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WELCOME TO V. VALE'S RE/SEARCH NEWSLETTER #48, May 2006. HERE'S THE NEWS FROM SAN FRANCISCO... ALL READERS ARE INVITED TO SEND CONTRIBUTIONS AND FEEDBACK!

### CONTENTS:

1. Sat, May 13, 2006, 6:30pm Cable Channel 29 San Francisco. CounterCulture Hour featuring Dan Witz (NYC "Street Artist"), filmmaker Christopher Coppola, and the 4-1-06 St Stupid's Day Parade and Mini-Service
2. Fri, May 12, 6PM: Benefit for West Memphis Three w/Jello Biafra, Henry Rollins, Jonathan Richman, Penelope Houston, Matt Gonzalez, etc.
3. Beyond Baroque's hosting of Punk '77/70s Punk Revolution Event by RE/Search...
4. What We've Been Reading, Listening To, etc...
5. Communications from Our Internet Correspondents...
6. Quotations
7. Review of *J.G. Ballard Conversations* by John F. Barber, U.Texas, Dallas

**First, the commercial: Punk '77 is here. Also, if you want to give a rare gift to someone special, we recommend our limited edition \*\*AUTOGRAPHED\*\* flexibind *J.G. Ballard Quotes* book! (only 250 made)...not in stores. Order from <http://www.researchpubs.com> Of course, you can also order the new *J.G. Ballard Conversations*. Our other rare autographed RE/Search books include *J.G. Ballard's Atrocity Exhibition*, and *Daniel P. Mannix's Freaks*. *Classic Search & Destroy* #1-11 tabloids (complete sets) only \$50, saved since 1977!**

**Secondly, our classic William S. Burroughs T-shirt ("We Intend to Destroy All Dogmatic Verbal Systems" - photo by Ruby Ray) is now available in M-L-XL sizes -- another great gift... It's not available in stores; impossible to find elsewhere.**

1. Sat, May 13, 2006, 6:30pm Cable Channel 29 San Francisco. CounterCulture Hour featuring Dan Witz (NYC "Street Artist"), filmmaker Christopher Coppola, and the 4-1-06 St Stupid's Day Parade and Mini-Service in North Beach, San Francisco. [Note: Counterculture Hour airs 2nd Saturday of each month at 6:30pm; set your DVD recorders / VCR's!]

Street Artist **DAN WITZ**, referred to us by Silke Tudor (thanks, Silke!) tells why and how he does his quasi-legal "Street Art" in New York City. In the Punk Rock scene from the late '70s on, Dan was a member of Glenn Branca's touring group to Europe and picked up painting skills visiting Europe's great museums and copying "masterpieces." Since then he's regularly "improved" the urban landscape of New York City with his classic-looking stickers, strategically placed at selected Manhattan locales.

Next, filmmaker **Christopher Coppola** unveils his plan to reach "the masses" with inspirational, independent art.

Third, **Marian Wallace's** "cinema verite" documentary of the (28th annual) **April 1, 2006 St. Stupid's Day Parade/Mini-Service** is colorful and inspiring. Anybody can have a parade (if they apply for the necessary permits). About 200 of San Francisco's finest Outsider Artists participated in this somewhat prankish march through North Beach, which ended at the North Beach Playground. A band, the **Stupids**, played a fantastic mix of retro "classics," and Ed Holmes gave a stirring "sermon" informing all present that they were already a member of the First Church of the Last Laugh. Why? Because all humanity is stupid! See [www.saintstupid.com](http://www.saintstupid.com) for more details. We recommend you watch this "variety show" episode of The CounterCulture Hour, hosted by **V. Vale**, and produced by **Marian Wallace**.

2. **Fri, May 12, 2006. BENEFIT FOR THE WEST MEMPHIS THREE.** *A Skeleton Key Production:* 111 Minna Gallery, 111 Minna St, San Francisco, CA. Gallery showing starts at 12:00pm. Reception at 6:00pm. Featuring pieces by Damien Echols as well as over thirty other artists to raise funds for his defense.

This one-night-only event includes music, speaking, and poetry readings by Punk legends **Henry Rollins** and **Jello Biafra**, veteran rocker **Jonathan Richman**, **Jacob Pitts** of *Strangers With Candy*, former San Francisco Supervisor **Matt Gonzalez**, **Penelope Houston** (of the Avengers), and former Misfits singer **Michale Graves**. **Local DJs** Justin McNeal and Marco Vega will spin tunes between sets. (What a line-up!)

The gallery showing opens at 12:00 PM, and includes works by artists of both local and international fame. Pieces by **Bob Gruen**, **Winston Smith**, **Shepard Fairey**, **Mick Rock**, **Jayne County** and **Jonathan Richman** are just a few of the exhibit's surprises.

The reception begins at 6:00 PM, the art auction closes at 10:00 PM. A minimum donation of \$15 will be required for the reception. Advanced tickets are available at <<http://www.ticketweb.com/>>TicketWeb. For more information visit <<http://www.111minnagallery.com/>>111minnagallery.com or call 415.974.1719.

**Who is this benefit for?** "Shortly after three eight-year-old boys were found mutilated and murdered in West Memphis, Arkansas, local newspapers stated the killers had been caught. The police assured the public that the three teenagers in custody were definitely responsible for these horrible crimes. Evidence? The same police officers coerced an error-filled confession from Jessie Misskelley Jr., who is mentally handicapped. They subjected him to 12 hours of questioning without counsel or parental consent, audio-taping only two fragments totaling 46 minutes. Jessie recanted it that evening, but it was too late. Misskelley, Jason Baldwin and Damien Echols were all arrested on June 3, 1993, and convicted of murder in early 1994. Although there was no

physical evidence, murder weapon, motive, or connection to the victims, the prosecution pathetically resorted to presenting black hair and clothing, heavy metal T-shirts, and Stephen King novels as proof that the boys were sacrificed in a satanic cult ritual. Unfathomably, Echols was sentenced to death, Baldwin received life without parole, and Misskelley got life plus 40. For over 12 years, The West Memphis Three have been imprisoned for crimes they didn't commit. Echols waits in solitary confinement for the lethal injection our tax dollars will pay for. They were all condemned by their poverty, incompetent defense, [the prosecution's] panic about "Satanism," and a rush to judgment. (See <http://www.wm3.org> for more info.)

3. **Beyond Baroque** in Venice, California recently hosted a party celebrating *Punk '77* and the **'70s Punk Revolution**, featuring rare 70s Punk films, a photograph show of prints by James Stark, an interview with **James Stark**, and a panel featuring **Graeme Revell** (SPK founder; soundtrack composer) and **Jerry Casale** (DEVO founder; video director), hosted by V. Vale. RE/Search hopes to air on "The CounterCulture Hour" an edited version of the video footage shot by Gary Chong & pals, David Coons and Carlye Archibeque (our hosts during our stay in L.A.) and Marian Wallace. Suffice to say that the panel/Q&A was "lively" -- in no small part due to our friend Kent Beyda's 16-year-old daughter and her friend, **Xeni Jardin** and **Coop** showed up -- Coop gave a nice testimony to Punk's lasting inspiration to his creativity, and as **Jerry Casale** wrote in an email, "That was a night much more interesting than I could have bargained for!!" Punk luminaries such as **Cliff Roman** (WEIRDOS founder), **Will D'Amato** (SLASH magazine writer) and punk photographer **Jenny Lens** appeared. Afterwards, a large group (including Cousin Gail, **Graeme Revell** and **Frank Discussion**, founder of the Feederz, who will be featured in our next **PRANKS 2** book project) retired to "La Cabana" to discuss the state of Bush-whacked Amerikkka and enjoy reasonably-priced Mexican food. We left at 3:30 AM...

However, before we left, we had a real sonic "treat": listening to five tracks of Jerry Casale's forthcoming new album, recorded under the name of "Jihad Jerry." The stereo system in Jerry's "un-SUV" mini-Cooper is amazing; it felt like we were in the "middle" of the recording! The tracks were witty, political, complex, thunderingly sonorous, and somehow weirdly addictive all at the same time, as any true Devo fan might expect. The drumming seemed especially powerful and the female vocals were like siren calls...Watch for this!

*Punk '77* is a candid, shocking and mind-altering confessional that, while true to the Punk spirit, carves its own style of vandalism across the veneer of consumer culture. PUNK '77 is told in a mosaic of anecdotes, rants, gossip, and self-aggrandizement by the prototypical punks, scenesters, musicians and artists who actually lived it. From filth and fury to gritty glam, the outrageous theatrics and devious antics are artfully captured in the nearly 200 photographs of both Punk luminaries and unsung heroes alike. "--*Leslie Hodgkins*. We've added a 24-page appendix of FORTY more photos, which includes a recent lengthy interview with photographer **James Stark**. RE/Search books are hard to find--please order your copy direct from: <http://www.researchpubs.com>

4. **What We've Been Reading, Listening To, etc...**

() **Jacques Lacarriere's THE GNOSTICS**. You have to be very careful who you associate with, because every person coming into your life can influence you. Ran into someone not seen since Summer '05 and "they" mentioned they were reading this book, which was already in the RE/Search library, thanks to a recommendation by Philip Lamantia many years earlier. Still, how often do you want to read a "religion" book? Prompted by the chance encounter, this book was pulled off the shelf and immediately the quotation came to mind, badly paraphrased: **"Those who claim they have no theory [on a given topic] are probably in the grip of an earlier theory."** If you (like me) were raised Fundamentalist and are reading this newsletter, you probably have rejected the whole kit-and-caboodle of that Christian upbringing, and possibly despise religion in general, looking forward to the day when there will be no more religions at all, anywhere. Hey, religions have been known to spawn terrorism, holy wars, jihads, nuclear bombings, invasions and Crusades...Plus a huge load of guilt, fear, hypocrisy and Pollyanna-ish escapism...

Nevertheless, as the introduction states, "Gnosticism" (meaning "knowledge, not faith or belief") advocates "a mutant thought" [that our world is a mistake, a per-version.] "This rejection of all systems includes a refusal to compromise with false institutions." Gnostics "see the whole of material creation as the product of a god who is the enemy of man" [!].

The book is full of "interesting" quotations, such as "The death of a bee, assassinated by his queen, is charged with as much meaning as the massacres of Dachau." The first chapter titled "The Perforated Veil" begins with "What emotions does the sight of the sky inspire in us, if not praise, enthusiasm, and admiration? It is vast, infinite, immutable, omnipresent...what is this matter which is by turns full and empty, dense and tenuous, luminous and dark, of which our sky is made? ... [But what of] "the dark portion of the sky--the vastness, the omnipresence, the heavy opacity of that blackness? It hangs over us like a veil, a wall of shadow encircling the earth...**A gigantic black lid seals in our universe and encompasses us with its opacity.**" After reading this first chapter, will the "sky" ever be the same again?

**Chapter 2 begins with "Injustice governs the universe."** ... "All power--whatever kind it might be--is a source of alienation." ... "Our world, the circle of dark fire, is the domain of evil ... Our world exudes evil from every pore, and our thinking being is tied to evil as ineluctably as our physical being is tied to the carbon in our body-cells ... [What] perverse demiurge dared to dream up such a cruel world in all its minute detail? ... How could a supreme God have conceived the incredible sequences, mechanisms, massacres, and annihilations that constitute the very practice of life itself? What warped mind could have invented the procreative act of the **praying mantis, in which the female decapitates and then devours the male?** What immeasurably sadistic being could have thought up the paralyzing sting of the ammophilous wasp, which it sticks into the flesh of caterpillars, that they may be devoured alive by the larvae of the winged insect? ... What paranoiac demiurge [i.e., "God"] had the idea of creating **bonellia, those marine worms whose male is only one-hundredth part the size of the female and lives in the esophagus of his partner--**if one can call the monster on whom he is an unwitting parasite a 'partner'?"

[Humans] are "totally alienated creatures, right down to their very encephalic cells, and condemned to lifelong enslavement, from which only a full awareness of man's inert and slumbering condition could save them ... all institutions, laws, religions, churches and powers are nothing but a sham and a trap, the perpetuation of an age-old deception."

Chapter 8, "The Ash and the Stars," contains graphic speculations as to some group sexual practices of certain Gnostic entities. This chapter might shock a prudish reader, but intrigue others...

If you've "enjoyed" the above, I highly recommend you find this book which has been republished by **City Lights**. (

<http://www.citylights.com> ) You will definitely be exposed to a host of provocative ideas...

() **Recently received: The Prefects Live in 1978 at the Festival Suite, Birmingham Co-Op.** We are by nature sympathetic to almost all 70s Punk cultural productions. To quote from the PR sheet accompanying the CD: "I will always remember that show; it's as Punk Rock as Nirvana at New York's Roseland ballroom in July 1993, when Kurt Cobain refused to play "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and, to the roars of a hostile crowd, brought on a cello player and played Leadbelly songs." ... "The Prefects occupy a very special place in the rich heritage of UK punk music. Guesting on the incendiary "White Riot" tour of 1977 with the Clash and the Subway Sect, the band were famously called "amateur wankers" by Clash manager Bernie Rhodes. Their music was a melange of Krautrock, Beefheart, Glam and the Pistols. All the things that PIL were to be later--the Prefects were there first--ground-breaking and unconsciously rewriting the rules. A great live document--it's like being back there... It captures the flavor of the time--that period when young musicians and writers could go direct to their audience, experiment in public and turn everyday life into art--but it sounds very NOW." --**Jon Savage.**

Caroline True Records is bringing this hard-to-find recording to you, available from [caroline@carolinetruerecords.co.uk](mailto:caroline@carolinetruerecords.co.uk), or call 011-44-07947-389116 to order.

() **Necrophilia Variations by Supervert;** for a copy email: [info@supervert.com](mailto:info@supervert.com) This beautifully-designed black-minimalist paperback collection of chapters by Supervert 32C Inc. is, upon a second and much more thorough reading, now definitely recommended by us. How could we have missed the abundance of Black Humor in this imaginative outpouring of pure bile? We laughed dozens of times, at least. A book to fend off the darkest, dourest, most insomniac Night Thoughts...

() **Recently received: Drop Black Sky's new EP-CD "Ring Pass Not."** "Drop Black Sky takes music to the next level of auditory impact." "Based in Oakland, Drop Black Sky has been performing in San Francisco clubs since 2003. Adria Amenti (vocals, keyboard, erhu, guitar, harp), Scott Weiser (guitar, bass), Steven Devaney (guitar, bass) interweave deeply textured harmonies and rhythms with powerful and evocative vocals. The band's sound lies somewhere within the realm of Dead Can Dance, Cocteau Twins, and This Mortal Coil, using effects-laden guitars, heavy bass, self-crafted samples, field recordings, digital programming, piano, and er hu (Chinese violin)." Go to [www.dropblacksky.com](http://www.dropblacksky.com) to order.

## 5. Communications from Our Internet Correspondents...

() This was sent to Our Principal Internet Correspondent:

A fellow movie columnist (reputable, "name" guy, works for big-city newspaper) wasn't permitted to post this, so he sent it to me: "Just about every movie now gets a 'director's cut' DVD, but I must admit I still almost sprang out of my seat when I received a package containing **Bambi: The Director's Cut**. What really got me was the sticker: 'Contains never-before-seen footage of the death of Bambi's mother.' Holy moley! The original Walt Disney film never showed this traumatic event (it was signaled by the sound of a gunshot) and yet this sequence is credited with sending generations of children into therapy. I was neither here nor there when I saw it as a kid, but when I re-saw the film as an adult in a crowded theater in Boston, I could hear high-pitched voices in the audience whimpering, 'Where's Bambi's mommy?', 'What happened?', 'Did Bambi's mother die?' and 'Will you ever die, Mommy?'. And yet it turns out that the first cut of Bambi included an entire extra minute involving the death of Bambi's mom, and the reaction to it wasn't conclusively negative.

There were some who thought -- and some modern-day psychiatrists on the featurette agree -- that the scene was quite moving and poetic. As Dr. Robert Bleb of the University of Pennsylvania states: 'Children who see this [version] now are likely to become less troubled than audiences of the past because what they see is so much less horrific than what those other children had only to imagine.' I've seen it and I think he's right.

Here's how it goes: As in the released version, Bambi and his mom are happily frolicking to celebrate the new spring when the mom senses the approach of Man and tells Bambi to run. The two of them sprint across a field, and as the camera stays on Bambi, a shot rings out. But this time there's a quick cut back to Bambi's mother, whose head jerks back as her body hits the ground, sending up a thin cloud of snow dust. (A faint trickle of blood is visible behind her.) She lies on the snow, her breath vaporizing in the air, and she whispers with her last breath, 'Bambi.' After the vapor of the mother's last words dissipates and her eyes become shrouded with what look like white drapes, her deer spirit levitates out of her body with newly-sprouted wings slowly flapping her heavenward while Edward H. Plumb's lush score swells to a crescendo. A trio of sweetly chirping bluebirds escorts her up to a thick layer of white puffy clouds, which the mom's deer spirit passes through alone. On the other side, she is greeted by a large gathering of similar deer spirits, including one who maternally licks her on the the head and says in a soft voice, 'Welcome home.' (Gulp...talk about the cycle of life.) Then the action returns to Bambi alone in the forest as seen in the original release, with him calling for his mommy until he is greeted by his father, the Great Prince.

At the end, when Bambi has triumphantly taken his father's place, a superimposed picture of the mother appears in the upper-left corner of the frame, in the sky. She's smiling down at Bambi, though if you look closely her head appears to be mounted on a wall. That Walt Disney was a cruel ironist..."

() giants: <http://www.stevequayle.com/Giants/pics/giants.html>

() The Mother of Television: <http://www.gizmag.com/go/5575/>><http://www.gizmag.com/go/5575/>

() [http://www.improveverywhere.com/mission\\_view.php?mission\\_id=57](http://www.improveverywhere.com/mission_view.php?mission_id=57)

"Reality is that which when you stop believing in it... doesn't go away."- Philip K. Dick

() [http://www.zug.com/gab/index.cgi?func=view\\_thread&sort=active&head=1&thread\\_id=64475](http://www.zug.com/gab/index.cgi?func=view_thread&sort=active&head=1&thread_id=64475)

How a hacker changed an annoying flashing road sign into Performance Art.

() oh, brother!

<http://www.bmezine.com/news/people/A10101/addsub/>

() Silke Tudor's new *Village Voice* column (hooray!):

<<http://www.villagevoice.com/nyclife/0619,tudor,73147,15.html>

><http://www.villagevoice.com/nyclife/0619,tudor,73147,15.html>

() A reader responds to Henry Rollins telling Australian Homeland Security types to "F--k Off" (quoted in our March newsletter): "Bravo Mr. Rollins, I heartily endorse his opinion of, & suggestions for the 'government' of my country. -- Phil Grove (Sydney)"

() From our friend, Game Theory drummer **GIL RAY**, featured in **Incredibly Strange Music Vol One** (pink cover) announces his new recording: "Thanks for the mighty help Joe and Sue gave me, well...here ya go!" <http://www.myspace.com/atomorama>

() **MICHAEL MALLERY DIES** - a member of the '70s-'80s Punk Rock Scene, involved in publishing **ANOTHER ROOM** magazine - By Susan McDonough, STAFF WRITER - Inside Bay Area

[http://www.insidebayarea.com/oaklandtribune/localnews/ci\\_3726284](http://www.insidebayarea.com/oaklandtribune/localnews/ci_3726284)

OAKLAND - A man who died Saturday, April 15, 2006, in a house fire that also killed his pet cat was identified Tuesday as Michael Mallery, 57, a semi-retired graphic artist.

Mallery was found burned to death about 9:30 p.m. Saturday in the basement of his house in the 7900 block of Greenly Avenue. Officials believe the fire started accidentally in the basement, possibly because of a faulty furnace. Capt. Melinda Drayton said the flames burned through the floor of Mallery's bedroom where he might have been sleeping. Mallery fell through to the basement when the floor collapsed. A neighbor saw smoke coming from the house and tried to rouse Mallery but did not get a response, officials said.

Mallery had owned the house for about eight years and lived alone with Squint, a feral cat he adopted and tamed several years ago, friend Lucy Childs said. She said Mallery continued to work from home designing business cards, letterhead, logos and books. Mallery loved to cook for friends and was the kind of person who chatted up strangers in grocery stores. "He was a wonderful person and will be very much missed," she said. [end] People who knew Michael Mallery are urged to contact Jim Morton, who may be organizing a San Francisco Memorial Service for Michael. Email [jmorton@powis.com](mailto:jmorton@powis.com)

() Comedian **Stephen Colbert**'s keynote speech at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner last Saturday may represent a new stage in the crumbling of the Bush regime's image from within the dominant spectacle itself. The following link gives a Windows Media clip of the last 15 minutes -- <http://movies.crooksandliars.com/WH-Dinner-Colbert.wmv>. The entire talk (about 25 minutes) can be viewed in three parts here - [http://youtube.com/results?search=colbert%20bush%20cspan&sort=title\\_sort](http://youtube.com/results?search=colbert%20bush%20cspan&sort=title_sort).

It's a bizarre experience because most of the audience was decidedly not sympathetic. Not only was Bush himself sitting a few feet away at the same table along with various other political bigwigs, but the major portion of the audience was the very journalists who with rare exceptions have treated the Bush regime with kid gloves over the last five years, and who were satirized almost as scathingly as Bush himself. So some of Colbert's funniest remarks are received with a deafening silence, and the rare moments of laughter are brief and uneasy, the audience obviously not having expected such a scandal and wondering how they were supposed to take it.

Re the COLBERT "roasting" of George W. Bush:

() "I've seen this in its C-span entirety and it's incredible. Of course, mainstream media failed to disseminate it, giving it a passing mention--if at all. Colbert definitely did not blow this singular opportunity to let a truly vile man drink a little vinegar."--Jerry Casale.

() "Yeah, I saw that last week. Ha Ha!!"--Mark Pauline

() **Our former intern ANDREW LYMAN wrote us:** "Hey Vale and gang! Just giving you guys the heads up as to our brand new blog/website/zine thing for you to peruse at your leisure. It just launched yesterday. Lots more content to come, but it's already turned out to be a great idea. Check it out at: <http://youngteammanager.com>

"Been reading the [RE/Search **J.G. BALLARD QUOTES** and **CONVERSATIONS** books] recently. I've been writing a lot lately because of that. He just takes your mind down all these new paths of thought. Sends you reeling. I have to give you credit; nearly everything I've ever picked up by you guys has just inspired me immensely. Same thing happened when I started re-reading some of the old Search & Destroy articles. Just got so excited; had all these ideas pouring out faster than i knew what to do with them..." (thanks, Andy!)

() **Letter from a reader:** "The "what we've been (consuming)" section keeps getting better and better. **I love to hear someone be critical of something...** I wish that person the other month had called out the "new Throbbing Gristle" a little more, although it's commendable that TG did so to begin with, covered as they are with a glamor of righteous awe for their earlier efforts... I picked up that Simon Reynolds book from a B & N (sans monetary exchange) and thought it was carelessly written and about as informative as the back covers of the records mentioned. Certainly people get a better idea from reading **Search and Destroy**. Anyway, thanks - Kevin Von Mutant

() **Another letter from a reader:** "Recently I read Vale's opinion about Simon Reynolds'"Rip it Up" and was delighted to see that we share a similar opinion on that book. - Isabelle Corbisier, author of a forthcoming book on Tuxedo Moon

## 7. QUOTATIONS:

() "The most frightening thing in this world is *discovering the abnormal in that which is closest to us.*"--Kobo Abe, Inter Ice Age 4

() "It is by the force of **images** that, in the course of time, real revolutions are made."--Andre Breton [Perhaps add "songs" to that one]

() "When you buy, use your eyes and your mind, not your ears"--Czech proverb

() "Turn your face to the sun and the shadows fall behind you"--Maori proverb [if this weren't Maori, it would be too New-Agey]

() "Never write when you can talk. Never talk when you can nod. And never put anything in an email."--Eliot Spitzer, NYC prosecutor

() "We are surviving machines created by genes."--Karlo Pastella

() "Good and evil are intertwined like the strands of a rope"--Japanese proverb

- () "The two most important qualities for relating to others: empathy and curiosity."--unknown
- () "The most effective anarchist is the one who can destroy *time*, for without it society is at a loss to function."--Arman
- () Why do the French "pass" and the Americans "kill" time? ... The Swiss have a genius for both chronometry and banking. When 'time is money' became a truth that needed monitoring because since money put out on loan begets more money with time, and money borrowed costs more money with time, they had to perfect the measuring of time, hence the timepiece. Time is a human invention, created by memory ... The memory of a succession of events becomes what we experience subjectively as time. The power of modern society can be measured by the memory bank it has accumulated and stored for future use. This is represented today by the computer. To create, means to have access to the memory bank of the future. What writing did to the oral tradition and the printing press did to writing, the clock and most recently the electronic memory systems have done to time: robbed it of its innocence, while providing society with an instrument of leveling and control.--Jan Van Der Marck, *Arman*, 1984
- () Yet Again, we mention the blog from **Mike Ryan**, our assistant editor on the J.G. BALLARD QUOTES project:  
<http://mikeryan.typepad.com/> - also check out **Margaret Cho's** blog.

## 6. Review of J.G. Ballard Conversations by John F. Barber, U.Texas, Dallas

"J[ames]. G[Graham]. Ballard is a UK writer well known in the Science Fiction arena for his concentration on near-future decadence and disaster. Highly influenced by the Surrealist painters and psychology, Ballard's apocalyptic view of a new evolution, or devolution, for humanity is impressively portrayed by his moody painterly eye, especially with regard to technology and deserted and wrecked landscapes, both internal and external.

"Born in 1930 in Shanghai and as a child interned in a Japanese civilian POW camp during World War II, Ballard has amassed an impressive body of work since the 1950s when he first discovered Science Fiction. As might be expected, he has interesting opinions and visions about a variety of subjects and *J. G. Ballard Conversations* captures many of them.

"Ballard is interviewed by V. Vale, Graeme Revell, Mark Pauline, Lynne Fox and Maura Devereux. Ballard's archivist, David Pringle, is also interviewed. The result is conversational and compelling as Ballard, like a jazz musician, utilizes a variety of phrasing to illuminate the human condition.

"Ballard's conversational topics are numerous: the neo-conservatives and George W. Bush, the destruction of the World Trade Center, globalization, religion, the triumph of emotions over rationalism, corporate media, surveillance and control, the death of cinema, the colonizing of our existence, the end of the Age of Reason, the Internet, the ascendance of machine morality, writing book reviews, astrology, changing one's life, and his various books.

"As can be imagined, following the jazz music metaphor, Ballard's concert is compelling but requires careful listening. Here are some samples. "We seem to have subcontracted out the moral dimensions of our lives. We rely on someone else to make moral decisions for us. . . . The fewer moral decisions we make, the better" (73). Moving through life as down a well-signalized highway, with decisions made by others, we can, Ballard says, "get on with the business of unwrapping the latest piece of candy" (73).

"The price to be paid for this utopian lifestyle is boredom, says Ballard, and a great deal of current cultural attraction with "reality" in any form from television shows to driving an SUV is a desperate search for something that is not packaged and contrived, something that is authentic. "I'm frightened that the possibilities of a genuine dystopia may be much more appealing than any utopian project that people can come up with," Ballard concludes (74).

"Of the current conflict in Iraq, Ballard says there seems to be no connection between Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, "so what we have is a sort of substitute phenomenon. "Saddam is a substitute target" (87) and the invasion of Iraq is "a kind of compensation activity [meant to] assuage all that repressed anger and frustration stemming from not being able to find bin Laden. It's a sort of surrogate activity, a substitute activity" (104).

"Even as a substitute activity, the invasion of Iraq was sold to the people of the United States and United Kingdom as a moral imperative. Leaders of both nations felt compelled to attack for religious reasons, says Ballard, and this eliminated many of the avenues for productive dissent as there is little if any defense when emotionalism overcomes reason. Such use of enlightened reason does not bode well for the future where crimes will be committed "for the most enlightened reasons. When the crimes are committed by the most high-minded people for the best reasons, you have no defense, do you? That's the real threat. And that will come" (292).

"There are other conversational threads in *J. G. Ballard Conversations*, many more, as there are motifs and metaphors and musings, all circling around Ballard's main concern with a psychopathic future where sexuality, human relations, the economy, communications, and technology are all going haywire. As a forensic pathologist, Ballard's conversations are, depending on the audience, either off-putting or enlightening. But, like a jazz musician, Ballard speaks with conviction about the power of speculation and imagination to remake the world, to get as close as possible to reality, to foster truth, to hold back the night." [end]

**J.G. Ballard Conversations** is available from <http://www.researchpubs.com>

After goggling "V. Vale" I just discovered the **\*\*\*full-length\*\*** essay by **Graham Rae**, writing about **J.G. Ballard** and **V. Vale**; there's also an interview with the latter. This sounds a bit self-serving, but I recommend reading this!

<http://www.laurahird.com/newreview/jgballardinterview.html>

**Note: J.G. Ballard's forthcoming new novel [Kingdom Come]** is about how consumerism could potentially turn to fascism... It's listed on [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

**J.G. Ballard writes on May 6, 2006.** "...Glad to see the review of J.G. Ballard Conversations" [above]. "Meanwhile, I'm summoning every ounce of strength for the **Kingdom Come** PR drive -- (oh, for Proust's cork-lined study...) All Best, Jim."

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