

What I believe

by T.G. Ballard

I believe in the power of the imagination to remake the world, to release the truth within us, to hold back the night, to transcend death, to charm motorways, to ingratiate ourselves with birds, to enlist the confidences of madmen.

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 Fauteur 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, air-
line time-tables, 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 kind-
ness of trees, in the wisdom of light.



J.G. Ballard wrote the above—which could be described as a surrealist's catalogue, "part poem, part prayer"—in response to a request from editor Daniel Riche for a contribution to a series entitled "Ce que je crois". It first appeared in French in the premier issue of Riche's magazine *Science Fiction* (January 1984). This is the first time it has been published in English. We are indebted to the author, and to Daniel Riche, for permission to use it here.