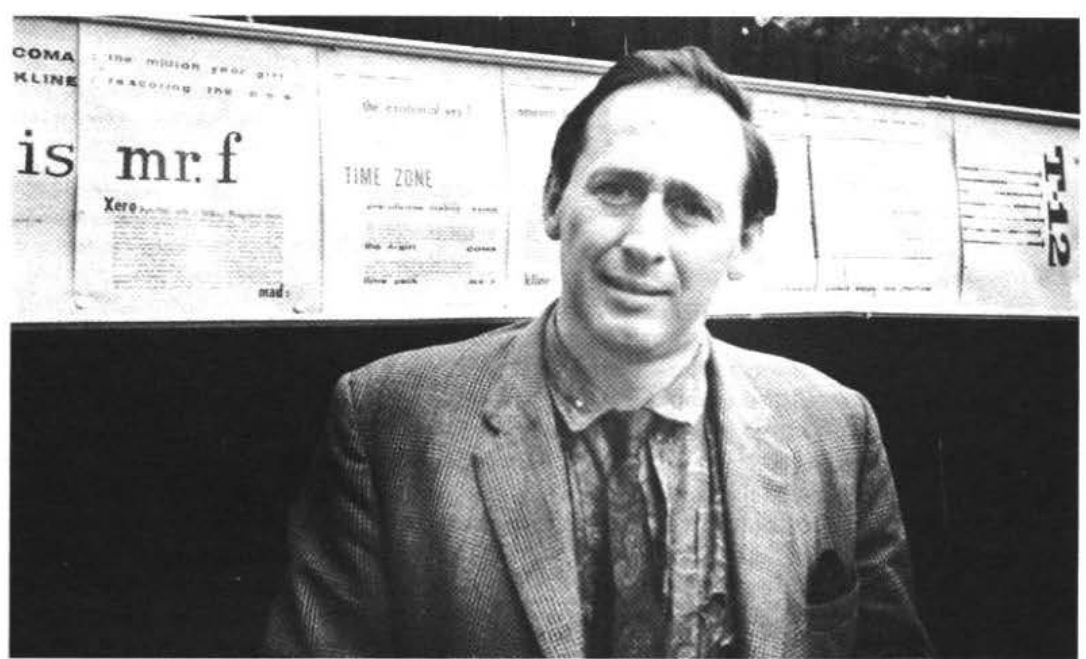
—Christopher Finch, "A Fine/Pop/Art Continuum,"
New Worlds 176, October 1967

■ I was always interested in the visual arts. I bought a lot of

Foreground: EUPHORIA BLISS, professional stripper and friend of Martin Bax and Ballard, who in early '70s performed strip-tease while giving readings of scientific papers and works of Ballard's. Front row from left to right: EDUARDO PAOLOZZI, sculptor and contributing editor of *AMBIT*. BALLARD. MIKE FOREMAN, art editor of *AMBIT*. DR MARTIN BAX, editor of *AMBIT*. Sculpture in background by Paolozzi at Royal Academy of Art. Cover of *Ambit* No. 50, 1972. Photo by Andrew Lanyon.



**Ballard
in front
of pages
of his
text, 1960.**



art magazines, and I used to go to all the new exhibitions on in London. I spent a lot of time haunting the National Gallery and the Tate Gallery—at times I used to go every day. I was interested in the old ICA. I wasn't a member, but I used to go to exhibitions there. That was a hothouse of ideas, and Pop Art was born there. Some people whom I subsequently got to know—Paolozzi, Reyner Banham, Hamilton and so on—formed the so-called Independent Group there. They were interested in a fresh look at the consumer goods and media landscape of the day, regarded it as a proper subject matter for the painter. I felt that their approach had a certain kinship with that of science fiction (in which they were all extremely interested) and I went along to the "This is Tomorrow" exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in '56. That was really the birth of Pop Art, the Americans hadn't started then. Richard Hamilton had on show his famous little painting, I can't remember the exact title—"What is it That Makes Today's Home So Exciting?" The first Pop painting, though in fact it's a collage. And there were a lot of other Pop artifacts there, which impressed me a great deal. It struck me that these were the sorts of concerns that the SF writer should be interested in. Science fiction should be concerned with the here and now, not with the far future but with the present, not with alien planets but with what was going on in the world in the mid-'50s. I still feel this, of course, but it was even truer then than it is now, because the world we live in now was being *born* in the postwar period. Then, if you looked at SF magazines, both British and American, they were almost entirely concerned with intergalactic adventures which struck me as rather juvenile and irrelevant to the lives that most people were leading.

■ What was so exciting about Pop Art was the response it elicited from the public. People were amazed by it. Here for the first time was an art actually about what it was like to buy a new refrigerator, what it was like to be in a modern kitchen, what modern fabrics and clothes and mass advertising were about, the whole world of the communications landscape: TV, radio and movies. I mean, the Pop artists (and *Pop* is an unfortunate term to describe them) were taking the world they lived in seriously, at its own terms. I thought

the SF writer needed to do the same, to get away from interplanetary travel and time travel and telepathy and all this nonsense.

■ I first met Eduardo Paolozzi with Michael Moorcock, much later. When Mike took over *New Worlds*, after a year or two and with my encouragement, he adopted a large format and he wanted articles on the visual arts. I knew that Paolozzi was interested in SF, and I suggested that we have an article on him. So I got his number from somebody, rang him up, and we went along to his studio. That was in something like 1966. We all got on famously together, and he became a contributor to *New Worlds*. I've known him very well in the years since, and through him I've met people like Hamilton and Reyner Banham.

■ By the late 1950s Pop Art was well on its way. I don't think it was a big influence on the fiction I was writing—if you read my early stories and novels there are very few traces, if any at all. (The dominant influence, if there is an influence from the visual arts, was that of the surrealists.) It wasn't really until I started writing the stories which made up *The Atrocity Exhibition* that I began to make direct references to the Pop artists. What the Pop artists did for me though was to encourage me in my determination to change things. This was more difficult to do than you might realize, because 1957 was the year of Sputnik I, and this seemed to confirm all the age-old dreams of the old-guard SF writers, editors and readers. In the next two or three years there was Gagarin's first flight and the launch of the American space program. But the Pop artists and their interest in the present, all the excitements of the media landscape around us, helped convince me that the course I'd set myself was the right one—SF needed to be about the present day, so much more interesting than this invented realm millions of years in the future and on other planets... All that struck me as nothing to do with science fiction.

■ ZERO SYNTHESIS...COMA: THE MILLION YEAR GIRL
...KLINE: RESCORING THE C.N.S...MR F IS MR F...XERO:
RUN HOT WITH A MILLION PROGRAMS... "I am 7000 years
old"...T-1: EMERGENCY MEGACHANNEL...THORACIC
DROP...PROGRAMMING THE PSYCHODRILL: CODED
SLEEP AND INTERTIME...AM: BEACH HAMLET...PM:

IMAGO TAPES...THE EXISTENTIAL YES!...TIME ZONE
...PRE-UTERINE CLAIMS: KLINE...THE A-GIRL: COMA
...TIME PACK: MR F...COMA SLID OUT OF THE SOLAR
RIG...T-12...TIME PROBE...VOLCANO JUNGLE:
VISION OF A DYING STAR-MAN... "Coma," Kline murmured,
"let's get out of time..."

—Phrases from a collage, *New Worlds* 213, Summer 1978
(described in the editorial as "J.G. Ballard material originally done in 1958 and published here for the first time")

■ Martin Bax has that now. It was a sort of collage of things; a lot of them were clipped from journals like *Chemical Engineering News*, the American Chemical Society's journal—I used them a lot because I liked the typeface. I wanted to publish a novel that looked like that, you see—hundreds of pages of that sort of thing. Get away from text altogether—just headlines! I was very proud of those pages. Moorcock published them in *New Worlds* three or four years ago. They were like chromosomes in a way, because so many of the subsequent ideas and themes of mine appeared in those pages. Kline, Coma, Xero—they're all there. I don't know. I used to make these things up!

■ I wasn't satisfied just by writing SF stories, you see. My imagination was eager to expand in all directions. The SF magazines only allowed me a limited amount of scope. Ted Carnell was tremendously generous, but as soon as I started writing for the American magazines, which I began to do in about 1961, '62, I started to get a lot of rejections. People like Cele Goldsmith and the man on *Fantasy and Science Fiction* accepted some of my stories and published them, but they rejected a lot too. It was obvious to me that the conventions of American SF were far tighter, far more prescriptive than anything Carnell laid down. He was remarkably flexible... Some people think there always has been a new wave, there always has been total freedom to write anything you like in SF. What they don't realize is that this had to be earned, the breakthrough had to be made—and it didn't start in 1965.

■ In those days, when I started writing science fiction, I would like to have written stories such as I wrote later in *The Atrocity Exhibition*—not those stories in particular, but similar ones. I would like to have written those long before they finally began to appear, but I didn't have the freedom to do so. The kind of narrative breakthrough, or whatever you like to call it, that I launched myself on in the *Atrocity Exhibition* stories from '65 onward wasn't just a sudden event, a blinding light on my own little road to Damascus. I was interested in writing experimental fiction (though I hate the phrase, in fact) when I was still at school. But one has to work within the possibilities available. Ted was reluctant to publish "The Terminal Beach." I think he only published it, to be honest, because *The Drowned World* had just had a big success, and he knew that I had put "The Terminal Beach" into a Gollancz collection, under that title. I remember him saying to me: "Oh, Gollancz are publishing it, are they? Right, I'll do it." But up to that point I had to work within the possibilities. If I'd had the freedom to do so I'd have been publishing experimental SF long before the mid-'60s.

■ But I think it was remarkable of Ted to publish "The Terminal Beach" in what was, after all, a commercial magazine. I remember sending that story to America. I think I sent it to *F & SF*, and certainly to Cele Goldsmith, who turned it down. My then agents, the Scott Meredith Agency in New York, refused to handle the story. It was one of the very few stories of mine that they actually returned to me, saying there was no scope for it. Subsequently, of course, they've

sold that story umpteen times to American anthologies. Very funny!

■ The grand occasion in 1957 was the holding of the World Science Fiction Convention in London—the first time this annual event had been allowed to stray outside the North American continent...

■ Was that nondescript year really 1957, and not 1947? The convention was held in a terrible hotel in the Queensway district. A distinctly post-war feeling lingered. Bomb damage was still apparent...

■ I went to the bar and bought a drink. Standing next to me was a slim young man who told me that there were some extraordinary types at the convention, and that he was thinking of leaving pretty smartly. He introduced himself as J.G. Ballard.

—Brian Aldiss, *The Shape of Further Things*, 1970 (Chapter 11)

■ I didn't really have that much to do with Ted, on a personal level. I would talk to him on the phone and write him letters but I didn't go to his offices very often. For one thing I was very busy, and for another a lot of the British SF writers of the time used to hang around there and I didn't like them very much. I don't mean to be offensive personally—I can't even remember their names—but to my young, arrogant mind they struck me as being hacks who were only interested in their two guineas a thousand, or whatever. They had no interest whatever in what they were writing, and regarded anybody who was trying to do anything different as just "affected" or "wasting his time." I had brief discussions now and then with one or two of them, but I didn't have anything in common. I took SF seriously. I thought it had great possibilities...

■ I produced quite a lot of stuff in 1956, '57, and then I went to the Science Fiction Convention in London. That shattered me, and then I dried up for about a year. For over a year I didn't write any SF at all. I was disillusioned and demoralized. I only went to the convention for one day, actually, or maybe I went on a couple of days. But I won't repeat all that. Carnell was the only person in the SF world I ever met, because I never went to any meetings or anything like that. The fact that I was writing and being published in *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy* from '57 to '63 didn't alter my life in any way. It was just something I did: I wrote a story, put it in the post, got a small check, and the story in due course was published. Then I wrote another. It wasn't really until 1963, after *The Drowned World*, that I began to meet people in the SF world—Moorcock, Brunner, Aldiss and various other people (though I'd met Aldiss at the convention in '57, and John Wyndham).

■ I've had problems since—not recently, but in subsequent years. I came across philistine attitudes in many of the American writers in the '60s when I began to meet them. Certainly at a place like the big SF conference at Rio that I went to in 1969 (I met practically all the American writers there) I came across the same attitudes, though by and large they were far more talented writers than the ones Carnell had around him in the late '50s.

■ We moved to Shepperton in 1960, and one drawback was the enormous journey, to and fro, from central London. It was difficult to help in bringing up a family of young children and to travel this distance to work and to secure enough time and energy for oneself to go on writing. Though I produced short stories at quite a steady rate, I think in the late '50s and early '60s. By the time I was in my early 30s I was beginning to feel that I couldn't see any opportunity for a radical break—another 10 years would go by and I'd still be churning out short stories. It was difficult to seize enough time to write, and I couldn't visualize myself being able to

write a novel, given all this endless commuting. When I got home I had a tired young wife who wanted to go out for a drink, or round up a baby-sitter and see friends, or do whatever one did then. With three young children she was absolutely exhausted anyway, at the end of a long day. It was difficult to visualize actually writing. . . . When I think of the leisure I have now: it's beyond my wildest dreams! I couldn't conceive of myself writing a serious novel, so I wrote *The Wind from Nowhere* very quickly, in my fortnight's annual holiday, simply to make that break and become a professional writer.

■ Which I managed to do. And, of course, *The Wind from Nowhere* opened a few little doors. It led to my tie-in with Berkley Books and to short-story collections. It was a convenient arrangement because they published almost everything I'd written, volumes of stories which were then republished all over the world and gave me the income to make the final break. But they were hectic times. My stories were written in snatched minutes, snatched half hours here and there, scribbled on the backs of envelopes. . . . I'm not, for God's sake, inviting pity, but it was all done in a kind of spur-of-the-moment, knocked-out-rapidly fashion. This continued to be true until quite recently. My youngest child is now 22, but it wasn't *that* long ago that I had three teenagers at home and domestic life going at full blast!

■ There can be no question now that J.G. Ballard has emerged as the greatest imaginative writer of his day. This latest collection of stories is profoundly stimulating and emotionally exciting. It shows

us a writer whose intellectual control of his subject-matter is only matched by the literary giants of the past, and it shows us a writer who is developing so rapidly that almost every story he writes is better than the last. He is the first really important literary talent to come from the field of modern sf and it is to his credit that he is as popular with his magazine audience as he ever was. He has shown that sf need make no concessions to the commercial publisher's idea of what the public wants.

■ . . . Buy this one—as an investment if nothing else, for there will come a time when a Ballard first edition will be valuable.

—Michael Moorcock, reviewing *The Terminal Beach* in *New Worlds* 144, Sept/Oct 1964

■ I have no feelings about first editions. I don't think there's anything magical about a first edition. Obviously, if you gave me a first edition of *The Ancient Mariner* I would look after it, because it would have a sort of iconic value, but a first edition of *Our Lady of the Flowers* or *The Naked Lunch* would mean no more to me than a tenth edition. I was annoyed recently. Some of my own books are more valuable now than I realized. Somebody sent me a parcel of books, asking me if I'd sign them. There were a couple of the original Berkley paperbacks of *The Voices of Time* and *The Terminal Beach*. They were just paperbacks that retailed at 40 or 50 cents in the early '60s. And *The Voices of Time* was marked at £6 and *The Terminal Beach* at £4! It put me in a terrible temper for the whole of the day! I thought this was outrageous. I got a 5% royalty on those, so if it was a 50 cent paperback I got the princely sum of 2½ cents—which in those days was probably about a penny. Now somebody is getting £6 from these things, and that's extraordinary. I



Ballard with his children: Bea, Fay and Jimmy, 1964.

suppose one ought to be grateful; in a way it's a reflection of the continuing interest that people have in the stuff. . . .

■ Illustrated books are enormously expensive to produce. My original idea for *The Atrocity Exhibition* was that I would do collage illustrations. I put that up to Cape. I originally wanted a large-format book, printed by photo-offset, in which I could prepare the artwork—a lot of collages, material taken from medical documents and medical photographs, crashing cars and all that sort of iconography. It wouldn't have been any more expensive for them to photograph the pages of collages than the pages of text. But to them illustrated books meant six pages of line drawings by some distinguished artist, Felix Topolski or somebody. So that fell through. I would still like to do it. . . . Well, I don't know. My mind has moved on. Time goes by, one loses contact with one's previous incarnations, one's previous selves.



Mary Ballard, 1954

■ The pain in this book is overwhelming, the impact devastating. . . . Like "The Terminal Beach" it is absolutely cold, contained, final and *sui generis*. In short it is a masterpiece. . . . It is impossible not to realize confronting it that one is in the presence of perhaps the major figure in western literature of our time.

—Barry Malzberg, reviewing *Love and Naplam: Export USA* (*The Atrocity Exhibition*) in *F & SF*, September 1976

■ My wife died in 1964, so I was a single parent as well as a full-time author. If I had not been a full-time writer I couldn't have brought up my children. Somebody else would have had to do it for me, at least during the daylight hours. Conversely, if I'd had to go out to work I couldn't conceivably have written. If I had not been here with the children all day long I would not have been able to write. When I think of the *Atrocity Exhibition* stories, written between 1965 and '70—that's 16 years ago. Bea, my youngest daughter, who is 22 now, was six when I started writing them—so Fay was seven and Jim was nine. Children of that age, I drove them to and from school, I did everything. We had an integrated, rich, family life blazing away 24 hours a day!

■ I wrote *Crash* with three children running around. It was worrying. I wrote that between 1970 and '72, when Bea was ten. And they were crossing the road about 20 times a day, on the way to wherever children go. I didn't want a knock on the door and see a bobby or a policewoman come to tell me some unpleasant news. That really would have been life's most bitter joke. . . .

■ As recently as five or six years ago I had two teenage girls here doing 'A' levels, with all the fuss involved in exams and their school activities, which I took part in. So most of my fiction has been produced out of the huge harum-scarum of domestic life! It's none the worse or better for that. But the domestic aspect of my life has been tremendously important. . . .

■ I think a new science fiction magazine is needed now. There are very powerful political, economic and social currents flowing. You see them at work in this country—all these riots, the polarizing of political forces—and all over the world for that matter, between the haves and the have-nots. All these topics such as, "How do you run a society where a large proportion of people will never work?" These are the sorts of themes that classic SF treated. I think a new SF magazine would do a marvelous job, and have a market of concerned readers. If you read papers like *Time Out* or *The New Musical Express*, for example. . . . A paper like *NME* is full of anguished concern with the great issues of the day—unemployment, science and technology, the nuclear arms race—a range of social and political issues moves through the pages. These are the sort of topics that SF writers should be working on. We now have all these political currents that are flowing ever more briskly, a clash of radically-opposed ideologies. I don't just mean party political, but fundamentally-opposed interest groups on the most basic of levels. I think this is an extremely interesting time. Western Europe—and Eastern Europe to some extent—is a huge cauldron that's coming up to the boil. (I don't think there's any politics at all in the United States. There's a scramble for power up the greasy pole, but there's no clash of political ideologies there.)

■ Overlaid on this are all the changes in advanced technologies, communications, the video revolution, which are going to change enormously the way people see everything. I think these are fascinating times, and just the times that demand a good SF magazine to comment on them. ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■



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THE FOURFOLD SYMBOLISM OF JG BALLARD

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BY DAVID PRINGLE

Photo by Bobby Adams



J G. Ballard's novels and stories are full of "things seen"—landscapes, objects, creatures. He is an intensely visual writer who deals in images and "properties." For anyone who has read more than a few of Ballard's stories, these landscapes and properties are instantly recognizable. They may belong in fact to the everyday world, they may sometimes be used by other writers, but once seen through Ballard's eyes they become unforgettably "Ballardian." I am referring, of course, to such things as concrete weapons-ranges, dead fish, abandoned airfields, radio telescopes, crashed space capsules, sand dunes, empty cities, sand reefs, half-submerged buildings, helicopters, crocodiles, open-air cinema screens, jeweled insects, advertising hoardings, white hotels, beaches, fossils, broken jukeboxes, crystals, lizards, multi-story car parks, dry lake beds, medical laboratories, drained swimming pools, mannequins, sculpture gardens, wrecked cars, swamps, motorway flyovers, stranded ships, broken Coke bottles, bales of rusting barbed wire, paddy fields, lagoons, deserts, menacing vegetation, high-rise buildings, predatory birds and low-flying aircraft. The list is by no means exhaustive, but it will serve as an indication of the wide range of objects and landscapes that Ballard has made his own. What do all these heterogeneous properties have in common? They are all Ballardian—any reader with more than a passing acquaintance with his work will vouch for that—but what do they mean, and are they interconnected in more than a purely private and autobiographical manner? In other words, can all these things be taken as *symbolic*, and, if so, is there a coherent *pattern* to the symbolism?

■ In what follows, I will demonstrate that there is a coherent pattern of symbolism in Ballard's fiction, and offer a tentative "reading" of it. . . .

■ It is my belief that Ballard's use of symbolism has, on the whole, been more conscious, more intelligent and more innovative than that of any other contemporary SF or fantasy writer (which is not to say that Ballard has "placed" every symbol, with a devious cunning, so that the whole can be unraveled like an explicit code; there may be deep meanings in Ballard's fiction, but there are no Hidden Messages). He has sometimes maintained, and sometimes altered, the traditional symbolic patterns in order to suit his own sensibility, and in order to mirror the dilemmas and perspectives of the modern mind. Throughout his novels and stories he has built up a structure of symbols which is very much his own, and which is recognizably "contemporary" (reflecting all the *angst* of the postnuclear period), and yet which can at the same time be approached as a variation on the ancient fourfold pattern of Heaven and Hell, the Garden of Eden and the Fallen World. There are even four "elements" which dominate the landscapes in Ballard's fiction, four primary substances which set the tone of his stories. They are Water, Sand, Concrete and Crystal.

■ Water and sand, concrete and crystal are to be found somewhere in virtually all of Ballard's fictions, and each is in fact a symbol with an aggregate of meanings, overtones, associations. Secondary symbols group themselves around these four major ones, and in different stories they combine in different ways. Ballard's work must above all be taken as a *whole* rather than as a number of discrete tales. Viewed as a whole, it will be seen to have a quite profound significance. To reiterate, this does not mean that Ballard has an overt message for us. He is not a didactic writer, as so many SF

authors are, and he is rarely an allegorist. Rather, he has used his symbols in the manner of a poet, to state the modern existential predicament. He offers no definite answers to our problems; he does not spur us to action. But he enables us to see; he gives back to us, vivid and estranged, the experience of being alive today, in an age when "science and technology" have become "the nearest thing we've got to the imperishable and unquestioned values of our forefathers." Let us now find a key that will open the locks on Ballard's mysterious symbolism of seas, deserts, motorways and jewels.

■ One key is a statement Ballard made some years ago in a BBC radio interview conducted by Dr Christopher Evans. He said that he believed his novel *The Drowned World* presented a psychological image of the *past*, whereas *The Drought* presented an image of the *future*. At first this seems a confusing statement, since both are SF novels ostensibly concerned with events in the future. *The Drowned World*, in fact, is set further in the future (the mid-21st century) than *The Drought* (which could well be taking place in the 1970s or '80s). However, when we study the novels, and consider the symbolism of water and sand, Ballard's meaning begins to become clear. *The Drowned World* is a tale of biospheric disaster, superficially in the John Wyndham or John Christopher mode, concerned with the melting of the earth's ice caps and the inundation of man's cities. It is a statement of the obvious to say that it is a novel absolutely dominated by the image of *water*. The landscapes of the novel are full of submerged buildings, alligator-infested lagoons, silt and steam. *The Drought* is also a disaster story, concerned with a worldwide cessation of rainfall and the consequent aridity. It is just as obvious that this is a novel dominated by *sand* (and its correlatives such as dust, ash, salt, etc.). The landscapes here consist of dried-up riverbeds, mudflats, sand dunes and the flakes of ash which drift through the air from burning buildings. Now there are many reasons why, for Ballard, water should be a symbol of the past and sand a symbol of the future. Before exploring these, let us jump ahead and add what Ballard did not say in the radio interview, but which becomes obvious on reflection—namely, that his books *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash* are concerned with the *present*, and their dominating symbol is *concrete*; and that his novel *The Crystal World* is concerned with *eternity*, and its dominating image is, of course, the *crystal*.

■ Why should water be symbolic of the past? The meeting-place of water and the past in Ballard's imagination is the womb, where the fetus hangs suspended in warm amniotic fluid. Another such meeting-place is the sea itself, whence came all plant and animal life many millions of years ago. Thus, water is associated with the past, with the prebirth existence of the individual human being, and with living things in general. The entire biological kingdom is founded in water. In ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt the flooding of the Euphrates or the Nile was the source of all fecundity and growth (thus civilization too is founded in water), and so floods, although destructive, have always been thought of as life-bearing. The waters scatter the seed and bring new life to the wasteland. Countless myths, fairy stories, legends of heroes' births and popular tales—from the stories of Noah and Moses to *Tarzan of the Apes* and *Superman*—echo this archetypal idea of seeds, including human seed, borne by water (whether it be by ark, basket of bulrushes, sailing ship

or—in the SF comic-strip version—by space capsule). It is this traditional association of water and life which Ballard utilizes, if ironically, in *The Drowned World*. Although the floods in that novel have destroyed London, Ballard is far more concerned with the new life that has arisen in its place. The submerged city may present a desolate prospect—and Ballard is not a writer to pass this way without lingering on the potent imagery of all man's works in dissolution—but there is enormous fecundity and vitality in the life forms which are imagined as having taken over the lagoons of London. It is significant that of all Ballard's stories this is the one which contains the greatest abundance of natural living things. "The dense groves of giant gymnosperms," the mosquitoes, the iguanas, the bats, the spiders, the marmosets, the alligators, and even "the rich blue moulds sprouting from the carpets" of the abandoned Ritz Hotel, are probably the images that readers of this novel remember most vividly.

■ The protagonist, Dr Kerans, is, of course, a biologist. Several of the scenes in the novel take place in the mobile

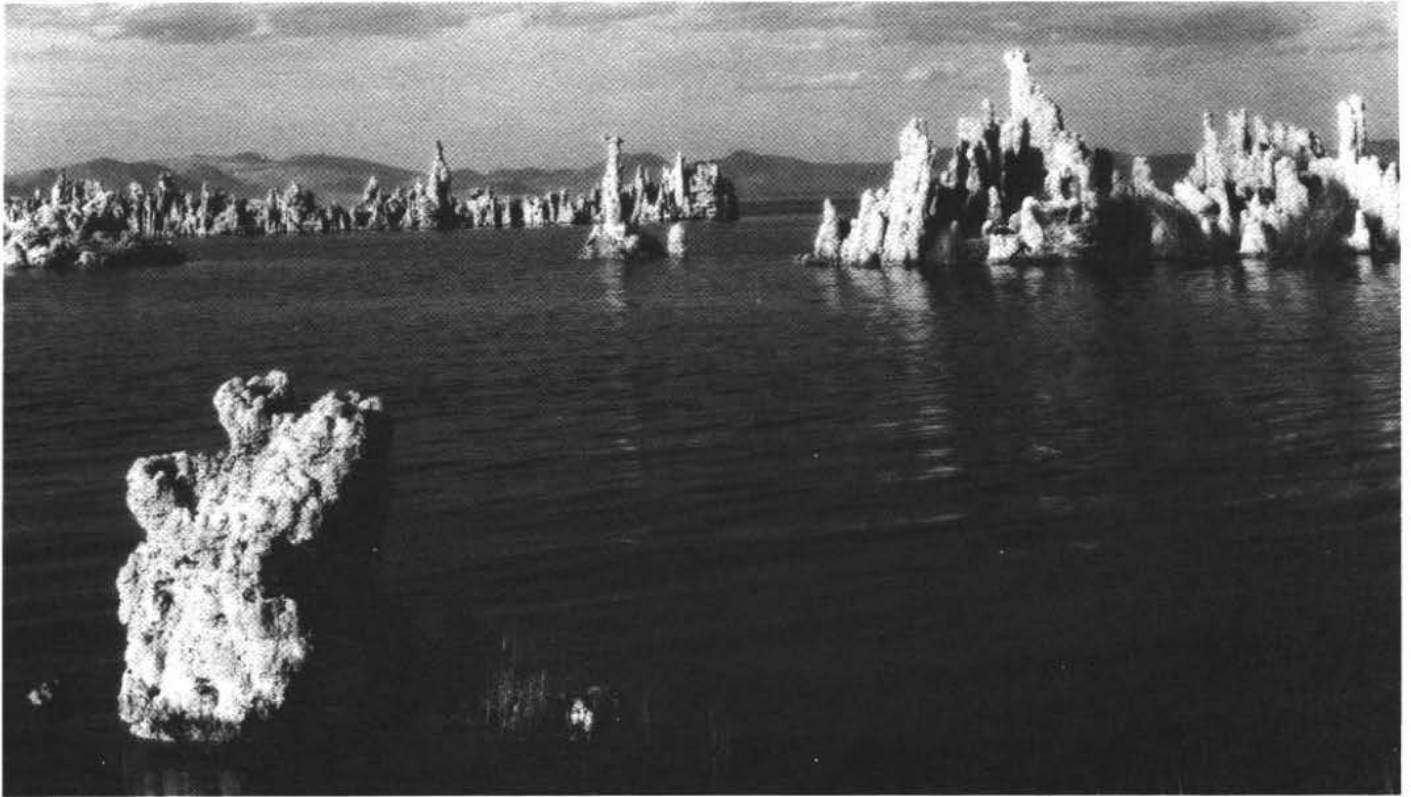
laboratory in which he works. The characters are surrounded by the equipment of biological research, and they talk in the language of that research. One of the most successful aspects of *The Drowned World* is the way in which Ballard uses the language of science to spin what is, after all, a "metabiological fantasy." The characters are encroached upon by a renascent biology—a humming, chittering, clicking and screeching world of life. This watery world is, I would contend, Ballard's science fictional equivalent of the Garden of Eden—not a friendly or comfortable environment, but Eden reimaged in terms of modern science, an Eden appropriate to the perspectives of the 20th century. It is typical of Ballard's somber and ironic imagination that, in describing nature's reconquest of London, he has chosen to visualize it in terms of the Triassic rather than of Arcadia. The typically "English" landscape of green-wood, meadow and piping hedgerow (the landscape, to a large extent, of Richard Jefferies' *After London* or Brian Aldiss's *Greybeard*) holds no interest for Ballard; it appears nowhere in his fiction. He sees nature in a less sentimental light: it is rich, fecund, very much alive, but essentially alien to man. When Kerans looks at the faces of the iguanas, sitting in the windows of the "one-time boardrooms" of the city, he senses "the implacable hatred one zoological class feels towards another that usurps it." In this case, who is the usurper and who the usurped? (The ambivalence is a typical Ballardian irony.) But the point is that, despite the hostility of the reptiles and the climate in general, Kerans is drawn towards the drowned world. He is attracted to it, like the needle of the broken compass he finds which points forever south. For all its horrors, it does represent a psychological Garden of Eden.

■ The principal theme of *The Drowned World* is devolution, or return to a prehistoric past. That is why the natural world is represented by giant plants, reptiles and insects, and not by warm-blooded mammalian creatures. Under the impact of freakish solar radiation, the earth's ecology is reverting to its state of millions of years ago. The human race is ceasing to procreate, and, as Ballard explicitly states, "a point might ultimately be reached where a second Adam and Eve found themselves alone in a new Eden." Far from being repelled by all this, Kerans is fascinated; he collaborates in the devolutionary process, and begins a dream journey down his own spinal cord, from level to level of the biological record. (Readers who complain that Ballard's characters do not "fight" the changes which overtake their worlds are missing the point: the true heroes are the men or women who follow the logic of the landscape.) Kerans deliberately seeks to return to the water world of the past, to the womb, to unthinking organic existence. Thus, the ending of the novel is quite logical, when he sets off on an impulsive journey to the south, to regions of still greater heat and humidity. In an earlier short story, "Mr F. is Mr F." (1961), the protagonist follows a similar route, growing backwards from adulthood to youth, and finally rediscovering "the drowned world of his first childhood." At the conclusion of *The Drowned World*, Kerans is described as "a second Adam searching for the forgotten paradises of the reborn Sun."

■ We may conclude from this that for Ballard the past does not belong to man—or, at any rate, it does not belong to man if he wishes to remain himself. The past belongs simply to the unconscious organic world—in a word, to life, symbolized by water (and all its correlatives, which in Ballard's fiction are vegetation, fish, reptiles, insects and birds). For

"He sees nature in a less sentimental light: it is rich, fecund, very much alive, but essentially alien to man." Photo by Ana Barrado





"Although some of them could be described as 'horror stories,' the horror is in fact overgrown by a beautiful richness and strangeness, like the bones of Ferdinand's father in *The Tempest*." Photo by Bobby Adams

the human being, the conscious animal, there is no place in the past. However much we may yearn to go back, the gates of Eden are closed. If we attempt the return we can succeed only at the expense of ceasing to be fully human. To go back to the womb is to become a fetus again; to search for the forgotten paradises of the Sun is to become dissolved once more in the great biological soup in which we all originated. Ballard's other "water" stories—for example, "The Reptile Enclosure" (1963), "Now Wakes the Sea" (1963), and "Prisoners of the Coral Deep" (1964)—make essentially the same point. A particularly interesting variant is the outstanding story "The Gioconda of the Twilight Noon" (1964), in which a temporarily-blinded man has inner visions of a marine grotto inhabited by a mysterious and frightening female figure. He eventually realizes that the madonna-like figure he is pursuing in these daytime visions is in fact that of his mother. An even closer approximation to Oedipus than the protagonist of "Mr F. is Mr F.," he finally tears out his eyes in order to avoid having to return to the drabness of "normal" sight.

■ What *The Drowned World* and these short stories have in common is an enormous fascination with sea imagery and all its psychological resonances. Although some of them could be described as "horror stories," the horror is in fact overgrown by a beautiful richness and strangeness, like the bones of Ferdinand's father in *The Tempest*. It is not merely a perverse quirk of Ballard's characters but a universal human urge which makes them wish to dissolve themselves "in the luminous, dragon-green, serpent-haunted sea." The difference between ourselves and Ballard's characters is that they are willing to go the whole way, beyond the bounds of sanity. Like mystics and madmen, they descend into the

maelstrom of our collective longings and perversities. As has been said, they follow the logic of the landscapes in which they find themselves—and in Ballard's fiction *landscape* is always a state of mind. The "water" stories are explorations of that unspoken desire to return to the past which persists in the human mind, the wish to revert to a state of damp innocence, the Eden of preconsciousness.

■ What, then, of the future? The psychological future in Ballard's work is mediated not by water but by sand. In his stories dominated by this symbol—for example, "Deep End" (1961), "The Cage of Sand" (1962), "The Day of Forever" (1966), "The Dead Astronaut" (1968), all the tales in the collection *Vermilion Sands* and, of course, *The Drought*—Ballard presents a picture of a future in which human beings have become ever more "mental" creatures. As this "intellectualization" of the human race proceeds, men and women remove themselves further and further from their biological roots. They become lethargic and affectless as the life force itself seems to dry up. A sandy desert becomes the appropriate symbol of this emotional and spiritual state. In *The Drought* industrial waste is imagined as having caused a tough polymeric film to form on the surface of the sea. This prevents the evaporation of water to form rainclouds, and thus the entire land surface of the globe turns into a parched desert. Sand, dust and ash dominate the landscape. Perhaps Ballard sees sand as an apt symbol of the future because it is dry and lifeless, and also because it is essentially formless. Sand dunes drift around, ever changing shape, and obliterating the particularity of the objects they cover—houses, roads, machines (Ballard is particularly fond of the image of the automobile buried in the sand). The future, Ballard suggests, will obliterate us in a similar way.



Sand is a symbol of entropy, the shape-destroyer, and entropy can be taken as a metaphor both on the individual and the social level. Mutability inevitably causes the death of the particular, even if it leads to new things.

■ The correlatives of sand in Ballard's symbolism, apart from substances like ash and salt, include rock, fire and lava flows—in fact, the mineral world in general as opposed to the vegetative world of his water symbolism. A short story like "The Volcano Dances" (1964), about a man with an uncontrollable urge to climb to the summit of a volcano which is about to erupt, fits the "sand" mode. In a later story, "My Dream of Flying to Wake Island" (1974), the protagonist feels a compulsive need to excavate a crashed World War II bomber plane from the sand which has long since buried it. Both "The Cage of Sand" and "The Dead Astronaut" are set in a melancholy Cape Canaveral where the gantries and launching pads have been overrun by sand. In all cases the mineral imagery is indicative of the slow disasters which time and the future wreak, the intractability of the inanimate. An interesting secondary symbol which represents a crossover point between Ballard's water and sand imagery—his symbolism of life and death, if you like—is the *fossil*, the life trace which has become mineral. There are numerous fossils in Ballard's stories, and they occur both in "water" tales like "Now Wakes the Sea" and "sand" stories like *The Drought* itself.

■ In *The Drought*, the protagonist, Dr Charles Ransom, keeps a number of mementos in his houseboat, one of which is a "limestone paperweight he had cut from a chalk cliff as a child, the fossil shells embedded in its surface bearing a quantum of Jurassic time like a jewel." The comparison with a jewel suggests a link with the crystal symbolism which we will examine later.

"...one of which is a 'limestone paperweight he had cut from a chalk cliff as a child, the fossil shells embedded in its surface bearing a quantum of Jurassic time like a jewel.' "

Photo by Ana Barrado

■ The fossil is a talismanic object, a linkage of past and future which now stands virtually outside time. It is a kind of solace. The disaster portrayed in *The Drought*, as well as in such short stories as "Deep End," is more horrifying, more thoroughly apocalyptic, than that which is imagined in *The Drowned World*. Cities and towns burn; fish, birds and other creatures (including human beings) die by the million; and the "bitter sea" offers no real escape from this doom. These tales may be about the future, but that is not to say that Ballard is predicting an *actual* biospheric disaster (although *The Drought*, written in 1963-64, could be regarded as prophetic of the widespread fears of pollution and environmental degradation which have become fashionable since). Rather, he is using it as an analogue of the general dessication of all life as human beings become less and less sure of what exactly they *are*. The relationships between people, Ballard suggests, will become increasingly tenuous in the future. As Ransom muses in his houseboat: "With the death of the river, so would vanish any contact between those stranded on the drained floor... Ransom was certain that the absence of this great moderator, which cast its bridges between all animate and inanimate objects alike, would prove of crucial importance. Each of them would soon

literally be an island in an archipelago drained of time." The waning of our biological drives, the growth in our powers of conscious choice, will lead to a loss of much social identity. In the future, men and women will turn increasingly to neurosis, psychopathology and perversion. However crowded the world may in fact be, we will all be addicted to the solitary pleasures.

■ The whole of Ballard's fiction is haunted by echoes of Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and it is particularly appropriate that in *The Drought* images of dead and dying birds abound. It is as though man's future state is the same as that of the Mariner marooned in the doldrums after killing the albatross. But Ransom is unable to bless the water snakes because they are dead and gone, too. The Mariner is evoked again in the short story "Storm-bird, Storm-dreamer" (1966), where the protagonist lives on board a stalled ship rather like Ransom's at the opening of *The Drought*. He slays the gigantic mutated sea birds with his machine gun, then suffers a slow remorse which eventually leads him to dress in feathers and take to the sky himself—only to be shot down in turn by a woman whose husband and child have been killed by the birds. Like many of the symbols in Ballard, birds play a rather ambiguous role. They are linked with his water and fish symbolism, they represent life, yet they are frequently predatory, symbols of retribution. In the later novel *High-Rise* the birds which roost on the apartment building's roof play a notably sinister and vengeful part. They represent the natural world which the building's inhabitants had blithely assumed they had left behind forever. Like Coleridge, and like Herman Melville in *Moby Dick*, Ballard seems to regard man's assault on the natural world as an analogue of his assault on the animal within himself. In cutting off our roots we kill ourselves. At the end of *The Drought*, the protagonist has reached such a state of living death that he does not even notice when it starts to rain again. If *The Drowned World* gave us Ballard's Eden, then *The Drought* certainly represents his Hell, and his American publishers were not entirely mistaken when they chose to change the title to *The Burning World*. The image of fiery retribution is apt.

■ Yet Ballard rarely deals in absolutes. Hellish many of his "sand" stories may be, but there is also a beauty and fascination to be found in desert landscapes. *The Drought* has its moments of dream-like beauty, but the "pleasures" of the desert are most marked in the set of stories which have been reprinted in book form under the title *Vermilion Sands*. Comparatively light in tone, these tales are all set in a land-locked beach resort where artists and eccentrics lead a life of leisure and material abundance. They represent a more easygoing vision of tomorrow, one which Ballard has described as his "guess at what the future will actually be like," a place where he would be "happy to live." In many ways, the desert resort of Vermilion Sands is indeed an attractive place. It has a languorous atmosphere; it seems to be always evening, the party just over, the season just ended. There are sculptured clouds, musical statues, singing plants, verse transcribers and psychosensitive houses to provide a cultured amusement. But Vermilion Sands is definitely past its peak, fading in the relentless sun, decaying and decadent. It is inhabited by movie queens living on their past exploits, whose mirrors tell lies. Their mansions are tumbling into ruin, their landscaped gardens are being overtaken by the desert. Attracted to this "glaucous paradise" are many poets, musicians and architects who are patronized by

the rich residents. They carve their patrons' images in the clouds, sculpt musical statues for them, breed them mood-sensitive clothes, and so on. The desert dominates everything with its vast reaches, its sand reefs, its coral towers and its unlikely fauna (e.g., the "sand-rays").

■ Vermilion Sands is undoubtedly beautiful, but it is a landscape full of anxieties. The characters behave in much the same way as do those of *The Drought*. They suffer from "beach fatigue," a slow lethargy which gives way to sudden outbursts of insane violence. There is a purposelessness and affectlessness about them—undoubtedly hallmarks of a future Ballard fears rather than desires. Frequently playful, the stories nevertheless contain a melancholy poetry of loss: "As I walked down the slope, the white sand poured into my footprints like a succession of occluding hourglasses. The sounds of my voice whined faintly through the metal gardens like a forgotten lover whispering over a dead harp." Those are the closing words of "The Singing Statues," and the mood they evoke is typical of many of the *Vermilion Sands* pieces. Most of the normal human drives and emotions have retreated like the absent sea waters, leaving the characters to their psychodramas and sterile reenactments of old legends. If this is the future, it is also a sandy waste.

■ Water, the medium of life, is evoked by its absence in many of Ballard's stories. Dried-up rivers and drained lakes are among the images that readers retain most vividly from *The Drought*, and in fact they constitute one of Ballard's important secondary symbols. "The Voices of Time" (1960) opens with a man drawing a mandala on the floor of an empty swimming pool. The image of the drained pool recurs in *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *High-Rise*. In "Deep End" the oceans themselves have been drained and the characters wander around the dried-up bed of the Atlantic. Fish are an important symbol of natural life, and the plot of "Deep End" concerns the hero's attempt—and failure—to keep alive the last fish on earth. As one of the characters states: "The seas are our corporate memory. In draining them, we deliberately obliterated our own pasts, to a large extent our own self-identities. Without the sea, life is insupportable. We become nothing more than the ghosts of memories, blind and homeless, flitting through the dry chambers of a gutted skull." A dry river delta is the setting of "The Delta at Sunset" (1964), a psychological fantasy about a man who conjures up snakes in his mind's eye. Hallucinatory sand seas on other planets provide the locales for "The Time-Tombs" (1963) and "Tomorrow is a Million Years" (1966).

■ Another important secondary symbol is the beach, meeting-place of water and sand, and thus of past and future. At least 25 of Ballard's stories contain beach scenes, and one of the most effective of these is "The Drowned Giant" (1964). Reminiscent of Melville's descriptions of the cutting-up of whales, this story concerns a dead giant who is washed up, Gulliver-like, onto a beach near a city. Like Melville's white whale, the giant is a symbol of all life, and the description of the callous dismemberment and scattering of his body is intensely moving and sad. Ballard has never created a finer metaphor for the process of entropy, the attrition which the future inevitably brings. His view of the future can be taken as very pessimistic, but we must remember that it is not so much the objective future that Ballard is writing about as the unstated image of the future that each of us carries in his mind. As the contrast between *The Drowned World* and *The Drought* reveals, Ballard is highly conscious of the paradoxical position of modern humanity.

Human beings are of the animal world, and yet not of it, unable to move in either direction—towards the animal or away from it—without losing their identities. As a result, human beings find themselves stranded on the terminal beach of the present. In fact, the beach in the story of that name is made of concrete, not sand, and concrete is preeminently the symbol of now in Ballard's fiction.

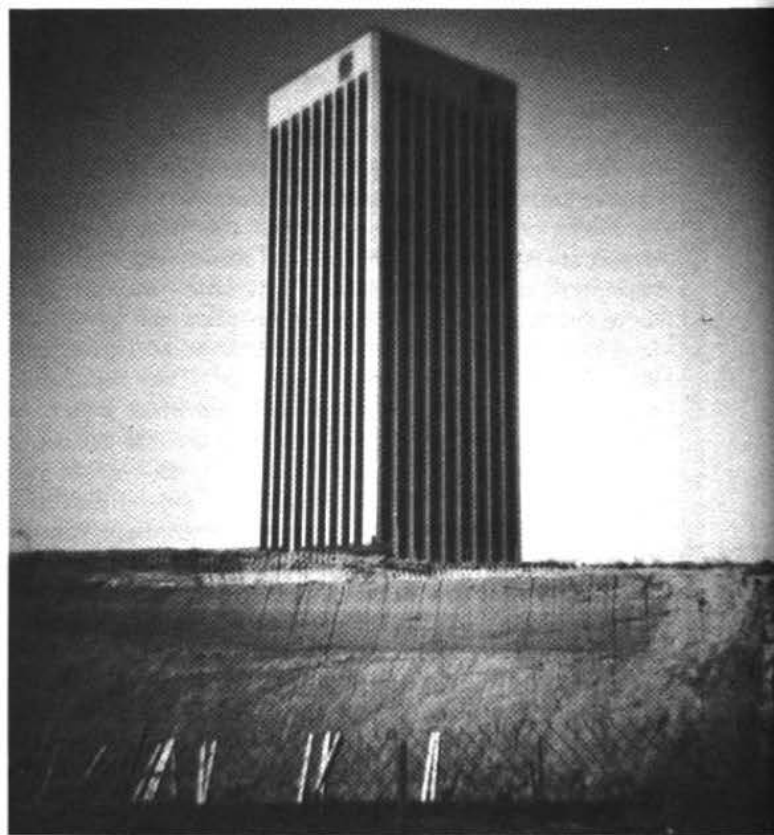
■ The present, to Ballard, means the city. It means other people, concrete and steel, glass and plastic, helicopters and automobiles. In this category of "concrete" stories I place all his claustrophobic city pieces, such as "Chronopolis" (1960), "Billenium" (1961) and "The Subliminal Man" (1963). Also in this category is the series of condensed and fragmented stories that makes up his book *The Atrocity Exhibition* and the loose trilogy of later novels, *Crash*, *Concrete Island* and *High-Rise*. In these works, Ballard shows a fascination for modern architecture; he becomes the poet of the motorway cloverleaf junction, the multi-story car park, and the high-rise block. Men and women are surrounded by machines, especially the motorcar, and by powerful media of communication, especially television. Claustrophobia is a key to Ballard's view of the present world. There is a continual sense of being hemmed in and enclosed by a universe of concrete. This is quite literally the case in the early short story called "The Concentration City" (1957). Here, the protagonist (named Franz M., in a deliberate echo of Kafka) attempts to escape from the city that he has grown up in. He goes on a long journey on the underground railway, only to end up at the point he started from. In other words, the city is global; there is no "up," no "down," no way out. The very concepts of "space" and "flight" cannot be grasped by the inhabitants of this metropolis. In another very early story, "Escapement" (1956), the central character is trapped in a time loop—or, more accurately, in a narrowing spiral of time—and this situation is first revealed to him via the television screen, where the programs seem to be endlessly repeating themselves.

■ The feeling of claustrophobia is conveyed more subtly in *The Atrocity Exhibition*. The central character, whose name varies from piece to piece but who is essentially the same person throughout (he is described on the jacket flap of the Cape edition as "a doctor who is suffering from a nervous breakdown"), lives in a world which induces claustrophobia because it represents an exteriorization of his own mind—or, more widely, a concretization of the collective mind of modern urban man. In this environment (and in many ways it is the actual landscape of contemporary London and its suburbs that Ballard describes), everything is man-made and thus is psychoanalyzable, like the contents of an individual mind. Every skyscraper, advertising hoarding or television broadcast has its latent as well as overt meaning. The lives of the famous—the Kennedys, Marilyn Monroe, Ronald Reagan, Elizabeth Taylor, the Apollo astronauts, even Ralph Nader—are part of this landscape, mediated by films, TV and glossy magazines. In Ballard's "water" stories we are among natural living things, however hostile; in the "sand" stories we are in the presence of an impersonal geology. Both introduce landscapes which are *other* to man. But in the "concrete" stories, and in particular in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, man is trapped within his own creations, and thus within himself. The protagonist of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, who is called Traven, or Tallis, or Talbot, but who can be regarded as a contemporary Everyman, is living in a completely "fictional" world—a world that is in fact a work of

science fiction, since it has been brought into existence by science and technology.

■ As Ballard has expressed it more than once in published interviews, "life has become an enormous novel." In this enclosed narcissistic present men and women have a terrible existential freedom. The individual can choose to do literally anything he wants to do. It is an atomized world, a society in fragmentation. Consequently, people are turning increasingly to perversions, particularly those involving violence, such as the vicarious enjoyment of war atrocities in newsreels from Vietnam and Biafra, or the pleasures of automobile "accidents." After all, the human being is a naturally perverse animal; his perversity is the measure of his removal from the normal biological round. Most men and women who have ever lived have followed the traditional circadian rhythms of existence; they have not "planned" their lives but have simply lived, following the way of all flesh. However, contemporary man's technological expertise has now given him the means to escape this lot and to fulfill his perverse nature, to realize his every fantasy. Sex has ceased to be a primarily biological function; it has become a purely conceptualized pleasure, and this has led to what Ballard calls "the death of affect." As Dr Nathan, Ballard's spokesman in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, says: "Consider all our most real and tender pleasures—in the excitements of pain and mutilation; in sex as the perfect arena, like a culture bed of sterile pus, for all the veronicas of our own perversions; in voyeurism and self-disgust; in our moral freedom to pursue our own psychopathologies as a game; in our ever greater powers of abstraction. What our children have to fear are not

"In these works, Ballard shows a fascination for modern architecture; he becomes the poet of the motorway cloverleaf junction, the multi-story car park, and the high-rise block." Photo by David Hamilton



the cars on the freeways of tomorrow, but our own pleasure in calculating the most elegant parameters of their deaths.”

■ In the earlier short story “The Terminal Beach” (1964) the protagonist, choosing to maroon himself, Crusoe-like, on the concrete-covered nuclear testing island of Eniwetok, exclaims to a would-be rescuer: “For me the hydrogen bomb was a symbol of absolute freedom. I feel it’s given me the right—the obligation even—to do anything I want.” The irony is that this moral freedom can be exercised only within the bounds of humanity’s own concrete world, where we all become victims of each other’s fantasies. Where else is there to go? The past is a biological swamp, the future is a sandy desert—and the present is a concrete playpen. This present is equivalent to the Fallen World in Biblical symbolism, the place where men and women toil and die—although increasingly, in Ballard’s modern version, it is the place where they act out their psychodramas and die. The novels which follow on from *The Atrocity Exhibition* elaborate this dark vision. *Crash*, Ballard’s most extreme and controversial novel, reads like one of the segments of the earlier book extended from 10 pages to 200. Here we have the same landscape of airports and motorways, a quintessential West London dominated by advertising and the automobile. The narrator suffers a car accident and as a result experiences an overwhelming desire to explore the psychosexual significance of the event. He meets a glamorous and somber figure called Vaughan—“a hoodlum scientist”—who already knows all the answers and is the first fully-conscious practitioner of a new sexual perversion involving the motorcar. He quickly becomes fascinated by Vaughan and follows the logic of his psychopathology to the grisly end. What makes *Crash* so different from *The Atrocity Exhibition* is the greater sexual explicitness and the long descriptions of injuries and mutilations—all of which seem divorced from “normal” human feelings and are treated quite equably, without a qualm. The novel is written less in the language of pornography than in that of the medical textbook, conveying a strange union of flesh and machine: “I felt the warm vinyl of the seat beside me and then stroked the damp aisle of Helen’s perineum. Her hand pressed against my right testicle. The plastic laminates around me, the colour of washed anthracite, were the same tones as her pubic hairs parted at the vestibule of her vulva. The passenger compartment enclosed us like a machine generating from our sexual act an homunculus of blood, semen and engine coolant.”

■ Ballard has always been a repetitive and obsessive writer; in *Crash* he is more so than ever. The horizons of the novel are severely limited, the characters boxed in by motorway embankments. *Concrete Island* gives us a protagonist, the architect Robert Maitland, who is quite literally hemmed in by slip-roads and freeways. He crashes his car onto a patch of waste ground, and an injury to his leg—coupled with the callousness of passing drivers—prevents him from escaping. The entire action of the novel takes place on this “traffic island,” which Maitland gradually comes to accept as his domain. Despite the title of the book, the island does not consist entirely of concrete. It is covered by long grass, a return of Ballard’s vegetative imagery (wholly absent in *Crash*, by the way): “Submerged in this green bower, Maitland lay for some time in a hammock of crushed nettles. The dense grass and the foliage of a stunted elder sealed off all but a faint glow of the late afternoon sunlight, and he could almost believe that he was lying at the bottom of a calm and peaceful sea, through which a few bars of faint light pene-



“Where else is there to go? The past is a biological swamp, the future is a sandy desert—and the present is a concrete playpen.” Photo by Ana Barrado

trated the pelagic quiet. This silence and the reassuring organic smell of decaying vegetation soothed his fever.” It is surprising to find these marine images emerging once more in the middle of Ballard’s steel-and-concrete phase, but then very few of his stories contain just one symbol or one system of symbols. Water and sand, concrete and crystal, together with their correlatives and mergings, can be found in most of his works, blending and contrasting in a way which is neither fully planned nor entirely fortuitous.

■ In the third of his urban disaster novels, *High-Rise*, Ballard leaves the motorways for another confined environment—that of a 40-story apartment block. It is rooted in just as obsessive a vision as the earlier novels, and follows the same inward-spiraling logic, turning a landscape of modern technological normalcy into utter nightmare. It is a better-constructed novel than *Crash* or *Concrete Island*. From the beginning, where a bottle of champagne smashes onto Dr Laing’s balcony, to the end, where he watches the lights going out in a neighboring tower block, the story develops unswervingly and remorselessly. We begin with a minor accident in the everyday world, and we end with the world gone mad. As Ballard has stressed in various interviews as

well as in his fiction, the most frightening aspect of the contemporary technological environment is the way in which it plays into our hands, panders to our most dangerous whims. In *High-Rise*, the apartment block is referred to as both a zoo and a prison, with willing and privileged inmates. The novel makes the point that the high-rise building is not so much a machine for living in as a brutal playground full of essentially solitary children. It is a concrete den which encourages every antisocial impulse in its inhabitants rather than serving as a physical framework for a genuine social structure.

■ If science and technology—all the ambitions and ideals of Western civilization—have brought us to this impasse, what other attitude should we adopt in order to live in grace? If past, future and present are all, in their different ways, equally unacceptable, where else is there to go? The dead Japanese doctor suggests to the hero of "Terminal Beach": "Have a proper humility, pursue a philosophy of acceptance." This is a note which has been sounded many times in Ballard's fiction, and it leads to a consideration of a fourth category of stories—those in which the dominating symbol is crystal or something akin. In "The Impossible Man" (1966), Ballard suggests that the inhabitants of a future society in which transplant surgery has become commonplace might choose to die rather than have their identities violated by the grafting of organs and limbs from other bodies. The theme of this story is precisely one of "humility and acceptance." In explaining his feelings to the boy hero, the aged Dr Matthews uses a very interesting image: "You're seventeen? . . . At that age, if I remember, life seems to stretch on for ever. One is probably living as close to eternity as possible. As you get older, though, you find more and more that everything worthwhile has finite bounds, by and large those of time. . . . The hard lines drawn around things give them their identity. Nothing is brighter than the diamond." The implied fatalism of this story is hard for us in the modern Western world to accept. It runs exactly counter to our tradition of regarding personal immortality as a goal to strive for—whether through the Christian religion or medical science. But is it just fatalism that Ballard suggests here? He mentions eternity, and he uses the symbol of the diamond—hard-edged, shining and everlasting. The concept of eternity embodied in the transient is a mystical one, reminiscent of the Eastern philosophies. It is not simply "fatalism," but a serene acceptance of the *justness* of existence which is suggested, the very antithesis of Western civilization's perennial discontent.

■ In "The Assassination Weapon" (1966), one of the best of the pieces collected in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Dr Nathan defines the protagonist's mental problem in the following way: "What the patient is reacting against is, simply, the phenomenology of the universe, the specific and independent existence of separate objects and events, however trivial and inoffensive these may seem. . . ." And later: "You must understand that for Traven science is the ultimate pornography, analytic activity whose main aim is to isolate objects from their contexts in time and space. This obsession with the specific activity of quantified functions is what science shares with pornography." Later still, another character gives the following gloss: "All this time later, it looks as if something is missing. . . . Perhaps his soul, the capacity to achieve a state of grace. Nathan would call it the ability to accept the phenomenology of the universe, or the fact of your own consciousness. This is Traven's hell." The "philosophy of acceptance," the quality of serenity which the

crystal symbolizes, is the exact opposite of Traven's mental predicament. It is the ability to *accept* the fact of one's own consciousness, the phenomenology of the universe. It is the capacity to exist in a state of grace—not merely to accept the fact of existence, but the facts of entropy and death, too. It is the ability to accept the sheer fact of the drowned giant, and the fact of his dismemberment as well. It is the capacity to make a "whole" out of a quantified universe.

■ "The Garden of Time" (1962) is, like "The Drowned Giant," a beautiful short story which can be interpreted as a parable on the subject of entropy. In this case, however, Ballard uses the symbol of the crystal. Count Axel and his wife live on in their Palladian villa, despite the threat from the vast ragged horde which approaches them on the far side of the garden wall. They are saved, in the meantime, by the "time flowers" which grow in their garden: "The flowers grew to a height of about six feet, their slender stems, like rods of glass, bearing a dozen leaves, the once transparent fronds frosted by the fossilized veins. At the peak of each stem was the time flower, the size of a goblet, the opaque outer petals enclosing the crystal heart. Their diamond brilliance contained a thousand faces, the crystal seeming to drain the air of its light and motion." Every time Axel plucks one of the crystalline flowers, time is reversed and the mendicant army is flung back from the walls. However, each day the horde edges a little nearer and the supply of flower-jewels runs lower. Eventually, Axel and his wife pluck the last flower—barely more than a bud—and as it deliquesces they are given a few moments' respite. Then the army is upon them. Axel and his wife are magically preserved as lifelike statues, protected by a thorn bush, while their villa and its garden go down in ruins. "The Garden of Time" is a fairy tale, really, and open to a number of interpretations. . . . but the important point to note here is the use of the crystal symbol to denote timelessness or eternity. The jeweled flowers represent stolen moments of time; the lifelike statues are a frozen moment, a fossilization of things which protects them from the ravages of entropy.

■ The diamond or crystal symbol is one that Ballard has used sparingly in his short stories, but of course it does appear profusely in his novel *The Crystal World*. This fascinating tale begins with descriptions of a "dark river" overhung by a somber African forest. We are reminded of the mutated London of *The Drowned World*, or the oppressive South American jungle of "A Question of Re-entry" (1963)—the vegetative symbolism at its heaviest and most menacing. Here we have Ballard's usual vision of the natural world that humanity has forsaken—frightening, alien, but alive. The port at the river's mouth is one of those depressing "outposts of progress," highly reminiscent of scenes in Joseph Conrad's and Graham Greene's novels. As the protagonist, Dr Sanders, remarks ironically: "Port Matarre has more than a passing resemblance to purgatory." But when the characters move upriver they discover a beautiful world of cancerous mutation. The forest and all its denizens are efflorescing, turning into a vast crystalline mass which is gradually expanding to fill all space. Ballard's science fictional explanation for this phenomenon is obscure, involving the "supersaturation" of time and space: "As more and more time 'leaks' away, the process of supersaturation continues, the original atoms and molecules producing spatial replicas of themselves. . . ." The important point is that the crystal world is *without time*; it has become a fragment of eternity and

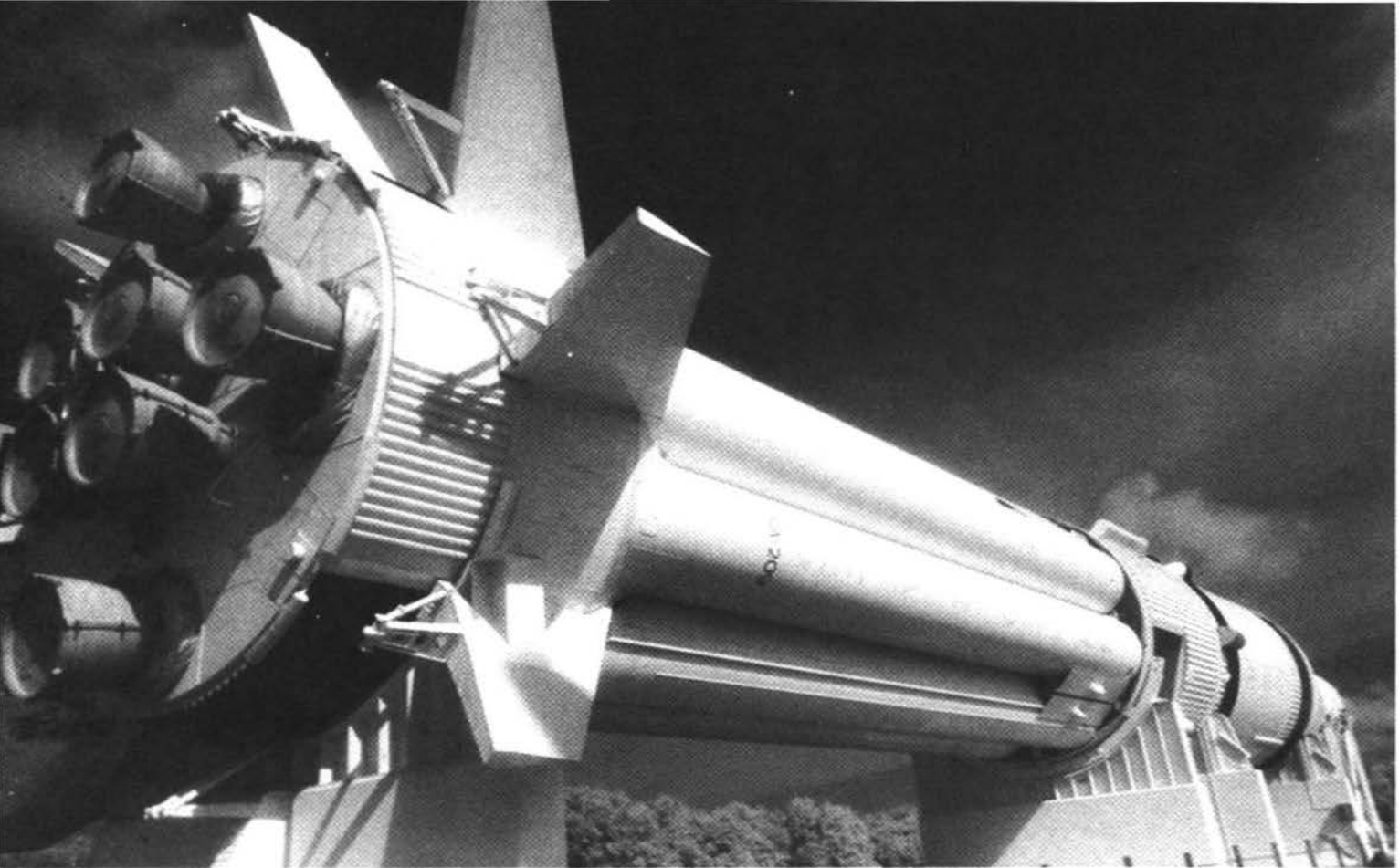


"But when the characters move upriver they discover a beautiful world of cancerous mutation. The forest and all its denizens are efflorescing, turning into a vast crystalline mass which is gradually expanding to fill all space." Photo by Bobby Adams

eventually it will fill the entire universe, "an ultimate macrocosmic zero beyond the wildest dreams of Plato and Democritus." The living things that are caught up in this process do not die: they become, as it were, embalmed in eternity. In the crystal world all opposites merge: light and dark, man and animal, life and death, space and time—all are resolved into one. Most of the characters gradually succumb to the enticement of this world and blend with it. Dr Sanders eventually undergoes a self-immolation which is superficially similar to those of Kerans in *The Drowned World* and Ransom in *The Drought*, but which is in fact very different in content and significance. In this rather mystical novel, Ballard has used the symbol of the crystalline forest as a science fictional objective correlative of our potential sense of oneness with the universe. Here Ballard has created his Heaven, or City of God.

■ It is natural enough to associate the stars with diamonds, the galaxy with crystal, and indeed much literature of the past has done so. In Ballard's symbolism too, crystal ex-

pands to embrace the heavenly bodies. In fact, the phenomenon of crystallization in *The Crystal World* is in some way triggered by events deep in outer space. Antimatter and antitime have appeared in the universe and the distant galaxies are "doubling." The first to be discovered by earth's astronomers is "in the constellation Andromeda, the great oblate diadem that is probably the most beautiful object in the physical universe, the island galaxy M 31." This thoroughly traditional association of crystal, eternity and the Milky Way leads us on to a consideration of the theme of space travel in Ballard's fiction. Ballard has sometimes been reproached for being the only SF writer who is apparently uninterested in what many would consider the quintessential themes of the genre: space flight and encounters with alien beings. In fact, this is not entirely fair, since several of his most brilliant and suggestive short stories deal in part with just such themes—in particular, "The Waiting Grounds" (1959), "The Voices of Time" (1960), "The Time-Tombs" (1963), "A Question of Re-entry" (1963) and "The Venus



"The recurrence of these motifs would suggest that Ballard regards the space programs as doomed to failure. But this does not really represent a conviction on his part, so much as a symbolic expression of a fear, a doubt." Photo by Ana Barrado of Saturn Rocket

Hunters" (1963). In contrast to most SF writers, what characterizes Ballard's approach to space travel themes is his extreme caution. . . .

■ The space ship itself is a frequent symbol in Ballard's work. When space capsules appear, they are invariably wrecked, grounded or trapped in an endless orbit. "Thirteen to Centaurus" (1962) presents us with a huge spacecraft which is in reality an earth-bound testing laboratory. Its inhabitants think they are flying to Alpha Centaurus, but in fact they are all guinea pigs in a failed experiment. Crashed space vehicles recur in such stories as "Deep End," "The Cage of Sand," "Tomorrow Is a Million Years" and "The Dead Astronaut," and in *The Atrocity Exhibition* Ballard evinces a fascination for the Apollo disaster at Cape Kennedy in which Grissom, White and Chaffee were burned to death on the launchpad. The recurrence of these motifs would suggest that Ballard regards the space programs as doomed to failure. But this does not really represent a conviction on his part, so much as a symbolic expression of a fear, a doubt. The fear is perhaps that humanity's frontal assault on the heavens—an approach lacking in humility—will lead to further damnation rather than salvation. As the protagonist of "A Question of Re-entry" puts it: "If the sea was a symbol of the unconscious, was space perhaps an image of unfet-

tered time, and the inability to penetrate it a tragic exile to one of the limbos of eternity, a symbolic death in life?" It is the possible failure of the space programs, the inability of humanity to face up to the sheer vastness of the cosmos, that gives Ballard pause, rather than the attempt itself. His personal attitude to the Moon landings was expressed in a review of Norman Mailer's *A Fire on the Moon*. Here, he blames Mailer for not having sufficient respect for the astronauts, and for deriding Buzz Aldrin's "quiet and moving" celebration of communion on the Moon's surface. Ballard admires the dedication of the NASA team and regrets that the public response to the event has not been greater. It should all have added up to a change in "the real substance of our lives, our private communion, however stuttered, with the unseen powers of the universe." The blame, he implies, is on us for not being sufficiently imaginative.

■ "Communion with the unseen powers of the universe"—what does Ballard mean by this? He is certainly not a conventionally religious man (elsewhere, he has written that "science fiction is totally atheistic," although this is one of his more dubious assertions), but that he has a leaning towards mysticism has already been hinted by the analysis of the crystal symbol in his fiction. His story "The Time-Tombs" is set on a far planet where a group of Earth's outcasts make

their living by scavenging the relics of a dead civilization. The oldest of the tomb robbers has come to regret his occupation: "He hated stripping the tombs. Each one robbed represented . . . a diminution of his own sense of eternity. Whenever a new tomb bed emerged from the sand he felt something within himself momentarily rekindled . . . a serene acceptance of the brief span of time left to him." The hero comes under the influence of this philosophy, and when he discovers an intact tomb he cannot bring himself to violate it, but gradually becomes more and more fascinated by the personality of its long-dead occupant, an alien woman whose image is that of a goddess whose "long copper hair streamed behind her like an entrained time-wind, her angled body in flight between two infinitely distant universes, where archetypal beings of super-human stature glimmered fitfully in their self-generated light." This is typical of Ballard's treatment of alien beings. It is as though we are seeing them from the corner of the eye rather than full on, and the result is much more mysterious and suggestive than the banal descriptions of so many SF writers. After all, how do you describe the indescribable? Few other writers have achieved this "corner of the eye" effect (although James Blish did, in his story "Common Time"). In Ballard's "The Voices of Time" the first men to land on the Moon never return to Earth but send back fragmentary messages about "blue people who had come from Orion and spoken in poetry to them of ancient beautiful worlds beneath golden suns in the island galaxies, vanished forever now in the myriad deaths of the cosmos." The technique here is exactly the same: an evocative glimpse, no more. But it is enough. These can be regarded as symbols of "the unseen powers of the universe," alien intelligences who are, to all intents and purposes, gods. Their message is the same: have humility, accept mortality. As one of the characters in "The Voices of Time" advises the protagonist: "Think of yourself in a wider context. Every particle in your body, every grain of sand, every galaxy carries the same signature."

■ The "summit" of Ballard's symbolic vision, his most apocalyptic imagery, is to be found in the comparatively early story "The Waiting Grounds." This brilliant, if flawed, piece concerns a man on an alien planet who discovers a strange temple of the galactic races. Amid a landscape of sand, ash and intense heat, the hero is rewarded with a glimpse of the cosmic cycle. He sees the future evolution of sentient beings, their expansion into space, their ability to slow their subjective time-rates until they abandon physical existence and become a "great vibrating mantle of ideation" which eventually swallows all matter and "achieves the final predicates of time and space, eternity and infinity." Once this zero has been reached, the system explodes, time and matter re-emerge, and the cycle begins again. An alien voice tells the hero of the purpose of his vision and of the waiting grounds: ". . . we wait here, at the threshold of time and space, celebrating the identity and kinship of the particles within our bodies with those of the sun and stars, of our brief private times with the vast periods of the galaxies, with the total unifying time of the cosmos . . ." The theme of acceptance can scarcely be stated more clearly. The universe may be a place of "myriad deaths," but it is also, ultimately, a single entity, every particular existence bodying forth its meaning.

■ Of course, Ballard does not expect that men and women will ever just sit still and accept. In "The Time-Tombs" the other tomb robbers eventually come and shatter the illusion

that has been sustaining the hero. In a later, much more ironic story called "The Life and Death of God" (1976), Ballard suggests that if God *did* exist it would be necessary to un-invent Him. Humankind cannot bear too much eternity. But this cosmic or crystal vision represents a genuine area of human consciousness. It is a potentiality of the mind: eternity is always there, an alternative to the unconscious past, the arid future, the claustrophobic present. Ballard expresses all this with an irony, ambivalence and wit which make it clear that his work adds up to an exploration of various states of the modern mind, not a new scripture. . . . The Jungian mandala appears frequently in Ballard's stories, and it can be regarded as analogous to the crystal or cosmic symbols. The protagonist of "The Voices of Time," when he finally finds his peace with the universe, has "the image of the mandala, like a cosmic clock . . . fixed before his eyes." Ballard's imagery derives not only from religious traditions and from the visual arts, but from depth psychology also. He does not adhere fully to any one system of psychology, be it Freudian or Jungian, but he uses them alternatively, as metaphors.

■ So we have explored the four main symbols of water, sand, concrete and crystal, and have touched on a number of secondary symbols, such as the drained swimming pool, the beach, the fossil, and the mandala. This leaves a number of Ballardian properties unaccounted for or insufficiently explained—the constant references to prison and zoos, for example, which seem to be balanced by images of flight (birds, aircraft). There is the ambiguous symbol of the helicopter, which appears with remarkable frequency in his work, sinister and threatening, and yet possessing all the associations of freedom and flight. There is the contrast of darkness and light (especially in *The Crystal World* and "The Day of Forever"), of blindness and vision. . . . But above all we must take note of the degree to which Ballard has blended his symbols, the way in which one thing suddenly becomes another. For example, his desert landscapes (in *Vermilion Sands* and elsewhere) are continually flaring with light; exposed veins of quartz are described as glowing as though illuminated from within. Thus crystal emerges from sand. Not only from sand, however, but from glass and concrete, too. In *Crash*, when the protagonist revisits the site of his accident, he notices the following:

■ At my feet lay a litter of dead leaves, cigarette cartons, and glass crystals. These fragments of broken safety glass, brushed to one side by generations of ambulance attendants, lay in a small drift. I stared down at this dusty necklace, the debris of a thousand automobile accidents. Within fifty years, as more and more cars collided here, the glass fragments would form a sizable bar, within thirty years a beach of sharp crystal. A new race of beachcombers might appear, squatting on these heaps of fractured windshields, sifting them for cigarette butts, spent condoms, and loose coins. Buried beneath this new geological layer laid down by the age of the automobile accident would be my own small death, as anonymous as a vitrified scar in a fossil tree.

■ This passage is very effective, precisely because it contains so many echoes of familiar Ballardian properties—not only automobiles and freeways, but sand, crystals, beaches and fossils. The crystal symbol returns later in *Crash*, particularly in the powerful passage describing the hero's LSD trip at the climax of the novel. The narrator sees motorcars as angels "waiting for some invisible slip-road into the sky," and these transformed machines seem to become chips of eternity, pouring out a preternatural light. The suggestion is that one no longer must visit the jungle behind Port Matarre for a vision of eternity—it can be found right there in West London; concrete and steel can be embalmed too. ■■■■

For years J. G. Ballard has been the subject of extreme controversy. The following selection of critical quotations, while not exhaustive, is representative. Our thanks to archivist/editor/writer David Pringle, whom Ballard described as: "a mine of information, without exaggeration he knows more about me than I do myself, which he has demonstrated many times. It's curious to realize that a lot of the basic facts one has about oneself are wrong . . ."

■ One of the strippers whom nightclubbers in Singapore found especially bewitching was a big Australian girl who crouched on a stationary motorcycle and flung her clothes off. But the music and lights created the illusion of the motorcycle speeding along, and after a sequence of antipodean gymnastics there was a terrific crash, the motorcycle tipped over and the stripper—now completely naked—sprawled in a grotesque simulation of an accident victim, her arms tangled in the steering gear, her legs scissored open and all askew. The Chinese, not noted for extravagant displays of appreciation, applauded this wildly. The act ran for months and just about put the Korean kick-lines out of business.

■ While this item failed to enchant me at the time, it was a substantial preparation for William Burroughs's remark in his preface to J.G. Ballard's new novel: "An auto crash can be more sexually stimulating than a pornographic picture."

"The auto crash as sexual stimulation,"
by Paul Theroux; a review of *Love and Napalm: Export USA*, *New York Times*,
Oct. 29, 1972

■ Mr. Ballard has no interest in things like personality, pain, consciousness, ambition, love or any of the other central concerns of classical fiction. More surprisingly, his work expresses little understanding of the real dynamics of technological evolution. His literary use of technology is merely emblematic. He has, in fact, only one important theme to which he recurs with obsessive fidelity. The very titles of his novels—*The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, *The Crystal World*, *The Disaster Area*, etc., suggest its nature: It is entropy, the tendency of all things to revert to a simpler, homogenized state which will ultimately result, according to one school of scientific thought, in "The heat death of the universe". This reduction obsession distinguishes him not only from classical novelists but also from most other science fiction writers who use science and technology to enrich the world and multiply options. J.G. Ballard seems to be rather an anti-SF writer concerned to expose the impotence of life and the irrelevance of thought in a cosmos that is irredeemably mineral.

"Desert Song," by Paul Ableman;
a review of *Hello America*,
Spectator, May 30, 1981

■ . . . one of the most powerful and beautiful and clever science fiction stories it has ever been my pleasure to read. Science fiction suffers a sea-change into something rich and strange. Ballard's potent symbols of beauty and dismay inundate the reader's mind: it's most haunting and hallucinatory.

A review of *The Drowned World*
by Brian Aldiss,
Oxford Mail, Jan. [or Feb.] 1963

■ Retrospection is obviously not a cardinal virtue for science fiction writers, but few avoid it as conspicuously as J.G. Ballard. He writes as though he never looks back, with the concentration of a tunnel-visionary on what is about to be written. The vision itself is no longer a particularly singular one, although it was Ballard's early novel *The Drowned World* which did much to make it popular. Where Ballard does stand apart—and this creates the continuing interest of his work—is in allowing the psychic shocks of his imagined worlds to disturb his own prose. That prose is often marked by what seems to be an unconsciousness about its own effects and direction, as though it were the product of an obsessive mind rarely pausing to check how erratic its progress is.

■ There is evidence outside the novels that this is a fair account of how Ballard writes. When his publisher showed him the proofs of his novel *Crash* he claims to have surprised even himself. "My first reaction was that the man who wrote this book is mad." Like some of his other novels, *Crash* reads as art aspiring to the condition of pornography, not because the subject matter is clinically erotic—though it is—but because it shows an apparent monomania which, far from being alarmed by repetition, seeks it out. In pornography, after all, the whole point is to go back to the beginning and start again.

■ This new collection of stories proves that Ballard has not lost his nerve. There are still repetitions, and there is no sense that these recurrences are the formal elaborations of a theme. Attention is not drawn to them in that way. Ballard has

abandoned that least realistic device of realism, the insistence on continual modification, the novelty of the novel, in order to show characters who are at the point of giving up the rationality of language in order to gain access to a new and anarchic physics.

■ There are repetitions in another sense. "Myths of the Near Future" and a companion story, "News from the Sun," both explore a characteristic Ballard theme: the pathological effect of modern "advancement" on the modern psyche. They return quite clearly to earlier rhapsodies from the novels and make use of a familiar repertoire of effects, desolate bars and empty motels, deserted streets ceding to sand or jungle and littered with the relics of an over-extended technology which has instituted its own dereliction. But the fascination with what happens to language when it loses its foundation hasn't been stale. "So called articulate speech is an artifact of time," says one of Ballard's characters, about to embrace a babbling condition of timelessness. Ballard's prose hovers uneasily between the visionary and the ludicrous. His similes are like nothing on this constrained earth. "Around him the bright winds were like the open jaws of a crystal bird, the light flashing between its teeth." This kind of thing can easily go wrong: there is something coyly anthropomorphic in his description of "hills waiting with the infinite guile of the geological kingdom for the organic world to end and a more vivid mineral realm to begin," but in general the risks he takes to present the decay of time and space are worth taking.

■ Ballard is not much interested in emotions. His characters are like abandoned buildings themselves, with the sharp architecture of their rationality remaining after feeling has fled. They record the details of their own dissipation with a scientific accuracy, and they are all animated by the "remorseless logic of madness" which is attributed to the one character in the stories who is diagnosed as insane. They are at their most sympathetic when, like the reader, they are assailed by the sense that there is meaning locked in the dislocated world around them "like the forgotten codes of a discarded geometric language."

"Leaving language behind."
by Thomas Sutcliffe;
a review of *Myths of the Near Future*,
Times Literary Supplement, Sept. 24, 1982

■ [Ballard] is the first clear voice of a movement destined to consolidate the literary ideas—surrealism, stream of consciousness, symbolism, science fiction, etc., etc.—of the 20th century, forming them into something that is prose, but no longer fiction (as the term is generally understood) and that is a new instrument for dealing with the world of the future contained, observably, in the world of the present.

"Ballard: The Voice."
by Michael Moorcock,
New Worlds 50, No. 167, Oct. 1966

■ There can be no question now that J.G. Ballard has emerged as the greatest imaginative writer of his day.

"No Short-cuts" by Michael Moorcock,
New Worlds 48, No. 144,
Sept./Oct. 1964

■ It is a kind of toying with horror, a stylish anatomy of outrage, and full of specious arguments, phony statistics, a disgusted fascination with movie stars and the sexual conceits of American brand names and paraphernalia, jostled by a narrative that shoves the reader aside and shambles forward on leaden sentences strung out with words like *conceptual* and *googolplex* and *quasars* and *blastospheres*, one sees his craft (not to mention his Krafft) ebbing, and one is tempted to ridicule or dismiss it. It is a horrible book, and it is even in parts a boring and pointless book.

"The auto crash as sexual stimulation,"
by Paul Theroux; a review of *Love and Napalm: Export USA*, *New York Times*,
Oct. 29, 1972

■ The high-rise, with its 1,000 overpriced apartments, swimming pools and shopping concourses is what Ballard calls "the vertical city," and, to begin with, its residents observe conventional class and territorial demarcations ("upper," "lower" and "middle" levels), showing resentment, expediency and disdain for their fellow citizens in much the same way as life is run in the outside world. Soon, though, the enclosed nature of the building has encouraged and intensified these aggressions beyond any clear analogy with external society. After various piracies and beatings-up, the class system within the high-rise deteriorates as readily as the building itself, becoming a filthy warren of violent, apathetic or paranoid enclaves. Drunken gangs storm through the blacked-out corridors; women are found raped and murdered in defused elevators; disposal chutes are clogged with excrement, smashed furniture and half-eaten pets. Eventually, the high-rise takes on that quality common to all Ballardian *loci*: it is suspended, no longer to do with the rest of the planet, screened off by its own surreal logic.

■ Ballard being Ballard, though, *High-rise* is no ordinary stroll down atavism lane. The mental journey undertaken by these colonists of the sky is not a return to "nature"; it is a return to the denurtured state of childhood: "for the first time since we were three years old what we do makes absolutely no difference," enthuses one of the affluent anarchists. Ballard's stranded characters have always been more than half in love with their lethal and unnerving environments, and the delinquents of the high-rise are soon completely defined by their new psychopathological "possibilities." One of the most ghostly and poignant scenes in the book has a middle-echelon psychiatrist attempting to leave his barricaded slum and return to work at his medical college; he gets as far as the car park before the shrill clarity of the outdoors sends him running back to the affectless and soupy warmth of the high-rise, satisfied that he will never try to leave it again. In the closing pages, as hauntingly wayward as anything Ballard has written, the retrograde logic of the high-rise is fulfilled, when the passive, derelict women emerge as the final avengers.

"Up!" by Martin Amis; a review of
High-rise, *New Statesman*, Nov. 14 1975

■ [*Crash* is] the first pornographic book dominated by 20th century technology.

A review of *Crash* by Maxim Jakubowski, *New Scientist* 59, Aug. 2 1973

■ The author [Ballard] is building from book to book, and from story to story, in such a way that although each unit is meaningful on its own terms, it assumes full dimensions only in the context of the whole body of work.

■ "Books" by Judith Merril, *Fantasy and Science Fiction* 30, No. 1, Jan. 1966

■ [Ballard's] blend of hard and soft science, splendid imagery and polished style, the depth of his vision, were the best things to happen to SF in a very long time.

■ A review of *The Crystal World* by Brian Aldiss, *Oxford Mail*, April 1966

■ These stories, set in a "post-technological" future, leave haunting pictures in the mind. Certain images recur: cars or aeroplanes half-submerged in sand, broken bridges, empty cities, shattered buildings, decaying machines. It is hard to think of another writer whose visions would be so nearly expressible as paintings. J.G. Ballard's landscapes—the word is unavoidable in discussion of his work—seem to convey more of his meaning than do the stories enacted against them. Several of these tales would make striking films, but the films would almost be silent—or, rather, wordless. The strange scenery fascinates because while hyperbolic, surrealistic, it is yet curiously familiar. One has repeatedly a sense of having seen something very like the blighted cities and dying seaside resorts that Mr. Ballard describes. He taps our memories of disused railway-stations or airstrips, dumped cars, derelict cinemas or factories. The world he creates seems credible because it has already begun to exist.

■ The author's attitude to that world is intriguingly ambivalent. He shows the human race crippled and dwindling through its own violence, negligence or blind self-gratification. Nature seems well rid of us and of our detritus: "The immaculate sand ran down to the water, free at last of cigarette-ends and bottle-tops, as clean and soft as milled bone." Yet in these lonely places even mechanical relics can seem touching. There is exhilaration when an ancient car, long inert, is made to move again, or when a juke-box, silent for a quarter of a century, is brought back to raucous life. To paraphrase a notion of Tom Lehrer's: if there is to be nostalgia for the technological age we should perhaps start feeling it now. This is what Mr. Ballard prompts us to do. His stories contrive to be both stark and wistful.

■ "On the scrapheap," by Michael Irwin, a review of *Low-flying Aircraft*, *Times Literary Supplement*, Jan. 14, 1977

■ ... it is perhaps not insignificant that the girl-friend of Crazy Charlie, president of the local Notting Hill Hell's Angels, last year changed her name to Vermilion Sands.

■ "My Favourite SF Writer" by Michael Moorcock, *Seacon '79: 37th World Science Fiction Convention* (program book) ed. Graham Charnock, London: Seacon '79 Ltd.

■ This is a little homage to J.G. Ballard, long and dark, surreal star of English letters, now become the shaman of Shepperton, still the patron saint of the thinking person's science fiction.

■ When Michael Moorcock was editing the magazine *New Worlds* in the '60s, British science fiction gave itself a little shake and turned, some of it—Ballard at the prow—into a reasonable if belated simulacrum of that avantgarde fiction that people read, championed, argued about ferociously. As if all the world had suddenly gone non-naturalistic about the time William Burroughs said he'd stopped reading fiction because the newspapers were so much more imaginative.

■ At times like that, naturalistic fictional techniques become too partial to adequately interpret the world. They seem to embody a false objectivity. How could one write a Middlemarch about My Lai? In 1970, in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Ballard was suggesting that the U.S. was establishing "a positive psycho-sexual relationship to the entire world" through its activities in Indo-China by means of "sexual stimulation by newsreel atrocity films." Nothing objective about the way Ballard teased out the latent content of that televised war, as if the TV screens were showing a continuous bad dream. Ballard is one of the few genuine surrealists in business and therefore sometimes seems to have a hot line to the most uncomfortable reality.

■ *The Atrocity Exhibition* is the one that ends with an account of the assassination of John F. Kennedy done in the manner of Alfred Jarry's "The Crucifixion Considered as an Uphill Bicycle Race." It is uncomfortable, mid-period Ballard, jagged as broken glass. Nevertheless, he started off sufficiently lyrically. His early '60s novels, *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, *The Crystal World*, *The Wind from Nowhere*, were romantic exercises in methods of ending the world—flooding it, drying it, dehydrating it, mineralizing it, blowing it away.

■ But the world had refused to dematerialize. So the hinge of the decade found him working on that hard-edge aesthetic of the horrid, all open wounds and black humor. Thermonuclear despoliation; "deranged," demented (favorite Ballard adjectives) landscapes of dismemberment; the baneful sexuality of the car crash. A particular obsession peaking in *Crash*, a mutilatory and inconsolable novel that could have sprung from the pen of some Maldoror of the motorways, as Ballard himself might put it.

■ This use of "some" as an indefinite article is a Ballard characteristic. As in: "he's playing some deranged game;" a woman "like some demented madonna." A verbal device used so often it becomes incantatory, a formal rhetorical sign to tell you this is not *normal* prose. And indeed it is not. At its most heightened, Ballard's prose is an impacted mass of images, dense and iridescent as mercury, stranger, you might say, than fiction.

■ "Weaver of dreams from the stuff of nightmares," by Angela Carter; a review of *The Unlimited Dream Company*, *Arts Guardian*, Oct. 26 1979

■ Any story by this talented British writer is stamped with a nightmare quality that is unmistakable. . . .

■ "The Reference Library" by P. Schuyler Miller, *Analog* 73, No. 3, May 1964

■ It [*The Atrocity Exhibition*] was scheduled to be published in this country by Doubleday a year or so ago. But it suddenly disappeared from the Doubleday list. I investigated the disappearance (I think Ballard is a major contemporary writer) by asking someone at Doubleday and I found that the company had printed the book and then destroyed all copies on the advice of their lawyers. Then, a couple of months ago, the book was announced by Dutton for this winter. I called Dutton recently and was told that the book had been dropped because Ballard had used proper names of public figures and the lawyers were scared.

■ "Thrilling Wonder" by David G. Hartwell, *Crawdaddy*, April 16 1972

■ I have admired Ballard's work for many years. He is one of the most important, intelligent voices in contemporary fiction.

■ Endorsement by Susan Sontag in the advertisement of *Love and Napalm: Export USA* (Grove Press), appearing in *Evergreen Review* 17, No. 96, Spring 1973

■ Ballard is one of the brightest new stars in post-war fiction. This tale [*The Drowned World*] of strange and terrible adventure in a world of steaming jungles has an oppressive power reminiscent of Conrad. . . . Mr. Ballard may turn out to be the most imaginative of Wells' successors . . .

■ A review of *The Drowned World* by Kingsley Amis, *The Observer*, Jan. 27 1963

■ But *Love and Napalm: Export USA* is not futuristic; here the novelist does more than botanize on the graves of mutilated peasants and famous victims—he blackmails us with our sentiment and outrages our compassion; it is the novel as a form of abuse, the dead-end of feeling.

■ "The auto crash as sexual stimulation," by Paul Theroux; a review of *Love and Napalm: Export USA*, *New York Times*, Oct. 29, 1972

THE NOBLE NEUROTIC

V

BY JOSEPH LANZ

*The ultimate dystopia is the
inside of one's own head.*
—Low Flying Aircraft

It is now obvious that only neurotics will survive the future. Only fragmented personalities will be able to withstand the fragmented world produced by our oversophisticated technology. What we consider today as pathological thoughts and behaviors are actually evolutionary advances that allow people to cope with urban alienation and its barrage of movie/video icons, computerized surveillance systems and nuclear threats. In place of raw emotion and instinct, we are increasingly compelled to cultivate a repertoire of artificial responses, amending the noble savage with a neurasthenic itinerary that consists of obsession, introversion and paranoia.

■ J.G. Ballard is among few writers to consistently explore the noble neurotic's visionary potential. His science fiction (or, to be more accurate, social science fiction) replaces the intergalactic journey with excursions into the convoluted psyche. In Ballard's realm, neurosis is an ultra-civilized version of primitive ritual where object and subject meld into an alchemical union. The outside world is just a projection of

private fetishes: organisms and machinery exchange identities, objects and contours become anthropomorphic, the most nonerotic artifacts take on sexual properties. All human experience belongs to the domain of our neural synapses which is, in turn, translated into what Ballard refers to as a "spinal landscape" of hallucinations and wish-fulfillments.

■ Taking psychoanalytic ideas to their sometimes outlandish extreme, Ballard exposes Freud's secret complicity with the emotional cripples he only pretended to cure. Taking the premise that civilization thrives on the unresolved psychosexual conflict, Ballard illustrates how Freud's "reality principle" is truly a literary hoax. There is no turning back to a golden age of spontaneous interaction with the "natural" world because all human motivation is rooted in repressed nightmares, forgotten childhood traumas and unconscious memories of our murky evolutionary origins.

■ For Ballard, sex and paranoia are inextricable. Sexuality stems from an overwrought imagination which, like a Rube Goldberg contraption, gets strangled in its own complexity. In

his stories, the erotic drive is the result of sublimation and not the impetus. Without the guilt, self-hatred, sadomasochism and various pathogenic responses, sexual motivation is non-existent. This is in keeping with Ballard's reaction against the naturalist and humanist literary traditions which value the dynamics of human character over ideas. The people in Ballard's universe are simply the by-products of conceptual systems: their obsessions, like ours, are often so specialized and alien that they assume a life independent of our rational apprehension. Vaughn in *Crash* experiences orgasm through elaborate fantasies of screen idols juxtaposed with images of car-accident victims. Pangborn, in the short story "Motel Architecture," reduces sex to a cinematic montage of isolated body parts reinforced by flashes of Hitchcock's famous shower scene. For Faulkner, in "The Overloaded Man," the environment exists as a pure ideation transcending time and space. People driven to the furthest limits of consciousness partake in a cerebralized carnival that forever threatens to explode.

■ In most of Ballard's work, sex is divorced from its reproductive function and becomes a function of everything else. Even manufactured items and politicians assume genital and anal characteristics. Ballard underscores the fact that sex depends on artificiality in stories such as "The Smile," where the generic heterosexual courtship is revealed as a series of camera angles with taxidermized partners; and "The Intensive Care Unit," in which the nuclear family exists as a continuous video projection that shields the fears and hostilities of each family member.

■ Works such as *Crash* and *The Atrocity Exhibition* are new forms of pornography that will one day be accessible to adults and children alike. They instruct us on how to use eroticism as a means of assimilating the repugnant and the horrifying. The mutilated bodies on highways and in Asian villages that populate our TV screens can quite conceivably have the allure of yesterday's pin-up idols. But while Ballard's protagonists construct intricate defenses, they are continually haunted by the prospects of reliving their primal scene. While visions of past and future holocausts are stamped in all of our chemistries, Ballard's troubled characters are always closer to the forbidden threshold. *The Drowned World* depicts our waking lives as a phobic reaction to reptilian and arachnid forms that monopolize our ancestral recall. In "Myths of the Near Future," the symptoms of "space-sickness"—emotional withdrawal, misanthropy and suspicion—are a protection against the raw truth; just as the "time fugues" in "News From the Sun" prepare us for a global catastrophe when temporal disorder will be the only means of cohabitation. Essentially, Ballard alerts us to the possibility that biological upgrading may coincide with a failure to adapt to the already obsolete climate of the present.

■ Even stylistically, Ballard incorporates the inverse optimism intrinsic to neurotic perception, joining those writers who are daring enough to promulgate a new literary aesthetic based on narrative confusion. Simple syntax and straightforward storyline must, out of necessity, succumb to more accurate techniques that paradoxically use distortion and over-interpretation. If he concerns himself with perverted communication systems, it is not surprising that (primarily in pieces like "Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan" and the longer version of "Notes Towards a Mental Breakdown") Ballard often reads like a *translation* of Freud—full of hyphenated adjectives, passive constructions, sterile descriptions and abstract terminologies that reflect our splintered points of view. By employing clinical objectivity to express a homily of subjective impressions, Ballard creates a verbal equivalent to the surrealist merging of the forensic and the sentimental previously achieved only visually by Dali, Magritte and de Chirico.

■ The real conflict in Ballard's work is not in the characters so much as the narrator's problematic relation to himself and to his reader. We never know when the seriousness ends and the burlesque begins. The urge to laugh at things otherwise painful is part of the neurotic's survival mechanism. Ballard likes to vacillate between the roles of solemn assessor and humorist, all done purposely to throw the readers off and force them to grapple schizophrenically with the truth. By using the neurotic's obsessive passion for detail, he also reveals the psychic frustration incurred when the modern mind must relate to its physical surroundings through the fetters of linguistic expression and words supersede the material objects being described. And, of course, Ballard aptly articulates this battle through the incongruous language of social science, which is the authentic language of our time. Already the works of Freud, Jung and Wilhelm Reich have ascended from psychology into the realm of pure fiction, and Ballard has championed the Freudian formula that deploys objectivity as a mask for exorcising one's own sexual demons. Psychoanalysis is able to delineate neurosis because it was born out of neurosis. It is a literary contrivance whose counterpart can be found in 19th-century aestheticism. In "The Decay of Lying," Oscar Wilde declares: "Art is our spirited protest, our gallant attempt to teach nature her proper place". Wilde anticipated what Ballard has helped establish: that the only remaining artistic statement involves a subversion of our internal ecosystems.

■ No matter how cumbersome and hideous they may seem to us at times, our neuroses are the only things we have left to call our own. Rather than attempt a futile cure, we should take Ballard's advice by reaffirming the psychopathic roles that Freud defined and which are now our duty to live up to.



***Preface to
Love and Napalm:
Export U.S.A.
(Atrocity Exhibition)
by William S. Burroughs***

Love and Napalm: Export U.S.A. is a profound and disquieting book. The nonsexual roots of sexuality are explored with a surgeon's precision. An auto crash can be more sexually stimulating than a pornographic picture. (Surveys indicate that wet dreams in many cases have no overt sexual content, whereas dreams with an overt sexual content in many cases do not result in orgasm.) The book opens: "A disquieting feature of this annual exhibition was preoccupation with the theme of world cataclysm as if these long incarcerated patients had sensed some seismic upheaval in the minds of the nurses and doctors."

■ The line between inner and outer landscapes is breaking down. Earthquakes can result from seismic upheavals within the human mind. The whole random universe of the industrial age is breaking down into cryptic fragments: "In a waste lot of wrecked cars he found the burnt body of the white Pontiac, the nasal prepuce of LBJ, crashed helicopters, Eichmann in drag, a dead child. . ." The human body becomes landscape: "A hundred-foot-long panel that seemed to represent a section of sand dune. . . . Looking at it more closely Doctor Nathan realized that it was an immensely magnified portion of the skin over the iliac crest. . ." This magnification of image to the point where it becomes unrecognizable is a key note of *Love and Napalm*. This is what Bob Rauschenburg is doing in art—literally *blowing up* the image. Since people are made of image, this is literally an explosive

book. The human image explodes into rocks and stones and trees: "The porous rock towers of Tenerife exposed the first spinal landscape. . . clinker-like rock towers suspended above the silent swamp. In the mirror of this swamp there are no reflections. Time makes no concessions."

■ Sexual arousal results from the repetition and impact of image: "Each afternoon in the deserted cinema: the latent sexual content of automobile crashes. . . James Dean, Jayne Mansfield, Albert Camus. . . . Many volunteers became convinced that the fatalities were still living and later used one or the other of the crash victims as a private focus of arousal during intercourse with the domestic partner."

■ James Dean kept a hangman's noose dangling in his living room and put it around his neck to pose for news pictures. A painter named Milton, who painted a sexy picture entitled "The Death of James Dean," subsequently committed suicide. This book stirs sexual depths untouched by the hardest-core illustrated porn. "What will follow is the psychopathology of sex relationships so lunar and abstract that people will become mere extensions of the geometries of situations. This will allow the exploration without any trace of guilt of every aspect of sexual psychopathology."

■ Immensely magnified portion of James Dean subsequently committed suicide. Conception content relates to sexual depths of the hardest minds. Eichmann in drag in a waste lot of wrecked porous rock. ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

The marriage of reason and nightmare . . .

■ 1970. A major American publishing house pulps an entire edition of a new novel for fear of a public outcry over its contents . . .

■ 1973. The reader for a large British publisher and wife of a prominent psychiatrist returns a different manuscript with the warning: "This author is beyond psychiatric help. DO NOT PUBLISH."

■ Not since Joyce's *Ulysses* or Henry Miller's "Tropics" had the written word provoked such disgust, moral outrage or outright misunderstanding. Both novels, *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash*, were by J.G. Ballard, and seemed to be some kind of perverse aberration in the career of their author, like the first glimpse of one's horribly deformed newborn infant. And whilst some hailed this mutant strain as pure genius, there was almost universal loss of support for its progenitor.

■ Until the late 1960s, Ballard had enjoyed growing popularity as a writer predominantly of short stories, and a reputation as an ingenious and entertaining figure in the sphere of science fiction. But these new works developed previously latent ideas to a malignancy which burst out of the confines of science fiction. The fiction seemed to have become real, too real, and there were dangerous questions: moral, existential, even political. To many, this man might have been advocating the assassination of presidents, unnatural sex acts with mutilated victims of car crashes, and defaming public idols. Even other writers, whose support he had previously enjoyed, failed to understand his motives now.

■ For Ballard, of course, this reaction represented total artistic success. But it meant that he never achieved the recognition, particularly in the USA, that he so richly deserves. In fact, it seems incredible that this publication should be the first (apart from two short monographs by David Pringle) to celebrate a career which to date spans more than 25 years. It is at least a first step to a fuller understanding of a unique commentary on our times.

The dead time . . .

■ James Graham Ballard was born in Shanghai in 1930, into a

cosmopolitan landscape which was to form the tableau for much of his subsequent writing. Internment by the Japanese in the last three years of World War II turned a world already without a past, a totally modern city, into an almost surreal setting of desolation, decadence and disarray. Empty zones, tower blocks and casinos fenced off with barbed wire, and everywhere the debris of war: "the end of technology, the end of America," or so it seemed.

■ In comparison, the return to England in 1946 was uninteresting; the urban landscape, like the people, dull, uniform. After two years studying medicine, he discontinued as the hitherto rich metaphors of physiology and pathology were swamped by a plethora of details. In fact, it was as a serviceman in the Royal Air Force in Canada that Ballard began to write seriously, leaving behind him some unfinished experimental pieces influenced by Joyce, among others. The result was his first published short story in the SF magazine *New Worlds* in 1956. Subsequently, a short period working on a scientific journal preceded his transition to full-time writer—about 1960.

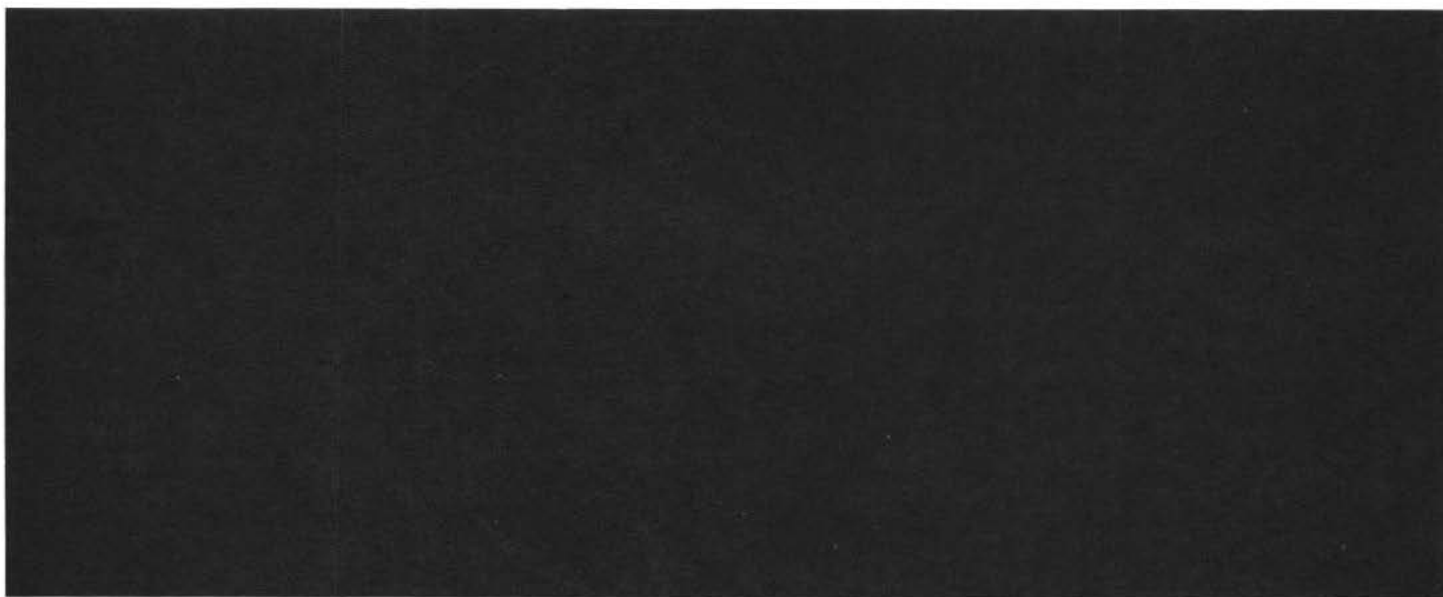
■ The choice of science fiction as the field in which he was to write was partly expedient—it was the easiest way to have stories published—and partly because Ballard believes it to be the most relevant branch of modern literature. But he has little time for the Asimov/Van Vogt/Heinlein school—the idea that SF is all about applied or social engineering, that SF ideas will soon be, or ought to be, material practice. He prefers those who show why SF is about the present, not the far-distant future; why it is about the Earth, not outer space. Thus the SF authors he respects are Bradbury above all, also Sheckley, Pohl and Matheson.

■ In other literature, authors with whom he has an affinity are Jarry's pataphysics, Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, Poe's grotesqueries, Borges' and Beckett's condensed style and, of course, W.S. Burroughs. And he has expressed admiration for Graham Greene's ability to externalize the psyche in terms of a particular landscape or situation. An ability Ballard has since crafted from the status of technique into an important theme, a statement on the psychology of modern man.

■ This is perhaps typical of his approach in general—the subject always comes first and the technique second. There was never any conscious attempt to evolve any literary style apart from the "condensed novel" format of *The Atrocity*



Photo: Larry Linsey





BY BALLARD

About the following series of "advertisements" which were taken out in *Ambit*, J. G. Ballard writes: "Back in the late 60s I produced a series of advertisements which I placed in various publications (*Ambit*, *New Worlds*, *Ark* and various continental alternative magazines), doing the art work myself and arranging for the blockmaking, and then delivering the block to the particular journal just as would a commercial advertiser. Of course I was advertising my own conceptual ideas, but I wanted to do so within the formal circumstances of classic commercial advertising—I wanted ads that would look in place in *Vogue*, *Paris Match*, *Newsweek*, etc. To maintain the integrity of the project I paid the commercial rate for the page, even in the case of *Ambit*, of which I was and still am prose editor. I would like to have branched out into *Vogue* and *Newsweek*, but cost alone stopped me . . .

Claire Churchill (by the way, the subject of the first ad, was my then girlfriend, and still is) is also the subject of the fifth ad, which shows her, after swimming in the sea off Brighton, sitting naked in the front seat of my car covered with thousands of specks of seaweed—so outraged was she by my sneak photography that she stole my only copy of the ad, but she has now agreed in the interests of *Art and Literature* to have it published. 'The Angle Between Two Walls' is a still from *Alone*, the American filmmaker Steve Dwoskin's movie about a masturbating woman. 'Neural Interval' was a picture from a bondage magazine. I've no idea of the source for the strange gun photo, though Les Krims was a very well known US photographer . . ."

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Photo: John Blomfield.

Advertiser's Announcement.



HOMAGE TO CLAIRE CHURCHILL, Abraham Zapruder and Ralph Nader. At what point does the plane of intersection of these eyes generate a valid image of the simulated auto-disaster, the alternate deaths of Dealey Plaza and the Mekong Delta. The first of a series advertising (1) Claire Churchill; (2) The angle between two walls; (3) A neural interval; (4) The left axillary fossa of Princess Margaret; (5) The transliterated pudenda of Ralph Nader.

A J. G. BALLARD PRODUCTION.



Does the angle between two
walls have a happy ending?

Fiction is a branch of neurology:
the scenarios of nerve and blood
vessel are the written mythologies
of memory and desire.

Sex: Inner Space: J. G. Ballard

In her face the diagram of bones
forms a geometry of murder. After
Freud's exploration within the psyche
it is now the outer world of reality
which must be quantified and eroticised

A Neural Interval

A J. G. BALLARD PRODUCTION






PLACENTAL INSUFFICIENCY

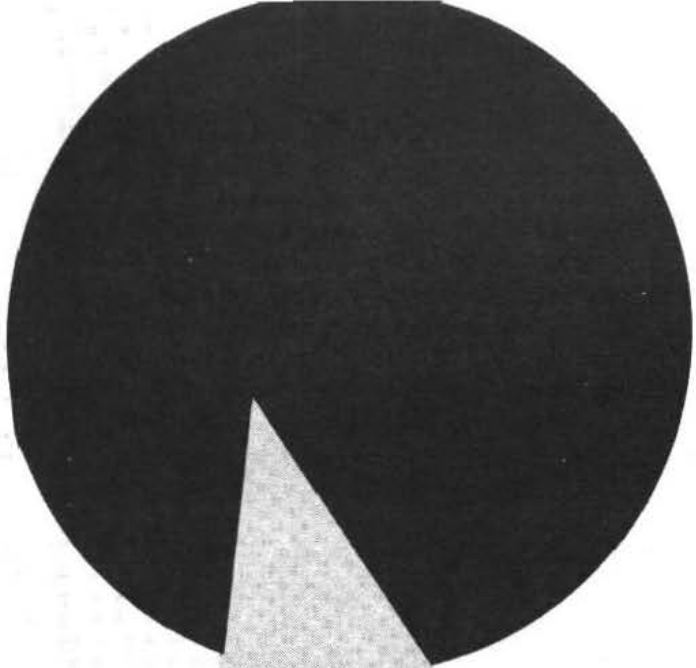
The X-ray plates of the growing foetus showed the absence of both placenta and umbilical cord. Was this, Dr. Nathan pondered, the maculate conception - that not the mother but the child was virgin, innocent of any of Jocasta's clatching blood. Each afternoon she would take me into the garden of the trailer park. Undressing herself, she made me memorise the trajectories of her body.

A J. G. BALZARD PRODUCTION

Venus smiles



He worked endlessly at the photographs: left breasts, the grimaces of filling station personnel, wound areas, catalogues of Japanese erotic films. By contrast their own relationship was marked by an almost seraphic tenderness, transits of touch and feeling as serene as the movements of a dune. J. G. BALLARD.



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These quotes by Ballard were culled from many sources such as interviews, essays, reviews much of which was sent to us by David Pringle.

■ I put on an exhibition of crashed cars, what I called *new sculpture*, at the New Arts Lab [April 4 thru 28, 1970]. And I had three cars brought to the gallery. It was very easy to mount the show because the technology of moving cars around is highly developed. A crashed Mini, an A40 and a Pontiac which had been in a massive front-end collision, a Pontiac from that last grand period of American automobile styling, around the middle '50s. Huge flared tailfins and a maximum of iconographic display. And I had an opening party at the gallery. I'd never seen 100 people get drunk so quickly. Now, this had something to do with the cars on display. I also had a topless girl interviewing people on closed circuit TV, so that people could see themselves being interviewed around the crashed cars by this topless girl. This was clearly too much. I was the only sober person there. Wine was poured over the crashed cars, glasses were broken, the topless girl was nearly raped in the back seat of the Pontiac by some self-aggrandizing character. The show went on for a month. In that time, they [the cars] came up against massive hostility of every kind. The cars were attacked, windows ripped off. Those windows that weren't broken already were smashed. One of the cars was up-ended, another splashed with white paint. Now, the whole thing was a speculative illustration of a scene in *The Atrocity Exhibition*. I had speculated in my book about how the people might behave. And in the real show the guests at the party and the visitors later behaved in pretty much the way I had anticipated. It was not so much an exhibition of sculpture as almost of experimental psychology using the medium of the fine art show. People were unnerved, you see. There was enormous hostility ...

■ In conversation with Eduardo Paolozzi and Frank Whitford, *Studio International* no. 183, October 1971

■ Life in Northern Europe is particularly sheltered. What's the old quotation by Villiers de l'Isle Adam? "As for living, our servants can do that for us." Living is one of the most boring things one can do. The really exciting things, the most interesting experiences, go on inside one's head, within those areas covered by the intelligence and imagination.

■ Interview by Lynn Barber, *Penthouse* vol. 5, September 1970

■ Each of these sculptures is a memorial to a unique collision between man and his technology. However tragic they are, I believe that automobile crashes play very different roles from the ones we assign them. Behind our horror lies an undeniable fascination and excitement ... The 20th century has given birth to a vast range of machines—computers, pilotless planes, thermonuclear weapons—where the latent identity of the machine is ambiguous. An understanding of this identity can be found in a study of the automobile ...

■ Handout by Ballard at his exhibit, "Crashed Cars," held April 4 thru 28, 1970, at the New Arts Laboratory Gallery.

■ *Atrocity Exhibition* is set in the present. Its landscape is compounded of an enormous number of fictions, the fragments of the dream machine that produces our lifestyle right now. I mean, fictions like TV, radio, politics, the press and advertising, that are all expressions of people's imaginative aims. Life is an enormous novel.

■ My book deals with the irrational violence of modern society, the side of our culture that could be described as an atrocity exhibition. We're all spectators (often bored ones) at tragedies like Vietnam. Real violence, frequently life, as it occurs, becomes a part of a huge entertainments industry. The Romans used to gather round arenas to have orgasms over vaudeville shows of real murder and rape. We laugh dismissively at the fairly common sci-fi plot of a future in which the public enjoys similar amusements, only via their TV sets. Yet what is a lot of today's live and recorded news and documentary material if not a variation on just this theme?

■ *Atrocity Exhibition* portrays a doctor who's had a mental breakdown. He has been shocked and numbed by events like the deaths of the Kennedys and Marilyn Monroe. To make sense of the modern world he wants to immerse himself in its most destructive elements. He creates a series of psychodramas that produce grim paradoxes. They suggest things like the possibility of Vietnam having some good effects, or of car crashes serving a useful purpose within the societal organism, or of a purgative aspect to the assassination of public figures, just as there used to be in ancient ritual murders, and always has been in the death of charismatic figures like Christ.

■ Interview by Douglas Reed, *Books and Bookmen*, April 1971

■ The traditional togetherness of the village is giving way to the inbuilt loneliness of the new high-rises . . . people nowadays like to be together not in the old-fashioned way of, say, mingling on the piazza of an Italian Renaissance city, but, instead, huddled together in traffic jams, bus queues, on escalators and so on. It's a new kind of togetherness which may seem totally alien, but it's the togetherness of modern technology.

■ Interview by Dr Chris Evans, *Penthouse* vol. 14, April 1979

■ . . . at the moment, I think we are starved of information. I think that the biggest need of the painter or writer today is information. I'd love to have a tickertape machine in my study constantly churning out material: abstracts from scientific journals, the latest Hollywood gossip, the passenger list of a 707 that crashed in the Andes, the color mixes of a new automobile varnish. . . . The technology of the information retrieval system that we employ is incredibly primitive. We fumble around in bookshops, we buy magazines or subscribe to them. But I regard myself as starved of information. I am getting a throughput of information in my imaginative life of one-hundredth of what I could use. I think there's an information starvation at present and technology will create the possibility of knowing everything about everything. When Apollo 99 blasts off to Alpha Centauri we will know everything about the crew all of the time.

■ In conversation with Eduardo Paolozzi and Frank Whitford, *Studio International*, no. 183, October 1971

■ Pop artists deal with the lowly trivia of possessions and equipment that the present generation is lugging along with it on its safari into the future.

■ Interview by Douglas Reed, *Book and Bookmen*, April 1971

■ Although our central nervous systems have been handed to us on a plate by millions of years of evolution, have been trained to respond to violence at the level of finger tip and nerve ending, in fact now our only experience of violence is in the head, in terms of our imagination, the last place where we were designed to deal with violence. We have absolutely no biological training to deal with violence in imaginative terms. And our whole inherited expertise for dealing with violence, our central nervous systems, our musculature, our senses, our ability to run fast or to reach quickly, our reflexes, all that inherited expertise, is never used. We sit passively in cinemas watching movies like *The Wild Bunch*, where violence is just a style.

■ In conversation with Eduardo Paolozzi and Frank Whitford, *Studio International*, no. 183, October 1971

■ A lot of my prophecies about the alienated society are going to come true. . . . Everybody's going to be staring in their own porno films as an extension of the polaroid camera. Electronic aids, particularly domestic computers, will help the inner migration, the opting out of reality. Reality is no longer going to be the stuff *out there*, but the stuff inside your head. It's going to be commercial and nasty at the same time, like "Rite of Spring" in Disney's *Fantasia*. One's going to need educated feet to get out of the way. In the past, one could invoke "sympathy for the devil" with fancy footwork but, in future times, our internal devils and angels may simultaneously destroy and renew us through the technological overload we have invoked.

■ Interview by Toby Goldstein, *Heavy Metal*, April 1982

■ So-called articulate speech was an artifact of time. But the babbling infant . . . spoke with the lucidity of the timeless, that same lucidity that others tried to achieve in delirium and brain damage. The babbling newborn were telling their mothers of that realm of wonder from which they had just been expelled.

■ *News From the Sun*, 1982

■ In the story *You: Coma: Marilyn Monroe* . . . I directly equate the physical aspect of Marilyn Monroe's body with the landscape of dunes around her. The hero attempts to try to make sense of this particular equation, and he realizes that the suicide of Marilyn Monroe is in fact a disaster, though of course, Marilyn Monroe committed suicide as an individual woman, but a disaster of a whole complex of relationships involving this screen actress, who is presented to us in an endless series of advertisements, on a thousand magazine covers, and so on, whose body becomes part of the external landscape of our environment. The immense terraced figure of Marilyn Monroe stretched across a cinema hoarding is as real a portion of our external landscape as any system of mountains or lakes.

■ "The New Science Fiction," a conversation between JGB and George MacBeth *The New Science Fiction*, ed. Langdon Jones, Hutchinson, 1969 (broadcast on BBC Radio, 1967)

■ . . . instead of treating time like a sort of glorified scenic railway, I'd like to see it used for what it is, one of the perspectives of the personality, and the elaboration of concepts such as the time zone, deep time and archaeopsychic time. I'd like to see more psycholiterary ideas, more metabiological and metachemical concepts, private time systems, synthetic psychologies and space times, more of the remote, somber half worlds one glimpses in the paintings of schizophrenics, all in all a complete speculative poetry and fantasy of science.

■ "Which Way to Inner Space?" *New Worlds* 118, May 1962

■ A car crash harnesses elements of eroticism, aggression, desire, speed, drama, kinaesthetic factors, the stylizing of motion, consumer goods, status—all these in one event. I myself see the car crash as a tremendous sexual event really: a liberation of human and machine libido (if there is such a thing). That's why the death in a crash of a famous person is a unique event—whether it's Jayne Mansfield or James Dean—it takes place within this most potent of all consumer durables. Aircraft crashes don't carry any of these elements whatever—they're totally tragic and totally meaningless. We don't have any individual rapport because we're not moving through an elaborately signaled landscape when we go aboard an aircraft: it's only the pilot who's moving through that . . . really, it's not the car that's important: it's *driving*. One spends a substantial part of one's life in the motorcar and the experience of driving condenses many of the experiences of being a human being in 1970, the marriage of physical aspects of ourselves with the imaginative and technological aspects of our lives. I think the 20th century reaches just about its highest expression on the highway. Everything is there, the speed and violence of our age, its love of stylization, fashion, the organizational side of things—what I call the elaborately signaled landscape.

■ Interview by Lynn Barber, *Penthouse*
vol. 5, September 1970

■ Perhaps violence, like pornography, is some kind of evolutionary standby system, a last-resort device for throwing a wild joker into the game? A widespread taste for pornography means that nature is alerting us to some threat of extinction.

■ *News From the Sun*, 1982

■ Hell is out of fashion—institutional hells at any rate. The populated infernos of the 20th century are more private affairs, the gaps between the bars are the sutures of one's own skull. Sartre's is other people: a lesbian, a coward and a neurotic trapped together in a hotel room and bored beyond death by their own identity. Cocteau's is the netherworld of narcissism: Orpheus snared by the images of his own mirror. Burroughs's hells are more public: their entrances are subway stations and amusement arcades—but made, nonetheless, from private phobias, like the Night-town of Leopold Bloom and Faust's witches' night. A valid hell is one from which there is a possibility of redemption, even if this is never achieved, the dungeons of an architecture of grace whose spires point to some kind of heaven. The institutional hells of the present century are reached with one-way tickets, marked Nagasaki and Buchenwald, worlds of terminal horror even more final than the grave.

■ "Visions of Hell," *New Worlds*,
March 1966

■ Two weeks after completing *Crash* I was involved in a serious car crash in which my car rolled over on a dual carriageway and crossed into the oncoming lane. This is an extreme case of nature imitating art.

■ Interview by James Goddard, *Cypher*
no. 10, October 1973

■ For most of us the styling and efficiency of a soup mix or an automobile are far more real, and far more reassuring than the issues of traditional politics: East of Suez, balance of payments, trade union reform. Anyone who can take a housewife's trusting relationship with her Mixmaster or my own innocent rapport with my automobile and feed into them all these obsessions and unease is clearly going to be in business.

■ "The Consumer Consumed"
Ink, June 5, 1971

■ The time values contained in the paintings of Tanguy, Delvaux [and] Chirico [is] quite apart from those of the more "psychological" of the Renaissance masters—Gentile Bellini, Leonardo, Piero della Francesca. The geometry of landscape and situation seems to create its own systems of time, the sense of a dynamic element which is cinematizing the events of the canvas, translating a posture or ceremony into dynamic terms. The greatest movie of the 20th century is the *Mona Lisa*, just as the greatest novel is *Gray's Anatomy*.

■ "The Thousand Wounds and Flowers,"
New Worlds 191, June 1969

■ To be honest, however, I find most writers unreadable—there are a very few exceptions—William Burroughs, Genet, Celine—more than enough to be getting on with. The main influences on me have been not writers, but painters, and in particular the surrealists. At the same time, I have always been a voracious reader of what I term "invisible literature"—market research reports, pharmaceutical company house magazines, the promotional copy for a new high-energy breakfast food, journals such as *Psychological Abstracts* and the Italian automobile magazine *Style Auto*, the internal memoranda of TV company planning departments, sex manuals, U.S. government reports, medical textbooks such as the extraordinary *Crash Injuries* (Vol. 1, incidentally, in the research library which I am forming jointly with the sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi—Paolozzi's *Moonstrips* and *General Dynamic Fun* exactly sum up my own major interests), bizarre verbal collages taken from fashion magazines, weapons, technology, stock market reports and so on.

■ By comparison with this, most writers—by which I mean the great majority of English and American novelists—have nothing of interest to say whatever, and an hour spent in not reading them is an hour gained forever. The only fiction worth reading—the true literature of the 20th century—is science fiction. Isaac Asimov, of course, is infinitely more important than Iris Murdoch or Elizabeth Bowen, much as I detest the type of science fiction that he writes. However, there is no doubt which will survive to the year 2000.

■ *Books and Bookmen*, July 9, 1970

■ The trouble with Marxism is that it is a social philosophy for the poor. What we need is a social philosophy for the rich.

■ Interview by Robert Lightfoot and
David Pendleton, *Friends* 17,
October 30 1970

■ I believe that organic sex, body against body, skin area against skin area, is becoming no longer possible, simply because if anything is to have any meaning for us it must take place in terms of the values and experiences of the media landscape, the violent landscape—this sort of Dionysiac landscape of the 1970s. That is why I bring in things like the car crash. A whole new kind of psychopathology, the book of a new Krafft-Ebing is being written by such things as car crashes, televised violence, the new awareness of our own bodies transmitted by magazine accounts of popular medicine, by reports of the Barnard heart transplants, and so on. There's a new textbook of psychopathology being written, and the old perversions are dead. They relate to a bygone age. A fantasy like a man dressing his wife in a gymslip and beating her belongs to the past. What we're getting is a whole new order of sexual fantasies, involving a different order of experiences, like car crashes, like traveling in jet aircraft, the whole overlay of new technologies, architecture, interior design, communications, transport, merchandising. These things are beginning to reach into our lives and change the interior design of our sexual fantasies. We've got to recognize that what one sees through the window of the TV screen is as important as what one sees through a window on the street.

■ Interview by Lynn Barber, *Penthouse* vol. 5, September 1970

■ ... the car as we know it now is on the way out. To a large extent, I deplore its passing, for as a basically old-fashioned machine, it enshrines a basically old-fashioned idea: freedom. In terms of pollution, noise and human life, the price of that freedom may be high, but perhaps the car, by the very muddle and congestion it causes, may be holding back the remorseless spread of the regimented, electronic society.

■ "The Car, The Future." *Drive*, Autumn 1971

■ Doing anatomy was an eye-opener: one had built one's whole life on an illusion about the integrity of one's body, this "solid flesh." One mythologizes one's own familiar bits of flesh and tendon. Then to see a cadaver on a dissecting table and begin to dissect it myself and to find at the end of term that there was nothing left except a sort of heap of gristle and a clutch of bones with a label bearing some dead doctor's name—that was a tremendous experience of the lack of integrity of the flesh, and the integrity of this doctor's spirit.

■ Interview by Lynn Barber, *Penthouse* vol. 5, September 1970

■ ... my children, or today's teenagers, they're not interested in the future. All the possibilities of their lives are contained within a different set of perspectives, an inner life. If you look back over the past 10 years, you can see a continuous retreat inwards ... what you see is the death of outer space: the failure of the moon landing to excite anyone's imagination on a real level; and the discovery of inner space, in terms of sex, drugs, meditation, mysticism.

■ Interview by Lynn Barber, *Penthouse* vol. 5, September 1970

■ Assuming that the one certain thing about the future is that it will be boring—much of Europe already seems to be taking on the aspect of a huge housing estate—the role of imaginative fiction becomes more and more important for survival. Above all, it seems to be our only means of discovering a benevolent and morally free psychopathology.

■ *The New Review*, vol. 5 no. 1, Summer 1978

■ For Dali to be able to paint soft watches, it was necessary that real watches be hard. Now today, if you ask someone the time in the street you might see the effigy of Mickey Mouse or Spiro Agnew on the dial. It is a typical invasion of reality by fiction; the roles have been reversed.

■ Interview by Robert Louit, *Magazine Littéraire* no. 87, April 1974 (re-translated by Peter Nicholls) *Foundation* no. 9, November 1975.

■ Many people make the mistake of assuming that people buy motorcars because of great advertising and external social pressures. Nothing could be further from the truth. Since the 1930s, when styling first began to be a big feature of design in the United States, the automobile industry has emerged as a perfect example of a huge technological system meeting profound psychological needs. The motorcar represents, and has done so for 40 years, a very complex mesh of personal fulfillment of every conceivable kind. On a superficial level, it fulfills the need for a glamorous package that is quite beautifully sculptured in steel and has all sorts of built-in conceptual motifs. At a deeper level it represents the dramatic role one can experience when in charge of a powerful machine driving across the landscape of the world we live in, a role one can share with the driver of an express train or the pilot of a 707. The automobile also represents an extension of one's own personality in numerous ways, offering an outlet for repressed sexuality and aggression. Similarly, it represents all kinds of positive freedoms—I don't just mean freedom to move around from place to place, but freedoms which we don't normally realize, or even accept we are interested in. The freedom to kill oneself, for example. When one is driving a car there exists, on a second-by-second basis, the absolute freedom to involve oneself in the most dramatic event of one's life, barring birth, which is one's death. One could go on indefinitely, pointing out how the motorcar is the one focus of so many currents of the era, and so many conscious and unconscious pressures. Indeed, if I had to pick a single image which best represented the middle and late 20th century, it would be that of a man sitting in a car, driving down a superhighway.

■ Interviewed by Dr Chris Evans, *Penthouse* vol. 14, April 1979

■ It was curious that images of heaven or paradise always presented a static world, not the kinetic eternity one would expect, the roller-coaster of a hyperactive fun-fair, the screaming Luna Parks of LSD and psilocybin.

■ *Memories of the Space Age*, 1982

... People will begin to explore all the sidestreets of sexual experience, but they will do it *intellectually*—there won't be any kind of compulsion to become, let's say, a high heel fetishist—which is a monomaniac impulse. ... Sex won't take place in the bed, necessarily—it'll take place in the head. And, in a sense, the head is a much richer place than the bed. Well, it is!

Interview by Lynn Barber, *Penthouse* vol. 5, September 1970

■ When I began as a science fiction writer, I felt that science fiction wasn't making the most of its own possibilities. It had become fantasy; its two main preoccupations were outer space and the far future, whereas in its best days it had always been a literature of commitment. I wanted to write a science fiction about the present day.

Interview by Alan Burns, *The Imagination on Trial: British and American writers discuss their working methods*, ed. Alan Burns and Charles Sugnet, Allison & Busby, 1981

■ Just as psychologists are now building models of anxiety neuroses and withdrawal states in the form of verbal diagrams—translating scientific hypothesis into literary construction—so I see a good SF story as a model of some psychic image, the truth of which gives the story its merit. Examples are [the movie] *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, *Limbo* by Bernard Wolfe and Henry Kuttner's "Dream's End." In general, stories with interplanetary backgrounds show too little originality, too much self-imitation.

Interview in *New Worlds* 30, No. 88, November 1959

■ To be honest—I don't listen to music, it's just a blank spot ...

Interview by Jon Savage, *Search & Destroy*, 1978

■ I think it's terribly important to watch TV. I think there's a sort of minimum number of hours of TV you ought to watch every day, and unless you're watching 3 or 4 hours of TV a day you're just closing your eyes to some of the most—synthesis of reality, and the *creation* of reality that TV achieves. It's the most important sort of stream-of-consciousness that's going on! I mean, *not* watching TV is even worse than say, never reading a book!

Interview by Jon Savage, *Search & Destroy* no. 10, 1978.

... multiplying to such a point that it is almost impossible to distinguish between the real and the false, that one has many layers, many levels of experience going on at the same time. On one level, one might have the world of public events—Cape Kennedy, Vietnam, political life. On another level, the immediate personal environment, the rooms we occupy, the postures we assume. On a third level, the inner world of the mind. All these levels are, as far as I can see them, equally fictional, and it is where these levels interact that one gets the only kind of valid reality that in fact exists nowadays.

"The New Science Fiction," a conversation between JGB and George MacBeth *The New Science Fiction*, ed. Langdon Jones, Hutchinson, 1969 (broadcast on BBC Radio, 1967)

■ I am very suspicious of literary biographies. I don't believe a word of most biographies that I read. Take yourself, be honest: could you imagine somebody living, say, 30 years after your death creating even the beginnings of an accurate report about what it is like to be inside your head, live your life. They couldn't do it, could they?

Interview by Catherine Bresson, *Métaphores*, 1983

■ The novelists must stop looking at things retrospectively, returning to past events which he lays out meticulously as if he were preparing a parcel which he will afterwards deliver to the reader, telling him: "It was like that." The essence of the traditional novel is in the formula "that's what happened". I believe that today it is necessary to write in a more speculative way, to write a kind of "investigation novel" which corresponds to the formula "this is what's happening" or "this is going to happen". In an enterprise of this kind, the author doesn't know in advance what he's going to produce. He loses his omniscience ... In *Crash* I'm content to give the reader a spectrum of possibilities, but it's up to him to choose between them. In the classical novel, we can discover the moral, political and philosophical position of the author in every event described. In *Crash* my position hasn't been clarified, since I'm content to supply a cluster of probabilities. It's the reader's reactions that assure the functioning of the book: in the course of the story, everyone has to reach a limiting position beyond which he is not able to accept what is proposed to him.

Interview by Robert Louit, *Magazine Littéraire* no. 87, April 1974 (re-translated by Peter Nicholls) *Foundation* no. 9, November 1975.

■ I firmly believe that only science fiction is fully equipped to become the literature of tomorrow, and that it is the only medium with an adequate vocabulary of ideas and situations.

"Which Way to Inner Space?" *New Worlds* 118, May 1962

■ I am interested in the surrealists altogether, because I am a great believer in the need of imagination to transform everything, otherwise we'll have to take the world as we find it, and I don't think we should. We should re-make the world ... The madman does that ... The psychopath does that ... But the real job is to re-make the world in a way that is meaningful ...

■ Interview by Catherine Bresson,
Métaphores, 1983

■ I would say that if one had to categorize the future in one word, it would be that word "home." Just as the 20th century has been the age of mobility, largely through the motor car, so the next era will be one in which instead of having to seek out one's adventures through travel, one creates them, in whatever form one chooses, in one's home. The average individual ... will have all the resources of a modern TV studio at his fingertips, coupled with data processing devices of incredible sophistication and power ...

■ For the first time it will become truly possible to explore extensively and in depth the psychopathology of one's own life without any fear of moral condemnation. Although we've seen a collapse of many taboos within the last decade or so, there are still aspects of existence ... I'm not talking about criminally psychopathic acts, but what I would consider as the more traditional psychopathic deviancies. Many, perhaps most of these, need to be expressed in concrete forms, and their expression at present gets people into trouble. One can think of a million examples, but if your deviant impulses push you in the direction of molesting old ladies, or cutting girls' pigtails off in bus queues, then, quite rightly, you find yourself in the local magistrates court if you succumb to them ... But with the new multi-media potential of your own computerized TV studio, where limitless simulations can be played out in totally convincing style, one will be able to explore, in a wholly benign and harmless way, every type of impulse—impulses so deviant that they might have seemed, say to our parents, to be completely corrupt and degenerate ...

■ Interview by Dr Chris Evans
Penthouse, April 1979

■ Reading Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, for example, teaches you to look at yourself in a different way and you begin to see elements of your own make-up that normally you would ignore. One has an impression that this room ... the typewriter, my car are my life. But it is not. This is not my life at all. It's like a decor inside a railway train, furniture in a hotel room ... mise-en-scene, stage-decor setting. The whole purpose of imaginative enterprise—surrealist paintings or the sort of fiction I try to write—is to find one's real nature.

■ Interview by Catherine Bresson,
Métaphores, 1983

■ The technological landscape of the present day has enfranchised its own electorates—the inhabitants of marketing zones in the consumer goods society, television audiences and news magazine readerships ... vote with money at the cash counter rather than with the ballot paper in the polling booth.

■ "The Consumer Consumed," *Ink*,
June 5 1971

■ " ... I feel that the fictional elements in experience are now multiplying to such a point that it's almost impossible to distinguish between the real and the false: that one has many layers, many levels of experience going on at the same time.

■ On one level, the world of public events, Cape Kennedy and Viet Nam mimetized on billboards. On another level, the immediate personal environment, the volumes of space enclosed by opposed hands, the rooms we occupy, the postures we assume, the motion-space of highways, staircases, the angles between these walls.

■ On a third level, the inner world of the psyche. Where these planes intersect, images are born. The characters in these stories occupy positions on these various levels:

■ On the one hand, a character is displayed on an enormous billboard as a figment in some vast CinemaScope epic. On another level, he's an ordinary human being moving through the ordinary to-and-fro of everyday life. On a third level, he is a figment in his own fantasy ...

■ Freud pointed out that one has to distinguish between the manifest content of the inner world of the psyche and its latent content; and I think in exactly the same way, today, when the fictional elements have overwhelmed reality, one has to distinguish between the manifest content of reality and its latent content ...

■ Landscape is a formalization of space and time. And the external landscapes directly reflect interior states of mind ... What I feel I've done in these pieces of mine is to rediscover the present for myself."

■ quoted in Judith Merrill's
England Swings SF, 1968

■ I wrote a couple of pieces for *New Worlds*, one called "Princess Margaret's Face-Lift." I got a textbook of cosmetic surgery—this was an attempt to lower the fictional threshold right to the floor—and I used the description of a face-lift word for word except I made it all happen to Princess Margaret ...

■ from *The Imagination on Trial*,
ed. Alan Burns & Charles Sugnet

■ Freud pointed out that one has to distinguish between the manifest content of the inner world of the psyche and its latent content. I think in exactly the same way today, when the fictional elements have overwhelmed reality, one has to distinguish between the manifest content of reality and its latent content. In fact the main task of the arts seems to be more and more to isolate the real elements in this goulash of fictions from the unreal ones ...

■ Interview by George MacBeth,
BBC, 1 February 1967

■ I feel very *optimistic* about science and technology. And yet almost my entire fiction has been an illustration of the opposite. I show all these entropic universes with everything running down. I think it has a lot to do with my childhood in Shanghai during the war. Shanghai was a huge, wide open city full of political gangsters, criminals of every conceivable kind, a melting pot for refugees from Europe, and White Russians, refugees from the Russian revolution—it was a city with absolutely no restraints on anything. Gambling, racketeering, prostitution, and everything that comes from the collusions between the very rich—there were thousands of millionaires—and the very poor—no one was ever poorer than the Shanghai proletariat. On top of that, superimpose World War II...

■ I remember this little boy, his name was Patrick Mulvaney, he was my best friend, he lived in an apartment block in the French concession, and I remember going there and suddenly finding that the building was totally empty, and wandering around all those empty flats with the furniture still in place, total silence, just the odd window swinging in the wind... it's difficult to identify exactly the impact of that kind of thing. I mean, all those drained swimming pools that I write about in my fiction were *there*, I remember going around looking at drained swimming pools by the dozen. Or, I used to go down to the waterfront where the great long line of big banks, and hotels, and commercial houses looked out over a wide promenade to the river frontage; one day, you'd see the familiar scene of freighters and small steamers at their moorings, and the next day the damn things would all be sunk—the Japs had sunk them, to form a boom. I remember rowing out to these ships, and walking onto the decks, with water swilling through the staterooms. Given the stability of the society we now live in, this is very difficult to convey...

■ I think all that was fed into my psyche and when I started writing science fiction and looking at the future, the imaginative elements I was trying to extract from any given situation tended to be those that corresponded to the experience that I'd had earlier.

■ quoted from *Dreammakers*,
ed. Charles Platt, Berkley, 1980.

■ Even today the idea that people watching a car race get some measure of excitement from being an observer of an accident which produces pain, mutilation and death, is somehow slightly shocking and yet it's clearly one of the reasons why people go to motor races.

■ Interview by Chris Evans,
Penthouse, April 1979

■ I think that the United States are finished, now... The great power of America in the past, really was psychological... it offered a new way of life. The American Dream has run out of gas. The car has stopped. It no longer supplies the world with its images, its dreams, its fantasies. No more. It's over. It supplies the world with its nightmares now: the Kennedy assassination, Watergate, Vietnam...

■ Interview by Catherine Bresson,
Métaphores #7, 1983

■ I'm drawn to certain kinds of landscape: deserts, jungles, deltas, certain kinds of urban landscape. I suppose I like very formalized landscapes, like great dunes or sand bars. I'm drawn to freeways, concrete flyovers, the metallized landscapes of giant airports...

■ Interview by Peter Linnett,
Corridor #5, 1974

■ On *Vermilion Sands*: "... The chief characteristic of this desert resort, not abandoned but forever out of season, is that everything is over. Its past lies behind it, and nothing that can happen in the future will substantially change it again. It has come to terms with its past, and now lies there on its deck chair beside a drained swimming pool, somewhere in the middle of this endless afternoon. It's against this background that chimeras stir, fancies take flight..."

■ If I had to make a guess I would say that *Vermilion Sands* is what the future will be like, a place where work will be the ultimate play, and play the ultimate work. It's a place where nothing happens but everything is possible and where the contents of the psyche pass freely through the barrier of the skull and take up residence at the bottom of the garden, to be cared for in that offhand way in which the hero of "Prima Belladonna" cares for his singing flowers. And of course, nothing is so likely to attract the attention of the nearest off-duty witch than a well-stocked psychic garden.

■ Where is *Vermilion Sands*? Somewhere, I suppose between Palm Springs, Juan Les Pins, and Ipanema Beach. *Vermilion Sands* is very much a beach resort, but needless to say there is no sea. The beach extends continuously, in all directions, merging with the beaches of its neighboring resorts, extensions of the afternoon minds of its inhabitants...

■ Introduction, *First Voyages*, 1981

■ If you could scrap all retrospective fiction and its immense body of conventions, most people who, for example, find William Burroughs' narrative techniques almost impossible to recognize—in exactly the same way that some aboriginal tribesmen are supposed to be unable to recognize their own photographs—would realize that Burroughs' narrative techniques, or my own in their way, would be an immediately recognizable reflection of the way life is actually experienced. We live in quantified non-linear terms—we switch on television sets, switch them off half an hour later, speak on the telephone, read magazines, dream and so forth. We don't live our lives in linear terms in the sense that the Victorians did.

■ Interview by George MacBeth,
BBC, 1 February 1967

■ Don't forget that man is, and has been for at least a million years, a hunting species surviving with difficulty in a terribly dangerous world. In order to survive his brain has been trained to screen out anything but the most essential and the most critical ... But now the world is essentially far less dangerous, and the time has come where the brain can be allowed to experience the true excitement of the universe, and the infinite possibilities of consciousness that the basic needs of survival have previously screened away. After a million or so years, those screens are about to be removed and once they are gone, then, for the first time, man will really know what it is to be alive.

■ Interview by Dr Chris Evans,
Penthouse, April 1979

■ My impression is that the original punk groups were reacting in a very direct way against the establishment music scene—someone like Mick Jagger is as much a part of the Show Business Establishment as Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby ... he's a completely socially accepted and integrated performer. What is interesting now is that the time span between the "rebel"—the "revolution"—and total social acceptance is getting shorter and shorter ... In the future, you'll get some radical new idea, but within 3 minutes it's totally accepted, and it's coming out in your local supermarket ...

■ Interview by Jon Savage,
Search & Destroy, 1978

■ Apart from its obvious role as a handy means of transport, the car satisfies one basic human requirement—our need to understand as much as possible of the world around us.

■ "The Car, The Future"
Drive, Autumn 1971

■ ... about the height of "Swinging London," 1966-67, a long time ago, I thought to myself: "Well, being young is synonymous with freedom, tolerance and all the rest of it"—I thought to myself, "I'm an SF writer" (tend to just play around with ideas and invert things deliberately)—I visualized a society where the young all wore Mao uniforms and were extremely puritanical and moralistic—this was 10 years ago—but you can actually see this going on ... one can see, actually, a whole range of New Orthodoxies emerging—attitudes about "race," attitudes about "women's lib," "woman's place in the world"—attitudes about all sorts of things have sort of fossilized into a sort of fixed position where, if you in any way (deviate)—you're in trouble! You're either a male chauvinist (you may well be a male chauvinist) but you are attacked merely because you choose to express an original opinion on the subject, and don't subscribe to the established orthodoxy.

■ Interview by Jon Savage, *Search & Destroy* no. 10, 1978

■ My novels and my fiction are of fulfillment. My characters embrace what most people would run miles from, in novels like *The Drowned World*, *The Crystal World*, and in another way *Crash* ... In many cases they embrace death, but that doesn't mean I am pessimistic. In fact, they find fulfillment. I think that all of my fiction is optimistic because it's a fiction of psychic fulfillment. The characters are finding themselves, which is after all the only definition of real happiness: to find yourself and be who you are ...

■ Interview by Catherine Bresson,
Métaphores, 1983

■ I think we're all perhaps innately perverse, capable of enormous cruelty and, paradoxically (this is difficult to put into words), our talent for the perverse, the violent, and the obscene, may be a good thing. We may have to go through this phase to reach something on the other side, it's a mistake to hold back and refuse to accept one's nature ... We're living in an abstracted world, where there aren't any values, where rather than fall back, one has to, as Conrad said, immerse oneself in the most destructive element, and swim.

■ from *The Imagination on Trial*,
ed. Alan Burns & Charles Sugnet

■ There's a whole series of subjects people are not really honest about. Violence is one. Most people take the view—I would myself—that violence is wholly bad whatever form it takes, whether it's the huge violence of Vietnam or the violence of, say, police brutality. But the point is that we're also excited by violence ... If we were honest about the Vietnams of the world, the real appeal of these events, we'd see them in a new light and they might never happen again. Honesty always enriches our lives, just as it has in the area of sex ... I just want to know why people need violence and how can one come to terms with this thing?

■ Interview by Lynn Barber, *Penthouse*
vol. 5, September 1970

■ I write out of what I feel to be a sense of great urgency and commitment. I'm certainly not a political writer, but I feel a great sense of urgency ... When people say to me, "You're very cold and clinical," I always find that strange; they may be confused. I use the language of an anatomist. It's rather like doing a post-mortem on a child who's been raped. The anatomist's post-mortem is no less exact, he itemizes things no less clearly, for the rage and outrage he feels.

■ from *The Imagination on Trial*,
ed. Alan Burns & Charles Sugnet

■ The exterior landscapes of the seventies are almost entirely fictional ones created by advertising, mass merchandising ... politics conducted as advertising ... Given that external reality is a fiction, the writer's role is almost superfluous. He does not need to invent the fiction because it is already there.

■ Intv by Robert Lightfoot & David Pendleton, *Friends*, Oct. 30, 1970

■ In *High-Rise* the whole point of the book, as in *Crash*, is that the characters eagerly embrace these revelations about themselves and the new life that technology has made possible. The whole logic of the book and their behavior only makes sense if you assume that they *want* this apparent descent into barbarism. It is willed by them all, either consciously or unconsciously ... The environment makes possible the whole set of unfolding logics, like those that unfold on the highway in *Crash*. That technology as a whole has a sort of alienating effect ...

■ Intv by David Pringle, *Thrust*, Winter 1980

■ I remember my dreams extremely vividly. Not only can I remember last night's dreams but I can remember vividly almost every dream I've ever had. I've never really drawn on my dreams for my own fiction, but in many ways I think of my imagination as a writer as a continuation of the dream time.

■ Quoted in Sam Scoggins' film, *The Unlimited Dream Company*

■ [On the prospect of life in a huge orbiting space colony:] I see chewing-gum on plastic floors and scuffed rusting rails, and a funny smell in the air from the air-conditioning, and a background of what other people have termed "airplane fear"—you know, a whole of flying DC-10s orbiting over your head. When is metal fatigue going to suddenly pump the atmosphere out? I'm not interested actually in whether it comes about or not—what I'm interested in is how it touches our imaginations ...

■ The pioneer years of flight ... provided some of the most potent metaphors that human beings have ever responded to. I suppose World War II was the last fling, but since then aviation is just Skytrain, which lacks any sort of imaginative dimension whatever.

■ Intv by David Pringle, *Thrust*, Winter 1980

■ If you look at, say, the SF of H. G. Wells, very little of that is set in the far future or on alien planets—*The Island of Dr. Moreau*, *The Invisible Man*, *The War of the Worlds*, large numbers of his short stories: all are set in the present, or the near-present, and on Earth ...

■ Intv by Alan Dorey & Joseph Nicholas, *Vector*, January 1980

■ Just as sex is the key to the Freudian world, so violence is the key to the external world of fantasy that we inhabit. There's this clash between what we all believe to be true, such as that violence is bad in all its forms, and the actual truth, which is that violence may well serve beneficial roles—much as we might deplore it.

■ Intv by Brendan Hennessy, *Transatlantic Review*, Spring 1971

■ *The Atrocity Exhibition* was due to be published in the United States by Doubleday, but two weeks before publication the entire edition was withdrawn and destroyed on the orders of the firm's boss, Nelson Doubleday, an old boy of extreme rightwing views who has donated a helicopter to the California police (a nice twist—the rich man no longer bequeaths a Rubens to King's College but a riot-control weapon to keep down the student body).

■ What had blown Nelson Doubleday's fuses was a section of the book entitled "Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan." The next firm to take the book, E. P. Dutton, were delighted with this piece, and thought seriously of using it as the book's title ... Now they too have had cold feet. I was interested to learn that among the things that most bothered them were "16 references to Ralph Nader." In vain did I protest that anyone in public life attempting to involve us in his fantasies can hardly complain if we involve him in ours ...

■ *Ink*, June 5, 1971

■ What I find is that, when I've finished a novel or short story—particularly with a novel, which one's had in one's head for six months or a year—one can't free oneself. There's a carry-over of weeks, perhaps months. It's like the end of a love affair ... It's exhausting in that one can't free oneself from the mental climate that a particular book has placed over one's head. I finished my last novel about three weeks ago. I was in a great state of exhilaration in the week after finishing this book, and I wanted immediately to start another novel. I've got an idea for a novel I very much want to write, quite different from the previous books. But I couldn't start it because I was under the spell of this novel I've just finished.

■ Intv by Peter Linnett, *The Writer*, June 1973

■ Reason rationalizes reality for us and presents us with a more and more conventional world. In a sense reason is the death of the spirit . . . [Yet] we've all got unlimited imaginative power—capable of transforming anything—the most humdrum little room, or little town or what have you . . . Inside each person's head is an Unlimited Dream Company. That, in a sense, is what I'm getting at; the total transformation of the ordinary which is going on every minute of the day . . .

■ Intv by Giovanni Dadomo, *Time Out*, Nov. 1979



■ Everywhere is infinitely exciting, given the transforming power of the imagination.

■ Intv by Alan Dorey & Joseph Nicholas, *Vector*, January 1980



■ Time is a very strong theme in my fiction. It must be tied up with my childhood . . . If you look at Renaissance paintings, a Vermeer or Rembrandt, or the Impressionists, Monet or Renoir, it's like *real time*. It's 3 o'clock in the afternoon and she's having a bath or having tea in the garden. You can set your watch to those paintings. Whereas the Surrealists are quite different; there's a world beyond Time. Time does no longer exist. I think all my fiction is really an attempt to get beyond Time into a different Realm—I don't know what . . .

■ Interview by Catherine Bresson, *Métaphores*, 1983



■ Violence is probably going to play the same role in the '70s and '80s that sex played in the '50s and '60s . . . one's more and more alienated from any kind of direct response to experience.

■ In conversation with Eduardo Paolozzi and Frank Whitford, *Studio International*, no. 183, October 1971



■ It's photography and the cinema above all which provide us with reflections of this landscape. Television seems to me to play a particularly important role, in the continuous flood of images with which it inundates our brain: it perceives things on our behalf, and it's like a third eye grafted onto us.

■ Intv by Robert Louit, *Magazine Littéraire* no. 87, April 1974 (retranslated by Peter Nicholls) *Foundation* no. 9, November 1975

■ Only a truly guilty man can conceive of the concept of innocence at all . . .

■ *Backdrop of Stars*, 1968, ed. Harry Harrison



■ If an Einstein Memorial Time Center is ever founded, it should take its first premises in the Museum of Modern Art. The hidden perspectives hinted at in even the most anecdotal paintings of Picasso and Braque, not to mention the time-saturated images of the Surrealists, say more about the subject than anything the natural sciences can provide, for the clear reason that the sciences are not equipped to deal with the metaphor. The thousand wounds and flowers opened in our sides every day irrigate themselves from a very different watershed.

■ *New Worlds*, no. 186, January 1969



■ Are there reasons to believe that our apprehension of the future is intimately associated with the origins of human speech, and that the imaginary reconstruction of events necessary for our recognition of the past is also linked with the invention of language?

■ In the Korsakov Syndrome, as a result of organic brain disturbance, memories fall out of place and there is no comprehension of succession and duration. Disturbance in chronology is often a first symptom of an oncoming psychotic phase. Schizophrenics may either deny the existence of time (on the basis of their infantile delusions of omnipotence), or deny that they lived at all before the onset of their psychosis. Compulsion neurotics stick to a tyrannical inner schedule out of a fear of real time. *Déjà vu* may be prompted by forbidden infantile wishes of which the possessor has become subliminally aware. In serious brain disturbances there can be extreme feelings of confusion which stem from the inability to "file" daily events . . .

■ *New Worlds*, no. 186, January 1969



■ I don't think the future will be sterile in any way, but I think relationships within the future will be far more ambiguous and far more uncertain than they seem to be now . . . A kind of California spreading across the globe.

■ Quoted in Sam Scoggins' film, *The Unlimited Dream Company*

■ [In the *Drowned World*] I wanted to look at our racial memory, our whole biological inheritance, the fact that we're all several hundred million years old, as old as the biological kingdoms in our spines, in our brains, in our cellular structure; our very identities reflect untold numbers of decisions made to adapt us to change in our environment, decisions, lying behind us in the past like some enormous, largely forgotten journey. I wanted to go back along that road to discover what made us what we are. Water was the central image of the past. In *The Drought* I was interested in future time, the image being sand. I see the future as being abstract, geometric—the landscape of the moon seems to me to be a good image of the future landscape for Earth. The crystal is a symbol of a timeless world. In *The Crystal World* I described a situation in which time doesn't exist at all. The crystallizing forest, in which the people, become crystallized, describes a state beyond death, a kind of non-living existence . . .

■ Intv by Brendan Hennessy,
Transatlantic Review, Spring 1971

■ Sex times technology equals the future.

■ Intv by Peter Linnett, *Corridor* #5, 1974

■ Look at most people and you will find that they have declared a moratorium on the past; they are just not interested. One is constantly meeting people who have only a hazy idea of their parents—who have changed their lifestyles since their childhood in every possible way. In a genuine way they have transformed themselves. It's rather like Los Angeles, where people can adopt any role they like and be convincing in that role . . .

■ Intv by Robert Lightfoot & David
Pendleton, *Friends*, Oct. 30, 1970

■ I've always wanted really to be a painter. My interest in painting has been far more catholic than my interest in fiction. I'm interested in almost every period of painting, from Lascaux through the Renaissance onwards . . . When I start painting I shall stop writing! I've said somewhere else that all my fiction consists of paintings. I think I always was a frustrated painter. They are all paintings, really, my novels and stories. The trouble is—I haven't any talent . . .!

■ Intv by David Pringle, *J. G. Ballard*,
The First 20 Years, 1976

■ It's funny that this man-powered flight across the Channel has just taken place. What I would love to do—I won't, because this sort of thing requires actual practical experience—is to write a novel about a man-powered flying machine . . . the whole private mythology . . .

■ The brain does settle down after the age of forty, physiologically. Nobody becomes psychopathic, I gather, after the age of forty. A lot of people with long-standing mental problems do emerge into some sort of calm plateau after the age of forty. But I don't know—I've tried to follow accurately, like a cruise missile, the contours of the period in which I'm living. Perhaps if images of flight have begun to appear in my fiction they may reflect something in the atmosphere that we all breathe. You know—we're all looking for some sort of vertical route out of the particular concrete jungle that we live in.

■ Intv by David Pringle,
Thrust, Winter 1980

■ After I finish reading the newspaper, after breakfast, I travel to work—a distance of about two feet!—from my armchair to my desk. I sit down at about 9:30, and work till 12:30 without a break. Then I go out and shop, to have a walk; come back, make a quick lunch, generally back at my typewriter by about 1:30. Then I work till about five, again without a break. Sometimes I work later; if I'm writing a section that is flowing well and easily I could go on to seven o'clock. Generally I end about five and then have a very stiff drink!

■ Intv by Peter Linnett,
The Writer, June 1973



R —
E —
F —
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FICTION (1951-1982)

"The Violent Noon" (1951)
 "Escapement" (1956)
 "Prima Belladonna" (1956)
 "Build-up" (1957; re-titled "The Concentration City" 1967)
 "Mobile" (1957; re-written and titled "Venus Smiles" 1967)
 "Manhole 69" (1957)
 "Track 12" (1958)
 "The Waiting Grounds" (1959)
 "Now Zero" (1959)
 "The Sound-sweep" (1960)
 "Zone of Terror" (1960)
 "Chronopolis" (1960)
 "The Voices of Time" (1960)
 "The Last World of Mr. Goddard" (1960)
 "Studio 5, the Stars" (1961)
 "Deep End" (1961)
 "The Overloaded Man" (1961; revised 1963)
 "Mr. F is Mr. F" (1961)
 "Storm-wind" (1961; early version of *THE WIND FROM NOWHERE*)
 "Billenium" (1961)
 "The Gentle Assassin" (1961)
 "The Drowned World" (1962; short version of novel of same name)
 "The Insane Ones" (1962)
THE WIND FROM NOWHERE (1962)
 "The Garden of Time" (1962)
THE VOICES OF TIME (1962; short story collection: The Voices of Time/The Sound-sweep/The Overloaded Man/Zone of Terror/Manhole 69/The Waiting Grounds/Deep End)
 "The Thousand Dreams of Stellavista" (1962)
 "Thirteen to Centaurus" (1962; revised 1963)
 "The Cage of Sand" (1962)
 "The Watch-towers" (1962)
 "Passport to Eternity" (1962)
 "The Man on the 99th Floor" (1962)
 "The Singing Statues" (1962)
BILLENIUM (1962; short story collection: Billenium/The Insane Ones/Studio 5, the Stars/The Gentle Assassin/Build-up/Now: Zero/Mobile/Chronopolis/Prima Belladonna/The Garden of Time)

THE DROWNED WORLD (1962)
 "The Subliminal Man" (1963)
 "A Question of Re-entry" (1963)
 "The Sherrington Theory" (1963; re-titled "The Reptile Enclosure" 1964)
 "The Time-tombs" (1963)
THE FOUR-DIMENSIONAL NIGHT-MARE (1963; short story collection: The Voices of Time/The Sound-sweep/Prima Belladonna/Studio 5, the Stars/The Garden of Time/The Cage of Sand/The Watch-towers/Chronopolis; re-issued with amended contents, 1974)
 "Now Wakes the Sea" (1963)
 "The Encounter" (1963; re-titled "The Venus Hunters" 1964)
 "End-game" (1963)
 "Minus One" (1963)
PASSPORT TO ETERNITY (1963; short story collection: The Man on the 99th Floor/Thirteen to Centaurus/Track 12/The Watch-towers/A Question of Re-entry/Escapement/The Thousand Dreams of Stellavista/The Cage of Sand/Passport to Eternity)
 "The Sudden Afternoon" (1963)
 "The Screen Game" (1963)
 "Time of Passage" (1964)
 "The Lost Leonardo" (1964)
 "Prisoner of the Coral Deep" (1964)
 "The Terminal Beach" (1964)
 "The Illuminated Man" (1964; re-written as "Equinox" and still later as *THE CRYSTAL WORLD* 1966)
THE TERMINAL BEACH (1964; short story collection, 2 versions. American edition: End Game/The Subliminal Man/The Last World of Mr. Goddard/The Time Tombs/Now Wakes the Sea/The Venus Hunters/Minus One/The Sudden Afternoon/Terminal Beach. English edition: A Question of Re-entry/The Drowned Giant/End Game/The Illuminated Man/The Reptile Enclosure/The Delta at Sunset/The Terminal Beach/Deep End/The Volcano Dances/Billenium/The Gioconda of the Twilight Noon/The Lost Leonardo)
 "The Delta at Sunset" (1964)
 "The Gioconda of the Twilight Noon" (1964)
 "The Volcano Dances" (1964)
 "The Venus Hunters" (1964)
 "The Reptile Enclosure" (1963)
 "The Drowned Giant" (1964; re-printed as "Souvenir", *Playboy*, 1965)
THE DROUGHT (1964; American edition titled *THE BURNING WORLD*)
 "Confetti Royale" (1966; re-titled "The Beach Murders" 1969)
 "You and Me and the Continuum" (1966)
 "You: Coma: Marilyn Monroe" (1966)
 "The Assassination Weapon" (1966)

THE CRYSTAL WORLD (1966)
THE IMPOSSIBLE MAN (1966; short story collection: The Drowned Giant/The Reptile Enclosure/The Delta at Sunset/Storm Bird, Storm Dreamer/The Screen Game/The Day of Forever/Time of Passage/The Gioconda of the Twilight Noon/The Impossible Man)
 "The Day of Forever" (1966)
 "The Impossible Man" (1966)
 "Storm Bird, Storm Dreamer" (1966)
 "The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered as a Downhill Motor Race" (1966)
 "The Atrocity Exhibition" (1966)
 "Tomorrow is a Million Years" (1966)
 "Plan for the Assassination of Jacqueline Kennedy" (1966)
 "The Death Module" (1967; re-titled "Notes Towards a Mental Breakdown" 1970)
THE DAY OF FOREVER (1967; short story collection: The Day of Forever/Prisoner of the Coral Deep/Tomorrow is a Million Years/The Man on the 99th Floor/The Waiting Grounds/The Last World of Mr. Goddard/The Gentle Assassin/The Sudden Afternoon/The Insane Ones/The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered as a Downhill Motor Race)
 "The Recognition" (1967)
 "Cry Hope, Cry Fury!" (1967)
THE DISASTER AREA (1967; short story collection: Storm Bird, Storm Dreamer/The Concentration City/The Subliminal Man/Now Wakes the Sea/Minus One/Mr. F is Mr. F/Zone of Terror/Manhole 69/The Impossible Man)
THE OVERLOADED MAN (1967; short story collection: Now: Zero/The Time Tombs/Thirteen to Centaurus/Track 12/Passport to Eternity/Escapement/Time of Passage/The Venus Hunters/The Coming of the Unconscious [nonfiction]/The Overloaded Man)
 "The Cloud Sculptures of Coral D" (1967)
 "The Dead Astronaut" (1968)
 "The Great American Nude" (1968)
 "Love and Napalm: Export USA" (1968)
 "The University of Death" (1968)
 "Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan" (1968)
 "The Generations of America" (1968)
 "The Comsat Angels" (1968)
 "The Summer Cannibals" (1969)
 "Crash!" (1969)
 "The Killing Ground" (1969)
 "A Place and a Time to Die" (1969)
 "Tolerances of the Human Face" (1969)
 "Coitus 80" (1970)
 "Journey Across a Crater" (1970)
 "Princess Margaret's Facelift" (1970)
THE ATROCITY EXHIBITION (1970; collection of condensed novels: The Atrocity

Exhibition/The University of Death/The Assassination Weapon/You: Coma Marilyn Monroe/Notes Towards a Mental Breakdown/The Great American Nude/The Summer Cannibals/Tolerances of the Human Face/You and Me and the Continuum/Plan for the Assassination of Jacqueline Kennedy/Love and Napalm: Export USA/Crash!/The Generations of America/Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan/The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered as a Downhill Motor Race; American edition titled *LOVE AND NAPALM: EXPORT USA* includes Preface by William S. Burroughs)

"Say Goodbye to the Wind" (1970)

VERMILION SANDS (1971; short story collection: Prima Belladonna/The Thousand Dreams of Stellavista/Cry Hope, Cry Fury!/Venus Smiles/Studio 5, the Stars/The Cloud Sculptors of Coral D/Say Goodbye to the Wind/The Screen Game/The Singing Statues)

CHRONOPOLIS (1971; short story collection: The Voices of Time/The Drowned Giant/The Terminal Beach/Manhole 69/Storm Bird, Storm Dreamer/The Sound-sweep/Billennium/Chronopolis/Build-up/The Garden of Time/End Game/The Watch-towers/Now Wakes the Sea/Zone of Terror/The Cage of Sand/Deep End)

"The Side-effects of Orthonovin-G" (1972)

"The Greatest Television Show on Earth" (1972)

CRASH (1973)

CONCRETE ISLAND (1974)

THE FOUR-DIMENSIONAL NIGHTMARE (1974; re-issued short story collection: The Voices of Time/The Sound Sweep/The Overloaded Man/Thirteen to Centaurus/The Garden of Time/The Cage of Sand/The Watch-towers/Chronopolis)

"My Dream of Flying to Wake Island" (1974)

"The Air Disaster" (1975)

"Low-flying Aircraft" (1975)

HIGH-RISE (1975)

"Notes Towards a Mental Breakdown" (1976; note: this is a completely different story to an earlier piece which was printed in *THE ATROCITY EXHIBITION*.)

"The 60 Minute Zoom" (1976)

"The Smile" (1976)

LOW-FLYING AIRCRAFT AND OTHER STORIES (1976; short story collection: The Ultimate City/Low-flying Aircraft/The Dead Astronaut/My Dream of Flying to Wake Island/The Life and Death of God/The Greatest Television Show on Earth/A Place and a Time to Die/The Comsat Angels/The Beach Murders)

"The Ultimate City" (1976)

"The Life and Death of God" (1976)

"Queen Elizabeth's Rhinoplasty" (1976)

"The Dead Time" (1977)

THE BEST OF J.G. BALLARD (1977; Introduction by JGB/The Concentration City/Manhole 69/The Waiting Grounds/The Sound-sweep/Chronopolis/The Voices of Time/The Overloaded Man/Billennium/The Insane Ones/The Garden of Time/Thirteen to Centaurus/The Subliminal Man/Passport to Eternity/The Cage of Sand/A Question of Re-entry/The Terminal Beach/The Day of Forever. Each story prefaced with brief notes by author, title on cover and spine reads *THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF J.G. BALLARD*)

"The Index" (1977)

"The Intensive Care Unit" (1977)

"Theatre of War" (1977)

"Having a Wonderful Time" (1978)

"One Afternoon at Utah Beach" (1978)

"Zodiac 2000" (1978)

"Motel Architecture" (1978)

THE BEST SHORT STORIES OF J.G.

BALLARD (1978; Introduction by Anthony Burgess/The Concentration City/Manhole 69/Chronopolis/The Voices of Time/Deep End/The Overloaded Man/Billennium/The Garden of Time/Thirteen to Centaurus (sic)/The Subliminal Man/The Cage of Sand/End Game/The Drowned Giant/The Terminal Beach/The Cloud-Sculptors of Coral D/The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered as a Downhill Motor Race/The Atrocity Exhibition/Plan for the Assassination of Jacqueline Kennedy/Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan)

THE UNLIMITED DREAM COMPANY (1979)

THE VENUS HUNTERS (1980; short story collection: Now: Zero/The Time-tombs/Track 12/Passport to Eternity/Escape/Time of Passage/The Venus Hunters/The Killing Ground/One Afternoon at Utah Beach/The 60 Minute Zoom)

"A Host of Furious Fancies" (1980)

HELLO AMERICA (1981)

"News from the Sun" (1981)

"Memories of the Space Age" (1982)

"Myths of the Near Future" (1982)

MYTHS OF THE NEAR FUTURE (1982; short story collection: Myths of the Near Future/Having a Wonderful Time/A Host of Furious Fancies/Zodiac 2000/News from the Sun/Theatre of War/The Dead Time/The Smile/Motel Architecture/The Intensive Care Unit)

"Report on an Unidentified Space Station" (1982)

NON-FICTION (1962-1982)

Guest editorial (*New Worlds* 1962)

"William Burroughs: Myth Maker of the 20th Century" (*New Worlds* 1964; review/article on W.S. Burroughs' *Dead Fingers Talk*)

"Down to Earth" (*Guardian* 1965; reviews: *I Love Galesburn in the Springtime* by Jack Finney; *The Arthur C. Clarke Omnibus and Telepathist* by John Brunner)

"The Elephant and the Quasar" (*Guardian* 1965; reviews: *Anomalous Phenomena* by Jules Verne; *Homeward Bound* by Jules Verne; *The Old Die Rich* by H.L. Gold; *The Best SF Stories of James Blish*; *Connoisseurs SF*, ed. Tom Boardman and Lambda 1, ed. John Carnell)

"Into the Drop Zone" (*Guardian* 1965; review: *Beyond Time* by Michael Siffre)

"Made in USA" (*Guardian* 1965; reviews: *The View from the Stars* by Walter M. Miller; *The Dragon Masters* by Jack Vance; *Reefs of Space* by Frederick Pohl and Jack Williamson; *The Specials* by Louis Charbonneau and *Somewhere a Voice* by Eric Frank Russell)

"The Demolition Squad" (*Guardian* 1965; reviews: *A Wrinkle in the Skin* by Christopher; *New Writings in SF 6*, ed. John Carnell and Bill, the *Galactic Hero* by Harry Harrison)

"The Old Guard" (*Guardian* 1965; reviews: *Of Worlds Beyond*, ed. Lloyd Arthur Eschback and *Best of SF Stories of Brian W. Aldiss*)

"The Transistorised Brain" (*Guardian* 1966; review: *Human Robots in Myth & Science* by John Cohen)

"Visions of Hell" (*New Worlds* 1966; review: *The Human Age* by Wyndham Lewis)

"What to Do Till the Analyst Comes" (*Guardian*

1966; reviews: *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* by Philip K. Dick; *The Worlds of Robert F. Young*; *Impulse 1 & New Worlds 160* (magazines) and *The Anything Box* by Zenna Henderson)

"Strange Seas of Thought" (*Guardian* 1966; reviews: *Fantastic Voyage* by Isaac Asimov; *The Saliva Tree* by Brian W. Aldiss; *Best SF 6*, ed. Edmund Crispin and *The 8th Galaxy Reader*, ed. Frederik Pohl)

"Notes from Nowhere" (*Guardian* 1966; reviews: *Future Perfect* by H. Bruce Franklin; *Park* by John Gray and *A Robert Heinlein Omnibus*)

"The Coming of the Unconscious" (*New Worlds* 1966; reviews: *Surrealism* by Patrick Waldberg and *The History of Surrealist Painting* by Marcel Jean)

"La Jeteé - Academy One" (*New Worlds* 1966; film review: *La Jeteé* by Chris Marker)

"Death Wish Anonymous" (*Guardian* 1966; reviews: *All Fools Day* by Edmund Cooper; *Dune* by Frank Herbert and *The Fury Out of Time* by Lloyd Biggle Jr.)

"All in the Mind" (*Guardian* 1966; review: *The Changing Mind* by John Roddan)

"Circles and Squares" (*Guardian* 1966; reviews: *Inner Circle* by Jerzey Peterkiewicz and *New Writings in SF 9*, ed. John Carnell)

"Waste of Beauty" (*The Guardian* 1966; review: *Diary of the Discovery Expedition to the Antarctic* by Edward Wilson)

"Notes from Nowhere" (*New Worlds* 1966; article on work in progress)

"The New SF" (1967; conversation with George Macbeth on BBC Radio 3. Transcript in *The New SF*, ed. Langdon Jones, 1969)

"Red Stars and Sickle Moons" (*The Guardian* 1967; reviews: *Path into the Unknown—New Soviet SF*; *Time Probe*, ed. Arthur C. Clark; *Antic Earth* by Louis Charbonneau and *The Egg Shaped Thing* by Christopher Hodder-Williams)

Afterword to "The Recognition" (*Dangerous Visions* ed. Harlan Ellison 1967)

Homage to Clare Churchill (*New Worlds* 1967; advertisement)

Does the Angle Between Two Walls Have a Happy Ending? (*New Worlds* 1967/68; advertisement)

"The Year's Science Fiction" (*The Guardian* 1967; reviews: *Nebula Award Stories 2*, ed. Brian W. Aldiss and Harry Harrison; *This Immortal* by Roger Zelazny; *Babel-17* by Samuel R. Delany and *An Age* by Brian W. Aldiss)

Comment on "End-Game" (*SF: Author's Choice* ed. Harry Harrison 1968)

A Neural Interval (*New Worlds* 1968; advertisement)

An Interview (*Speculation* 1969; interview by Jannick Storm)

"How Dr Christopher Evans Landed on the Moon" (*New Worlds* 1969; computer printout of moon landing)

"Salvador Dali: The Innocent as Paranoid" (*New Worlds* 1969; article)

"The Thousand Wounds and Flowers" (*New Worlds* 1969; review: *The Voices of Time* by J.T. Frazer)

"Dreams and Surrealism" (*Sunday Times Magazine* 1969; article)

"Use Your Vagina" (*New Worlds* 1969; review: *How to Achieve Sexual Ecstasy* by Stephan Gregory)

Pieces from an Interview (*International Times* 1969; with Robert Lightfoot and David Pendleton)

"Alphabets of Unreason" (*New Worlds* 1969; review: *Mein Kampf* by Adolf Hitler)

"The See-through Brain" (*The Guardian* 1970; review: *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin)

"J.G. Ballard" (*Books and Bookmen* 1970; article)

"Twentieth Century Vox: An Interview" (*The Guardian* 1970; interview by Michael McNay)

"Sci-fi Seer" (*Penthouse* 1970; interview by Lynn Barber)

"Inner Space: An Interview with J.G. Ballard" (*Friends* 1970; interview by Robert Lightfoot and David Pendleton)

"Lost in Space" (*The Guardian* 1970; review: *A Fire on the Moon* by Norman Mailer)

"Fictions of Every Kind" (*Books and Bookmen* 1971; article)

"An Interview" (*Cypher* 1971; interview by James Goddard)

"Ballard at Home" (*Books and Bookmen* 1971; interview by Douglas Reed)

"The Consumer Consumed" (*Ink* 1971; article)

"The Car, the Future" (*Drive* 1971; article)

"Speculative Illustrations" (*Studio International* 1971; conversation with Eduardo Paolozzi and Frank Whitford)

"Ballard on Crash" (*Cypher* 1973; interview by James Goddard)

Preface to *Vermilion Sands* (Jonathan Cape ed. 1973; Panther ed. 1975)

Introduction to *Salvador Dali* (Pan/Ballantine 1974)

Interview (*Corridor 5* 1974; interview by Peter Linnett)

"Spaced Out" (*New Society* 1974; review: *The Next Ten Thousand Years* by Adrian Berry)

Introduction to *Crash!* (Calmann-Levy ed. 1974 [in French]; [in English]: "Some Words About Crash!" *Foundation* 9 1975)

Interview (*Magazine Littéraire* 87 1974 [in French]; [in English, trans. by Peter Nicholls] *Foundation* 9 1975)

"A Personal View" (*Cypher* 1974; review: *Billion Year Spree* by Brian W. Aldiss)

"J.G. Ballard's Science Fiction for Today" (*Science Fiction Monthly* 1975; interview by James Goddard and David Pringle)

"An Interview with J.G. Ballard" (*Vector* 1976; interview by James Goddard and David Pringle)

"Down to Earth" (*New Statesman* 1976; reviews: *The Lives and Times of Jerry Cornelius* by Michael Moorcock; *The Stochastic Man* by Robert Silverberg; *The Prayer Machine* by Christopher Hodder-Williams; *The Space Machine* by Christopher Priest and *Universe 2*, ed. Terry Carr)

Introduction (*J.G. Ballard: The First Twenty Years* 1976; eds. James Goddard and David Pringle)

"Package Tours" (*New Statesman* 1976; reviews: *Martian Time-Slip* by Philip K. Dick; *Bring the Jubilee* by Ward Moore; *Galactic Empires, Vols. I and II*, ed. Brian W. Aldiss; *Skyfall* by Harry Harrison and *The Feast of St. Dionysus* by Robert Silverberg)

"Zap Code" (*New Statesman* 1977; reviews: *Approaching Oblivion* by Harlan Ellison; *Shadrach in the Furnace* by Robert Silverberg and *Medusa's Children* by Bob Shaw)

"French Polish" (*New Statesman* 1977; reviews: *Travelling Towards Epsilon*, ed. Maxim Jakubowski; *The Martian Inca* by Ian Watson and *Man Plus* by Frederik Pohl)

Introduction (*The Best of J.G. Ballard* 1977)

"Closed Doors" (*New Statesman* 1977; review: *The Hughes Papers* by Elaine Davenport and others)

"Grope Therapy" (*New Statesman* 1977; review: *Travels in Inner Space* by John St John)

"The Future of the Future" (*Vogue* 1977; article)

"Cataclysms and Dooms" (Introduction to *The Visual Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction* 1977; ed. Brian Ash)

"Hobbits in Space?" (*Time Out* 1977; film review: *Star Wars* by George Lucas)

"Candid Camera" (*New Statesman* 1978; review: *The Alchemical Marriage of Alistair Crompton* by

Robert Sheckley)

"J.G. Ballard" (*The New Review* 1978; article)

"Manbotching" (*New Statesman* 1978; review: *The Body in Question* by Jonathan Miller)

"J.G. Ballard" (*Search and Destroy* 1978; interview by Jon Savage)

"The Space Age is Over" (*Penthouse* 1979; interview by Dr Chris Evans)

"Not a Step Beyond Tomorrow" (*Time Out* 1979; interview/profile by Giovanni Dadomo)

"Killing Time Should be Prime-Time TV" (*The Guardian* 1979; review: *The Executioner's Song* by Norman Mailer)

"Kings of Infinite Space" (*The Guardian* 1979; review: *The Right Stuff* by Tom Wolfe)

"Writers' Choice for Christmas Reading" (*The Guardian* 1979; reviews: *Wild Nights* by Emma Tennant; *The Mighty Micro* by Christopher Evans and *The Assassination of Federico Garcia Lorca* by Ian Gibson)

"Unlimited Dreams - J.G. Ballard Interviewed" (*Vector* 1980; interview/profile by Alan Dorey and Joseph Nicholas)

"Disasters" (*The Listener*/extracts from 1980 BBC radio interview with Rodney Smith)

"Interview with J.G. Ballard" (*Thrust: SF in Review* 1980; interview by David Pringle)

"J.G. Ballard" (*Dream Makers: The Uncommon People Who Write Science Fiction*, Interviews by Charles Platt 1980)

"Brian W. Aldiss" (*Novacon 10 Programme Book* 1980; appreciation of Brian W. Aldiss)

"First Things Last" (*Tatler* 1981; review: *Other People* by Martin Amis)

"J.G. Ballard" (*The Imagination on Trial: British and American Writers Discuss Their Working Methods* eds. Alan Burns and Charles Sugnet 1981)

"New Means Worse" (*The Guardian* 1981; review: *The Golden Age of Science Fiction*, ed. Kingsley Amis)

"Fallen Idol" (*The Guardian* 1981; review: *Elvis* by Albert Goldman)

"Writers Reading in 1981" (1981; reviews: *A Confederacy of Dunces* by John Kennedy Toole and *Cities of the Red Night* by William S. Burroughs)

"Things I Wish I'd Known at 18" (*Sunday Express Magazine* 1981; interview by Lynn Barber cast in form of autobiographical statement)

"The Profession of Science Fiction, 26: From Shanghai to Shepperton" (*Foundation* 1982; interview by David Pringle arranged as chronological narrative)

"Legend of Regret" (*The Guardian* 1982; review: *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald* by Matthew J. Bruccoli)

FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDITIONS (1964-1981)

DANISH

Verden under Vand (*The Drowned World*) 1969

Grusomhedsudstillingen (*The Atrocity Exhibition*) 1969 [first world edition; appeared 6 months before English edition]

Krystalverdenen (*The Crystal World*) 1973

Slutstranden (*The Terminal Beach*) 1973

DUTCH

De brandende Aarde (*The Burning World*) 1967

De verdrinken Aarde (*The Drowned World*) 1968

De Wind van Nergens (*The Wind from Nowhere*) 1968

De kristallen Aarde (*The Crystal World*) 1969

Dooplopend Strand (*The Terminal Beach*) 1971

De Gruweltoonstelling (*The Atrocity Exhibition*) 1971

De Wachtvelden (*The Overloaded Man*) 1973

De zingende Beelden (*Vermilion Sands*) 1973

Eiland in Beton (*Concrete Island*) 1978

De Torenflat (*High-Rise?*) 197-?

De Laatste stad (*Low-flying Aircraft?*) 197-?

De Klap (*Crash*) 1980

FRENCH

Le monde englouti (*The Drowned World*) 1964

Cauchemar à quatre dimensions (*The Four-dimensional Nightmare*) 1965

Le forêt de cristal (*the Crystal World*) 1967

Billenium (*Billenium*) 1970

Crash! (*Crash*) 1974

L'île de béton (*Concrete Island*) 1974

Secheresse (*The Drought*) 1975

Vermilion Sands ou le paysage intérieur (*Vermilion Sands*) 1975

La Foire aux atrocités (*The Atrocity Exhibition*) 1976

I.G.H. (*High-rise*) 1976

Le vent de nulle part (*The Wind from Nowhere*) 1977

Cauchemar à quatre dimensions (*The Four-dimensional Nightmare*) 1978

Appareil volant à basse altitude (*Low-flying Aircraft*) 1978

Le rêveur illimité (*The Unlimited Dream Company*) 1980

Le livre d'or de la science fiction: J.G. Ballard 1980 [contains: *L'homme subliminal* (*The Subliminal Man*)/*L'homme saturé* (*The Overloaded Man*)/*Treize pour le Centaure* (*Thirteen to Centaurus*)/*Chronopolis* (*Chronopolis*)/*Fin de partie* (*Endgame*)/*Demain, dans un million d'années* (*Tomorrow is a Million Years*)/*Le jour de toujours* (*The Day of Forever*)/*Un assassin très comme il faut* (*The Gentle Assassin*)/*Le Vinci disparu* (*The Lost Leonardo*)/*Perte de temps* (*Escapement*)/*Le géant noyé* (*The Drowned Giant*)/*Le cage de sable* (*The Cage of Sand*)/*Les statues qui chantent* (*The Singing Statues*)/*Amour et napalm: export USA* (*Love and Napalm: Export USA*)/*Bibliography*]

Le salon des horreurs (*The Atrocity Exhibition*) 1981

Salut l'Amérique (*Hello America*) 1981

GERMAN

Der Sturm aus dem Nichts (*The Wind from Nowhere*) 1964

Welt in Flammen (*The Burning World*) 1968

Kristallwelt (*The Crystal World*) 1969

Karneval der Alligatoren (*The Drowned World*) 1970

Liebe und Napalm: Export USA (*The Atrocity Exhibition*) 1970

Der unmögliche Mensch (*The Impossible Man*) 1971

Die Tausend Träume von Stellavista (*Vermilion Sands*) 1972

Der vier-dimensionale Alptraum (*The Four-dimensional Nightmare*) 1973

Die Betoninsel (*Concrete Island*) 1981

Der ewige Tag (*The Day of Forever*) 1981

[*High-rise* has also appeared in German]

GREEK

[*The Crystal World* has appeared in Greek]

ITALIAN

Vento dal nulla (*The Wind from Nowhere*) 1962

Deserto d'acqua (*The Drowned World*) 1963

Essi ci guardano dalle torri (*Passport to Eternity*) 1965

Terra bruciata (*The Burning World*) 1966

Condominium (*High-rise*) 1976

Incubo a quattro dimensioni (*The Four-Dimensional Nightmare*) 1977

Il gigante annegato (*The Terminal Beach*) 1978

La zona del disastro (*The Disaster Area*) 1979

[*The Crystal World*, *The Day of Forever*, *Vermilion Sands*, *Crash*, *Concrete Island* and *Low-flying Aircraft* have also appeared in Italian]

JAPANESE

Shizunda Sekai (*The Drowned World*) 1968

Jikan Toshi (*Billionium*) 1969

Kessho Sekai (*The Crystal World*) 1969

Toki No Koe (*The Voices of Time*) 1969

Eien eno Pasupato (*Passport to Eternity*) 1970

Jikan no Bohyo (*The Terminal Beach*) 1970

Kyafu Sekai (*The Wind from Nowhere*) 1970

Moeru Sekai (*The Burning World*) 1970

Oboreta Kyojin (*The Impossible Man*) 1971

[*The Atrocity Exhibition*, *Vermilion Sands*, *Crash*, *Concrete Island*, *High-rise* and *Low-flying Aircraft* have also appeared in Japanese]

NORWEGIAN

Luftspeil (*Vermilion Sands*) 1972 [contains 2-page foreword by Ballard, different to British edition; 8-page appreciation of Ballard by Jon Bing; bibliography and 6-page glossary of proper names]

POLISH

[*Concrete Island* and *The Best of J.G. Ballard* have appeared in Polish]

PORTUGUESE

Cataclismo solar (*The Drowned World*) 1966

O mundo de cristal (*The Crystal World*) 1967

Menos um (*The Terminal Beach*) 1971

Passaporte para o eterno (*Passport to Eternity*) 1976?

SPANISH

El mundo sumergido (*The Drowned World*) 1966

El huracan cosmico (*The Wind from Nowhere*) 1967

La sequia (*The Drought*)? 19-?

El hombre imposible (*The Impossible Man*) 1972

Crash (*Crash*) 1979

La exhibicion de atrocidades (*The Atrocity Exhibition*) 1981

[*Vermilion Sands*, *Concrete Island*, *High-rise* and *Low-flying Aircraft* have also appeared in Spanish]

SWEDISH

Kristallvarlden (*The Crystal World*) 1971

Drömbolaget (*The Unlimited Dream Company*)—1981, includes 7-page biographical essay by Peter Stewart]

[*Editor's note: This (incomplete) list is based on the entries in the *Index Translationum* (Paris: UNESCO) for the years 1964 to 1976, together with information kindly supplied by Ballard's agent, John Wolfers. No attempt has been made to trace translations of individual short stories, although these are numerous and include translations into languages not represented (e.g. Russian)]

BALLARD'S WORKS IN AMBIT edited by Martin Bax

No. 23 (1965) — "The Draining Lake" (first chapter of *The Drought*). (Rare; 3 copies left: \$25)

No. 27 (1966) — "You : Coma : Marilyn Monroe"; and "Terminal Documents" (a review of W.S. Burroughs). (Rare: \$50)

No. 29 (1966) — "The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered as a Downhill Motor Race." (illus. by Michael Foreman).

No. 31 (1966) — "Plan for the Assassination of Jacqueline Kennedy" (illus. by M. Foreman).

No. 32 (1967) — "Homage to Claire Churchill" (full-page advertisement, text by JGB, photo by John Blomfield). (\$25 post free)

No. 33 (1967) — "Sex : Inner Space" (full-page advertisement, text by JGB, photo by J. Blomfield). (\$25 post free)

No. 36 (1968) — "The Great American Nude"; and "A Neural Interval" (full-page advertisement, text by JGB, photo from collection of Eduardo Paolozzi). (\$25 post free)

No. 37 (1968) — "Court Circular"; and "Love—A Print-out for Clair Churchill." (Rare: \$25)

No. 44 (1970) — "Mae West's Reduction Mammoplasty"; and M. Foreman's illustrations for *The Atrocity Exhibition*.

No. 45 (197-) — "Placental Insufficiency" (full-page advertisement, text by JGB, photo by Les Krims). (\$25 post free)

No. 46 (1971) — "Venus Smiles" (full-page advertisement, text by JGB). (\$25 post free)

No. 50 (1972) — "The Side-effects of Ortho-novin G."

No. 53 (1972/3) — "The Greatest Television Show on Earth."

No. 55 (1973) — Chapter one of *Crash*.

No. 60 (1974) — "My Dream of Flying to Wake Island."

No. 63 (1975) — "Critical Mass" (first chapter of *High-rise*, illus. by Ron Sandford)

No. 66 (197-) — "The Life and Death of God"; and "The Invisible Years" (serial; text by JGB and Martin Bax, illus. by R. Sandford). (All 14 numbers: \$100 post free)

No. 72 (1977) — "The Intensive Care Unit" (illus. by M. Foreman)

No. 75 (1978) — "Zodiac 2000" (illus. by R. Andford). The cover features a personal letter from JGB to M. Bax about the story, discussing what sort of illustrations should be used.

No. 80 (1979) — An extract from *The Unlimited Dream Company* (illus. by Cathy Felston)

No. 85 (1980) — "Landfall at Last" (a section from *Hello America*, illus. by M. Foreman).

No. 87 (198-) — "News From the Sun" (illus. by M. Foreman, "artistic meditations" by Rod Judkins).

[Individual numbers \$10 except where stated. Nos. 66-79 \$100 post free. Ongoing subs: \$15 post free. All material shipped surface, allow two months' delivery. Add \$1 for first copy and \$.50 for additional post. Address: 17 Priory Gardens, Highgate, London N6 5QY.]

JGB NEWS

David Pringle's JGB News, an essential newsletter exclusively devoted to news about J. G. Ballard, is available for \$10 or £6 for an introductory subscription from David Pringle, 124 Osborne Road, Brighton, BN1 6LU, England. Inquire as to availability of back issues—they contain valuable information.

DEFINITIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

David Pringle's J. G. Ballard: A Primary and Secondary Bibliography was published July, 1984 by G. K. Hall, 70 Lincoln St, Boston, MA 02111. This authoritative reference hardback lists every known appearance of J. G. Ballard in print, including short stories, novels, film criticism, general essays, book reviews; as well as critical and biographical essays, articles, introductions, and citations from writers around the world. \$45 (\$49 foreign) from the publisher or Forbidden Planet.

INTERZONE

Editorial staff includes David Pringle. "Britain's only periodical devoted to high-quality science fiction and fantasy." *Recommended.* For a four-issue subscription in the U.K., send £6, payable by International Money Order, to *Interzone*, 124 Osborne Rd, Brighton BN1 6LU, England. American subscribers send \$10 to *Interzone*, 145 East 18th St, Apt 5: Costa Mesa, CA 92627 (American agent: Scott Bradfield). *Note:* *Interzone* No. 8, Summer 1984, contains the original typewritten "What I Believe" by J. G. Ballard. Limited supply of back issues of *Interzone* available from 21 The Village St, Leeds, LS4 2PR for £1.50 each (3 or more £1.25. Overseas £1.75, or £1.50 for 3 or more.) Contents: 1) M. John Harrison, John Sladek, Angela Carter, Keith Roberts, Michael Moorcock; 2) J. G. Ballard, Alex Stewart, Andrew Weiner, Rachel Pollack, Thomas Disch; 3) Garry Kilworth, Angela Carter, Josephine Saxton, Nicholas Allan, David S. Garnett; 4) John Sladek, Alex Stewart, David Redd, Malcolm Edwards, Andy Soutter, Barrington J. Bayley; 5) Scott Bradfield, Richard Cowper, John Crowley, John Shirley, M. John Harrison; 6) Cherry Wilder, Neil Ferguson, John Hendry, Lorraine Sintetos, Keith Roberts, Roger Dean; 7) Geoff Ryman, Bruce Sterling, Michael Blumlein, Margaret Welbank.

FOUNDATION

Editor: David Pringle. Published three times a year; each issue contains over 100 pages. Filled with criticism and reviews of science fiction, plus interviews, autobiographical essays, etc. In the past has published articles and reviews by Brian Aldiss, J. G. Ballard, Thomas Disch, Harry Harrison, Pamela Sargent, John Sladek, Ian Watson, Jack Williamson, and many others. Send £7 for three issues to The SF Foundation, N.E. London Polytechnic, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, RM8 2AS, England. American subscribers send \$16 International Money Order. Please make checks payable to "The SF Foundation." Back issues available; inquire.

SAM SCOGGINS' FILM

The Unlimited Dream Company, written, edited & directed by Sam Scoggins. 16mm, 24 mins, color, 1983. "The British science fiction writer J. G. BALLARD talks about his life and work. Meanwhile a crashed pilot stalks the landscapes of his dreams. The film is concerned with what constitutes an adequate picture of a person, the role of the imagination in transforming the world." Cast: J. G. Ballard, Tom Pollock. Credits: Camera, Ian Duncan; Assistant Camera, Bryan Morgan; Art Director, Charlotte Humpston; Sound, Tom Pollock. For further information (rentals, availability of videocassette, etc) write Royal College of Art School of Film and Television, Kensington Gore, London SW7 5EU. (01) 584-5020. Or write Sam Scoggins at 22 Knowles House, Neville Gill Close, Wandsworth, London SW18, England. (01) 870-5268.

Scoggins' own description of the film follows:

"There are two main types of material intercut in the film:

- 1) A big close-up of Ballard's face. He talks, looking straight at the camera.
- 2) Ballard's alter ego wearing a ragged flying suit wanders through "Ballardian" landscapes and in each makes a portrait of Ballard from things around him.

The landscapes are:

- a) The Jungle (past). He makes a portrait from feathers.
- b) Motorway/Scrapyard (present). He makes a portrait from crashed cars.
- c) The Beach (future). He draws a huge spiral in the sand.

These sections were shot in black and white, then printed each in a different monochrome, i.e. a) green, b) red, c) blue.

There are other bits of material in the film:

- i) Tracking shots through Shepperton ending up on Ballard's house with him standing outside.
- ii) The same repeated but in negative color while Ballard talks about *The Unlimited Dream Company* in voice-over.
- iii) Shots from different sequences of the film cut to the "Captain Kirby" quote.
- iv) Single framed images from TV while Ballard talks about the latent and manifest content of TV.
- v) A 6 min. duration very slow zoom in from a head and shoulders shot of Ballard to a very large close-up of his right eyeball. Off camera a voice asks the 90 questions from the *Eyckman Personality Quotient*, each of which Ballard answers Yes or No.
- vi) The last sequence of the film is a zoom out from some clouds to a shot of the whole earth, which match dissolves into Ballard's eye as the zoom out continues until we see the whole of Ballard's head.

On one level I hope the film is a fairly straightforward introduction to Ballard and his work, but on another level the film (at least for me) is concerned with two things:

- 1) How can you make an adequate picture of someone;
- 2) The way in which the imagination/film transforms "reality."

FILM TREATMENT

In 1969 J. G. Ballard wrote a treatment for a Hammer film, *When Dinosaurs Ruled The Earth*. "Most of Ballard's material was subsequently lost in Val Guest's clumsy screenplay, but enough of it remained to make [the film] a far less predictable and boring film than the others in the series. Ballard had conceived an account of early life on this planet which would illustrate Horbiger's theories about violent cosmic upheaval and the creation of the moon..."—David Pirie, *A Heritage of Horror: The English Gothic Cinema 1946-1972, 1974*

CITY LIGHTS

Attempts to stock every J. G. Ballard book in print; interesting free booklist available. Large selection of Dada & Surrealism books, all of William S. Burroughs' books, beat books, etc. Send SASE (overseas, send 2 IRCs) to Mail Order Catalog, City Lights, 261 Columbus Ave, San Francisco, CA 94133. (415) 362-8193.

FORBIDDEN PLANET

Forbidden Planet source for every J. G. Ballard book in print plus *Interzone*, *Foundation*, etc. Inquire about recently published *Ballardiana*, including magazines w/interviews, etc. Send want list plus SASE to: Forbidden Planet, 821 Broadway at 12th St, NYC 10003. (212) 473-1576. England address is: 23 Denmark St, London WC2, England. (01) 836-4179. Second store located at 51 St. Giles High St, London WC2, England.

SOME BOOKS OF INTEREST

THE IMAGINATION ON TRIAL: This book includes an essential J. G. Ballard interview by Alan Burns, the editor (with Charles Sugnet). Published by Allison & Busby in the U.K. and distributed by Schocken Books in the U.S.A. Order from Forbidden Planet, or City Lights (see elsewhere for addresses). Price £4, or \$8 US, plus postage.

DREAMMAKERS, VOL. 1: Charles Platt's wide-ranging book of interviews with science fiction writers is specifically recommended for the inclusion of J. G. Ballard; however, many other interviews may be of interest. Send \$3.50 to Berkley Book Mailing Service, P.O. Box 690, Rockville Centre, NY 11570, or order from *Forbidden Planet*.

THE ENTROPY EXHIBITION: "The first critical assessment of the literary movement known as 'New Wave' science fiction... Detailed attention is given to each of the three principal contributors to *New Worlds*—Aldiss, Ballard, and Moorcock... 'I cannot believe that there is any better criticism of SF in print at the moment'—John Sutherland." Published by Routledge & Kegan Paul. Hardback: \$25 from *Forbidden Planet*.

BALLARD'S LATEST NOVEL

1984: J. G. Ballard's longest novel to date, *Empire of the Sun*, will be published in hardback by Victor Gollancz (Simon & Schuster in the US) and in paperback by Granada. David Pringle summarized it in his *JGB News* as "a boy's eye view of old Shanghai... very good, powerfully described and intensely felt."

MISCELLANEOUS

Hard Copy #3 (from Bernard Sigaud, 81 bis Ave Max Dormoy, 63000 Clermont-Fd., France) contains an JGB interview by Hermione Lee, plus other articles of interest. *Science Fiction* #1 contains the original appearance in French of JGB's "What I Believe," available from Daniel Riche, 82 rue Compans, Paris 75019 France. A 1984 *Paris Review* contains a JGB interview by Thomas Frick...

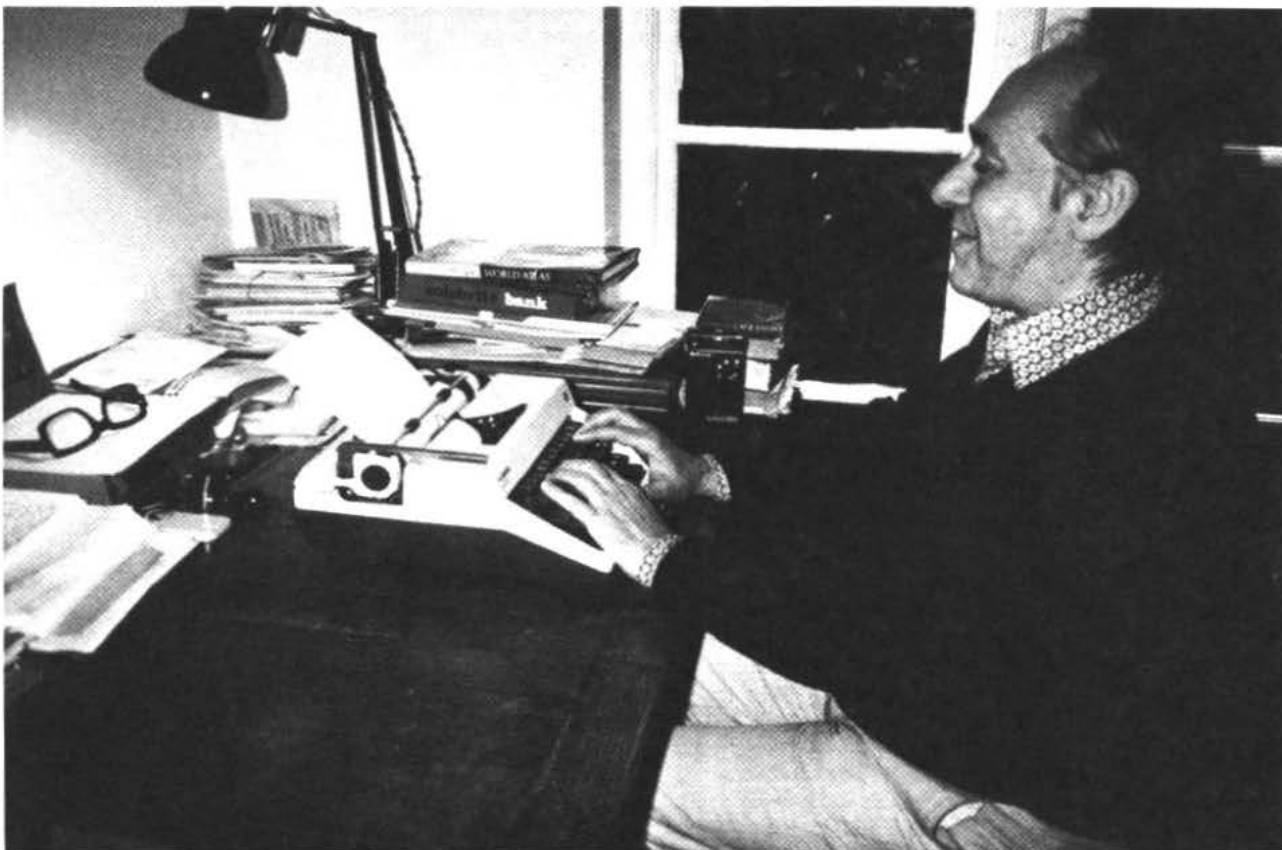
SOME BOOKS FROM BALLARD'S LIBRARY

*(Note: no endorsement is implied;
these books were merely some of the
titles on J. G. Ballard's shelves)*

Crash Injuries/Jacob Kulowski (available
from Charles C Thomas, 2600 First St,
Springfield, IL 62717 (217-789-8980)
for \$115 postpaid)
The Warren Commission Report
Limbo/Bernard Wolfe
Marinetti: Selected Writings
Programs of the Brain/John Z Young
The Extraordinary Worlds of Edward James
History of Surrealist Painting/
Marcel Jean
Surrealism/Patrick Waldberg
Opium/Jean Cocteau
La Batarde/Violette Le Duc
Céline: A Biography/Patrick McCarthy
Complete Works of William Shakespeare
Brothers of the Head/Brian Aldiss
The Icarus Complex
Stanley Spencer RA: The Catalogue
of the Royal Academy's Major

Autumn Exhibition 1980
Woman as Sex Object/ed Thomas Hess
& Linda Nochlin
The Emerging Japanese Superstate
/Herman Kahn
Cults of Unreason
The Jonah Kit/Ian Watson
The Soft Machine/W S Burroughs
The Ticket That Exploded/W S Burroughs
Urban Structuring/Smithson
Broads/I & E Cameron
The Colour of Blood/MacBeth
The Doomsday Book/George MacBeth
The Big Time/Fritz Leiber
The Hospital Ship/Martin Bax
Max Ernst (several books)
Warhol/Crone
Dali (several books)
Claes Oldenburg's Store Days
Paul Delvaux
Forever Picasso
Psychiatry and Art, vol. 3
Munch: The Scream
Fuseli: The Nightmare
/Nicholas Powell
Diary of a Genius/Salvador Dali
The Case of Salvador Dali
Dada, Surrealism & Their
Heritage/William Rubin
Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp
Vincent van Gogh
Dada et surréalisme

Allen Jones Figures
Francis Bacon
Pop Art (several books)
Pop Art Redefined
Le Corbusier
Dada/Hans Richter
René Magritte (several books)
Dreamers of Decadence/Philippe Jullian
Gaudi
Visual Encyclopedia of Science Fiction
Articulate Mammal: An Introduction
to Psycholinguistics/Jean Aitchison
White Women/Helmut Newton
Faces of the Future: The Lessons
of Science Fiction/Brian Ash
Diary of the Discovery Expedition to
the Antarctic Regions, 1901-1904
/Edward Wilson
Last Exit to Brooklyn/Hubert E Selby Jr
Picasso's Picassos
The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction
Hebdomeros/Giorgio de Chirico
Mountbatten/Richard Hough
The Dream of Icarus
Fireworks/Angela Carter
Hitchcock by Truffaut
The Machineries of Joy/Ray Bradbury
David Hockney
Dream Makers/ed Charles Platt
Philips' World Atlas
Assorted magazines, journals, etc.
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□ **Einstürzende Neubauten, Survival Research Laboratories** (Mark Pauline, Matt Heckert, Eric Werner plus Monte Cazazza). **NON** and **Rhythm & Noise**: this videotape presents the [literally] cutting edge of industrial/primitive entertainment/provocation. Includes the March 6, 1984 San Francisco concert featuring the above four (a Re/Search event), an **E.N.** concert in Los Angeles, as well as additional footage with **E.N.** and **SRL** shot in the Mojave desert. **Einstürzende Neubauten's** use of power tools to overcome musical inhibitions is well-documented here, as is the **SRL** meat-and-machine assault on an audience trapped in close quarters; **NON** more sedately allows cement cinder blocks to be smashed by a sledge hammer on his unprotected chest, while **R&N** present a surprise video preview. \$29.95 plus \$3 shipping (airmail overseas add \$10).

□ **WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS: Philosophy.** Cutting to the heart of what matters in life—with survival, psychic and physical, as the stakes—W. S. Burroughs in this series of interviews demonstrates an amazing, far-ranging yet simple clarity of insight and inspiration into the basic philosophical questions: who are we, where did we come from, and where are we going. Ironic and genuinely humorous, Mr. Burroughs demonstrates a creative mind inventing in real time hypotheses and theories at once laconic yet profound. Essential. (At least 2 color videocassettes will be made available; Summer 1984; write for price)

□ **#4/5—WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS, BRION GYSIN, AND THROBBING GRISTLE.** Strikingly designed, with scarce photographs, bibliographies, discographies, chronologies, etc. Interviews, excerpts from forthcoming books, essays—this limited edition is loaded with ideas, provocation and is already an underground classic. 8 1/2 x 11" perfectbound book. \$9 postpaid, \$15 airmail overseas.

□ **#6/7—THE INDUSTRIAL CULTURE HANDBOOK.** Essential library reference guide to the deviant group of performance artists and musicians of the *Industrial Culture*: Throbbing Gristle, Cabaret Voltaire, SPK, Non, Monte Cazazza, Johanna Went, Mark Pauline, Sordide Sentimental, R&N, and Z'ev. Some topics discussed in the interviews: new brain research, forbidden medical texts & films, creative crime & interesting criminals, modern warfare & weaponry, neglected gore films & their directors, psychotic lyrics in past pop songs, art brut, etc. With discographies, chronologies, bibliographies; lists of selected books, films, records, etc. Over 120 photos. 8 1/2 x 11" perfectbound, 136 pgs. \$9 postpaid (\$15 air overseas)

□ **Re/Search #8/9—J.G. BALLARD.** A comprehensive special on this most relevant and contemporary science fiction writer of the decade. W.S. Burroughs described Ballard's novel *Love & Napalm: Export U.S.A.* (1972) as "profound and disquieting. The nonsexual roots of sexuality are explored with a surgeon's precision... The magnification of image to the point where it becomes unrecognizable is a key note of *Love and Napalm*. This book stirs sexual depths untouched by the hardest-core illustrated porn." Includes long interviews on many topics; selected key writings and rare short stories; a biography; bibliography; photos; and illustrations and photographs. \$11 postpaid (\$15 air overseas).

□ **MENACING MACHINE MAYHEM: MARK PAULINE.** A creative documentary probing the motives, methods and manias of industrial performance artist, Mark Pauline and his Survival Research Laboratories, whose anarchist inventions fuse machines, corpses, explosives and aviation-tech into new prototypes and archetypes appropriate for a war universe. Entertaining!

B/W a mini-documentary of WILLIAM BURROUGHS in San Francisco—at his 70th birthday party hosted by Survival Research Laboratories, a book-signing, and a reading of new work spoken at the premiere of Howard Brookner's biographical feature film, *Burroughs*. Color, 60 minutes. Available Summer 1984; write for price



RE/SEARCH: Deep into the heart of the Control Process. Preoccupation: Creativity and Survival, past, present & future. These are the early tabloid issues, 18x11", full of photos and innovative graphics.

□ **#1**—J.G. Ballard, Cabaret Voltaire, Julio Cortazar, Octavio Paz, Sun Ra, The Slits, Robert K. Brown (Editor, *Soldier of Fortune*), Non, Conspiracy Theory Guide, Punk Prostitutes, and more. **RARE \$10**

□ **#2**—DNA, James Blood Ulmer, Zev, Aboriginal Music, West African Music Guide, Surveillance Technology, Monte Cazazza on Poisons, Diane Di Prima, Seda, German Electronic Music Chart, Isabelle Eberhardt, and more. **\$3.50**

□ **#3**—Fela, New Brain Research, The Rattlesnake Man, Sordide Sentimental, New Guinea, Kathy Acker, Sado-Masochism (Interviews), Joe Dante, Johanna Went, Surgical Penis Klinik, Flipper, Physical Modification of Women, and more. **RARE \$10**

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 - #5—Sex Pistols, Nico, Crisis, Screamers, Suicide, Crime, Talking Heads, Anarchy, Surrealism & New Wave. Not available.
 - #6—Throbbing Gristle, Clash, Nico, Talking Heads, Pere Ubu, Nuns, UXA, Negative Trend, Mutants, Sleepers, Buzzcocks. \$3.50
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 - #8—Mutants, Dils, Cramps, Devo, Siouxsie, Chrome, Pere Ubu, Judy Nylon & Patti Palladin, Flesheaters, Offs, Weirdos, etc. \$3.50
 - #9—Dead Kennedys, Rockabilly Rebels, X, Winston Tong, David Lynch (Eraserhead), Television, Pere Ubu, DOA, etc. \$5
 - #10—J.G. Ballard, William S. Burroughs, The Feederz, Plugz, X, Russ Meyer, Steve Jones, Mad Dog, Target, and more. Not available.
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I believe in my own obsessions, in the beauty of the car crash, in the peace of the submerged forest, in the excitements of the deserted holiday beach, in the elegance of automobile graveyards, in the mystery of multi-storey car parks, in the poetry of abandoned hotels.

I believe in the forgotten runways of Wake Island, pointing towards the Pacifics of our imaginations.

I believe in the mysterious beauty of Margaret Thatcher, in the arch of her nostrils and the sheen on her lower lip; in the melancholy of wounded Argentine conscripts; in the haunted smiles of filling station personnel; in my dream of Margaret Thatcher caressed by that young Argentine soldier in a forgotten motel watched by a tubercular filling station attendant.

I believe in the beauty of all women, in the treachery of their imaginations, so close to my heart; in the junction of their disenchanting bodies with the enchanted chromium rails of supermarket counters; in their warm tolerance of my own perversions.

I believe in the death of tomorrow, in the exhaustion of time, in our search for a new time within the smiles of auto-route waitresses and the tired eyes of air-traffic controllers at out-of-season airports.

I believe in the genital organs of great men and women, in the body postures of Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and Princess Di, in the sweet odours emanating from their lips as they regard the cameras of the entire world.

I believe in madness, in the truth of the inexplicable, in the common sense of stones, in the lunacy of flowers, in the disease stored up for the human race by the Apollo astronauts.

I believe in nothing.

I believe in Max Ernst, Delvaux, Dali, Titian, Goya, Leonardo, Vermeer, Chirico, Magritte, Redon, Durer, Tanguy, the Facteur Cheval, the Watts Towers, Bocklin, Francis Bacon, and all the invisible artists within the psychiatric institutions of the planet.

I believe in the impossibility of existence, in the humour of mountains, in the absurdity of electromagnetism, in the farce of geometry, in the cruelty of arithmetic, in the murderous intent of logic.

I believe in adolescent women, in their corruption by their own leg stances, in the purity of their dishevelled bodies, in the traces of their pudenda left in the bathrooms of shabby motels.

I believe in flight, in the beauty of the wing, and in the beauty of everything that has ever flown, in the stone thrown by a small child that carries with it the wisdom of statesmen and midwives.

I believe in the gentleness of the surgeon's knife, in the limitless geometry of the cinema screen, in the hidden universe within supermarkets, in the loneliness of the sun, in the garrulousness of planets, in the repetitiveness of ourselves, in the inexistence of the universe and the boredom of the atom.

I believe in the light cast by video-recorders in department store windows, in the messianic insights of the radiator grilles of showroom automobiles, in the elegance of the oil stains on the engine nacelles of 747s parked on airport tarmacs.

I believe in the non-existence of the past, in the death of the future, and the infinite possibilities of the present.

I believe in the derangement of the senses: in Rimbaud, William Burroughs, Huysmans, Genet, Celine, Swift, Defoe, Carroll, Coleridge, Kafka.

I believe in the designers of the Pyramids, the Empire State Building, the Berlin Fuhrerbunker, the Wake Island runways.

I believe in the body odours of Princess Di.

I believe in the next five minutes.

I believe in the history of my feet.

I believe in migraines, the boredom of afternoons, the fear of calendars, the treachery of clocks.

I believe in anxiety, psychosis and despair.

I believe in the perversions, in the infatuations with trees, princesses, prime ministers, derelict filling stations (more beautiful than the Taj Mahal), clouds and birds.

I believe in the death of the emotions and the triumph of the imagination.

I believe in Tokyo, Benidorm, La Grande Motte, Wake Island, Eniwetok, Dealey Plaza.

I believe in alcoholism, venereal disease, fever and exhaustion.

I believe in pain.

I believe in despair.

I believe in all children.

I believe in maps, diagrams, codes, chess-games, puzzles, airline timetables, airport indicator signs.

I believe all excuses.

I believe all reasons.

I believe all hallucinations.

I believe all anger.

I believe all mythologies, memories, lies, fantasies, evasions.

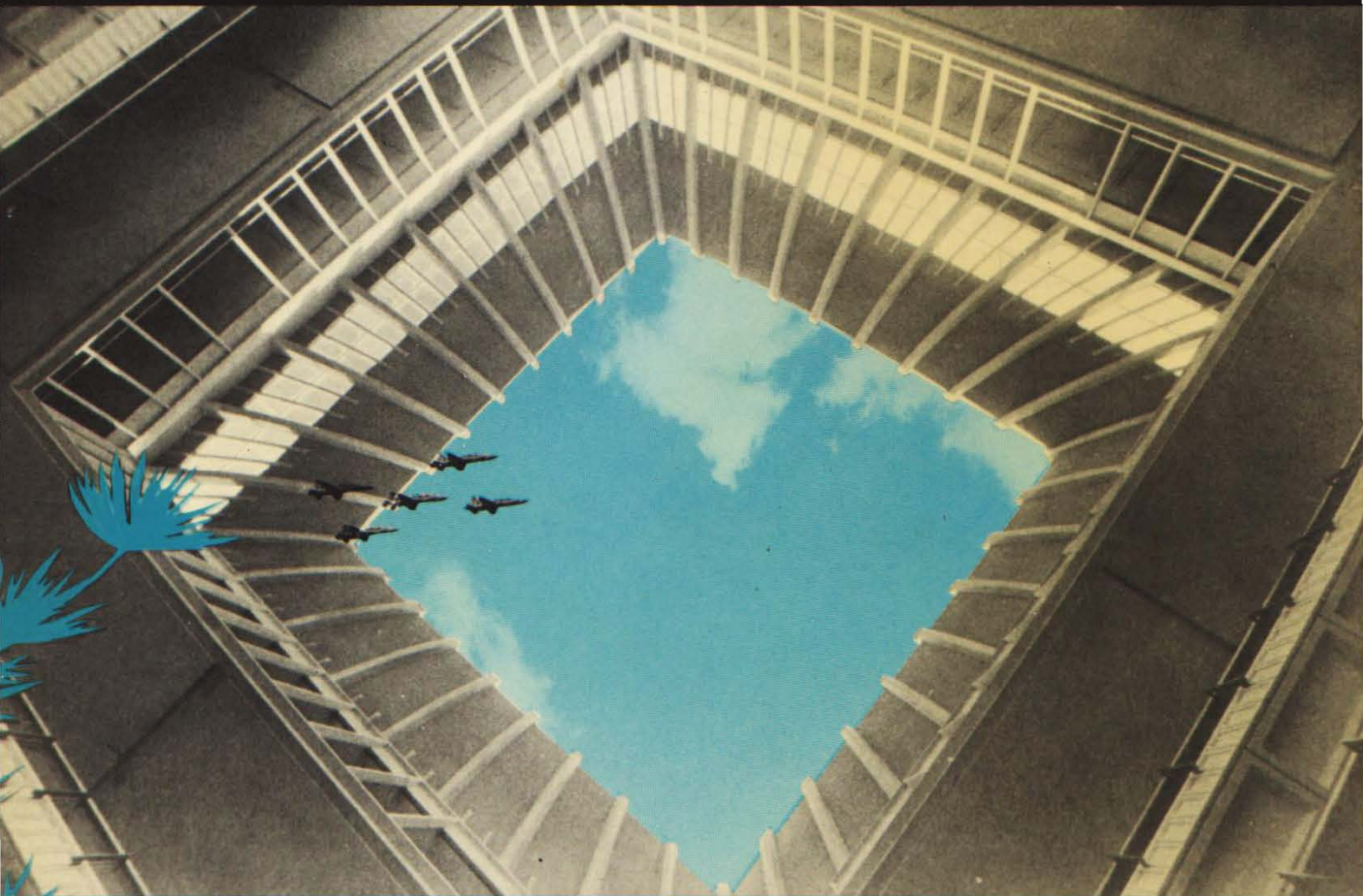
I believe in the mystery and melancholy of a hand, in the kindness of trees, in the wisdom of light.

—J. G. Ballard

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