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Roy R. Behrens
roy.behrens@uni.edu

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Peple call themselves poets and painters, and seek help for their failures, as I might come to a psychiatrist to discover the causes of my vaulter's block or to find out why I can't get anywhere in nuclear physics. Indeed, regularly people push through the turnstiles of the critic's day who feel very strongly the need to pass as poets, to be called "creative," to fit themselves into a certain social niche, acquire an identity the way one acquires plants there's no time to tend or goldfish that can't be kept alive, and their problems are important and interesting and genuine enough; but they are not the problems of poets as poets, any more than the child who tiptoes to school on the tops of fences has the steelworker's nerves or nervousness or rightly deserves his wage.


During the most austere phase of Analytical Cubism, when he and Braque were working in closely related styles, Picasso one day went to look at his friend's latest work. Suddenly, he became aware that there was a squirrel in the picture, and pointed it out to Braque, who was rather abashed at this discovery. The next day Braque showed him the picture again, after reworking it to get rid of the squirrel, but Picasso insisted that he still saw it, and it took another reworking to banish the animal for good.


Be sat around tossing ideas back and forth, and we developed material of what we called the "What if?" category. Someone would say, "What if Christopher Columbus were an usher at Roxy Theater?" and we'd take it from there, with Columbus navigating people to their seats. Or, "What if Leonardo da Vinci worked as a short-order cook?" and we'd have Leonardo sort of painting sandwiches together like each one was a work of art.


The next day Schwitters decided he wanted to meet George Grosz. George Grosz was decidedly surly; the hatred in his pictures often overflowed into his private life. But Schwitters was not one to be put off. He wanted to meet Grosz, so Mehring took him up to Grosz's flat. Schwitters rang the bell and Grosz opened the door. "Good morning, Herr Grosz. My name is Schwitters."

"I am not Grosz," answered the other and slammed the door. There was nothing to be done. Half way down the stairs, Schwitters stopped suddenly and said, "Just a moment."

Up the stairs he went, and once more rang Grosz's bell. Grosz, enraged by this continual jangling, opened the door, but before he could say a word, Schwitters said "I am not Schwitters, either." And went downstairs again. Finis. They never met again.


Here was a man whose chatter certain circumstances made it necessary for me to listen to. At every opportunity he was ready with a little philosophical lecture, a very tiresome harangue. Almost in despair, I suddenly discovered that he perspired copiously when talking. I saw the pearls of sweat gather on his brow, unite to form a stream, glide down his nose, and hang at the extreme point of his nose in a drop-shaped body. From the moment of making this discovery, all was changed. I even took pleasure in inciting him to begin his philosophical instruction, merely to observe the perspiration on his brow and at the end of his nose.


This issue is dedicated to
LIAM HUDSON

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ballast (bal'ast), n. 1. something heavy carried in a ship to steady it. 2. weight carried in a balloon or dirigible to control it. 3. anything which steadies a person or thing. 4. gravel or crushed rock used in making the bed for a road or railroad track. —v. furnish with ballast. 1. give steadiness to. 2. load or weigh down. (ap paz < Scand. (ODan.) barlast < bar bare + last load) —ballast-er, n.
After dinner, Duchamp would take the bus to Nice to play at a chess circle and return late with Lydie (his first wife) lying awake waiting for him. Even so, he did not go to bed immediately, but set up the chess pieces to study the position of a game he had been playing. First thing in the morning when he arose, he went to the chessboard to make a move he had thought out during the night. But the piece could not be moved—during the night Lydie had arisen and glued down all the pieces... A few months later Duchamp and Lydie divorced, and he returned to the States.


The three panels of the rounded triptych (shown below) indicate three domains of creativity which shade into each other without sharp boundaries: Humour, Discovery, and Art... Each horizontal line across the triptych stands for a pattern of creative activity which is represented on all three panels; for instance: comic comparison—objective analogy—poetic image. The first is intended to make us laugh; the second to make us understand; the third to make us marvel. The logical pattern of the creative process is the same in all three cases; it consists in the discovery of hidden similarities.


Before hearing this lecture I was confused about this subject. Having heard it, I am still confused, but on a higher plane.


If lawyers are disbarred and clergymen defrocked, doesn't it follow that electricians can be delighted; musicians denoted; cowboys deranged; models deposed; tree surgeons debarked and dry cleaners depressed?

Virginia Ostman.

Here are few better examples of purposeful visual invention than the collage novel What a Life! by E.V. Lucas and George Morrow (London: Methuen & Co., 1911; unabridged republication, with an introduction by John Ashbery, NY: Dover Publications, 1975). Lucas was a well-known British writer and an editor of Punch. The authors cut out steel engravings from a British mail order catalog (Whiteley's), arranged them in a halfway-reasonable way, and then wrote a story which does but does not fit the plates. Shown here (above) are two pages from the book in which the Crystal Palace (site of the great design exposition of 1851) is talked about as if it were a bird cage while an animal at the zoo is represented by an electric iron, and the game of leapfrog is illustrated by a coat hanger. These are pretended confusions of course in which two different genera are treated or pictured or spoken about as if they were the same thing.

RECOMMENDED

Antaeus, No. 54, Spring 1985, an issue on writers on artists, with essays by Genet on Rembrandt, Sartre on Tintoretto, Mark Strand on Hopper, Guy Davenport on Rousseau, Linda Orr on Michaux, Robert Pinsky on Goya, and so on.


Contrary to my hopes we spoke little, but we devoured each other with our eyes...suddenly I had the whim of trying to appear in his eyes as a kind of dandy of "universal intellectualism." I learned later that the effect I produced was exactly the opposite.

Before leaving I wanted to give him a magazine containing an article I had written on paranoia. I therefore opened the magazine at the page which was exactly the opposite. Trying to interest him, I explained that it was not a Surrealist diversion, but...an ambitiously scientific article, and I repeated the title, pointing to it with my finger. Before his imperturbable indifference my voice became sharper and more insistent. Then, continuing to stare at me with a fixity in which his whole being seemed to converge, Freud exclaimed, addressing Stefan Zweig, "we have never seen a more complete example of a Spaniard. What a fanatic!"

Salvador Dali (describing his first and only meeting with Sigmund Freud, on 1 July 1936, when Freud was in his eighties), quoted in "Freud and Dali: Personal Commands" by Sharon Romm and Joseph William Slap in *American Imago*, vol 10, no 4, Winter 1983, pp. 344-345.

...He loved to shake hands. Nothing left him more puzzled and aggrieved than a white man who declined the offer. That he should feel baffled when a white man refused to shake hands is easy to understand because he had picked up the habit from them. Thomas Henry Tibbles...remarked that Indians, who never shake hands among themselves, consider this act to be one of the funniest things in the world. Nevertheless, having learned that whites express friendship by seizing each other, they happily do the same.


Alexander Woolcott (reviewing a play): The scenery was beautiful, but the actors got in front of it.

1. Work on one thing at a time until finished.
2. Start no more new books, add no more new material to "Black Spring."
3. Don't be nervous. Work calmly, joyously, recklessly on whatever is in hand.
4. Work according to Program and not according to mood. Stop at the appointed time:
5. When you can't create you can work.
6. Cement a little every day, rather than add new fertilizers.
7. Keep human! See people, go places, drink if you feel like it.
8. Don't be a draught-horse! Work joyously, recklessly on whatever is joyous.
9. Discard the Program when you feel like it--but go back to it the next day. Concentrate. Narrow down. Exclude.
10. Forget the books you want to write. Think only of the book you are writing.
11. Write first and always. Painting, music, friends, cinema, all these come afterwards.


Custer and the Little Bighorn

what is a double petunia? A petunia is a flower like a begonia. A begonia is a meat like a sausage. A sausage-and-battery is a crime. Monkeys crime trees. Tree's a crowd. A crow crowd in the morning and made a noise. A noise is your face between your eyes. Eyes is the opposite of nays. A colt nays. You go to bed with a colt, and wake up in the morning with a case of double petunia.


The Wapiti are like us to an extraordinary degree. They have a kinship system which is very similar to our kinship system. They address each other as "Mister," "Mistress," and "Miss." They wear clothes which look very much like our clothes. They have a fashion which divides their territory into east and west. They have a Chock Full o' Nuts and a Chevrolet, one of each. They have a Museum of Modern Art and a telephone and a Martini, one of each. The Martini and the telephone are kept in the Museum of Modern Art. In fact they have everything that we have, but only one of each thing.

We found that they lose interest very quickly. For instance they are fully industrialized, but they don't seem interested in taking advantage of it. After the steel mill produced the ingot, it was shut down. They can conceptualize but they don't follow through. For instance, their week has seven days--Monday, Monday, Monday, and Monday. They have one disease, mononucleosis. The sex life of a Wapiti consists of a single experience, which he thinks about for a long time.


British Military Officer (addressing an army recruit): How are your bowels working? Recruit: Haven't been issued any, sir.

Officer: I mean, are you constipated?

Recruit: No, sir, I volunteered.

Officer: Heavens man, don't you know the King's English?

Recruit: No, sir, is he?

When I was about five years old my father happened to be in a basement-chamber of our house, where they had been washing, and where a good fire of oak-logs was still burning; he had a viol in his hand, and was playing and singing alone beside the fire. The weather was very cold. Happening to look into the fire, he spied in the middle of those most burning flames a little creature like a lizard, which was sporting in the core of the intensest coals. Becoming instantly aware of what the thing was, he had my sister and me called, and pointing it out to us children, gave me a great box on the ears, which caused me to howl and weep with all my might. Then he pacified me good-humouredly, and spoke as follows: "My dear little boy, I am not striking you for any wrong that you have done, but only to make you remember that that lizard which you see in the fire is a salamander, a creature which has never been seen before by any one of whom we have credible information." So saying, he kissed me and gave me some pieces of money.


Kenneth Tynan: A critic is a man who knows the way but can't drive the car.


Undoubtedly one of the best books on mimetic resemblance in natural forms is Mimicry in Plants and Animals by Wolfgang Wickler (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1968). The author's text is amplified by fifty illustrations by Hermann Kacher. The cover (reproduced at left) presents a composite of two unrelated varieties of butterflies, set up to aid in comparing their wings. The left wing is that of Atrophanura coon, a distasteful "model" which is avoided by predators, while the right is the wing of the "mimic," Papilio memnon, a palatable source of food for birds, and yet it too is avoided because it looks like the poisonous form.
inner of the 1982 Drue Heinz
Literature Prize was Dancing
for Men, eleven short stories
by Robley Wilson, Jr. (NY: Ecco
Press, 1985). His previous volumes
of stories include The Pleasures of
Manhood (1977) and Living Alone
(1978). Wilson’s works have been
described as “highly realistic, ut-
terly convincing dreams.” That is
especially apparent in “Iris,” a
story which has just appeared in the
Indiana Review (Spring 1985, pp. 7-
13), a story which starts in the
following way:

When Iris woke up one Sunday morn-
ing and recognized that Robert was
dead, she passed the rest of the day
in silence, absorbed in the problem
of how to explain to him what she
knew he would refuse to believe.

The simplest prejudice of all, the
basic currency of judgment in the
academy at large, is the distinction
with which I began: that between the
“hard” and the “soft.” Either, this
distinction says, we are trying to
do science or we are engaged in some-
thing quite different: politics,
therapy, journalism, self-expression.
The arts in particular are seen as
professionally academic attention
either for artist or for spectator;
as carefully poised, as subtly calcu-
lated in their effects, as any other
artistic essay, “Texts, Signs, Arte-
ownists on Psychology: Modern Inno-
Cognitive Processes in the
pp. 65-70. The following is a brief
passage from that essay.

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Because of my work with colour, I
began to notice butterflies. There
is nothing so brilliant or as chang-
ing and shifting as the iridescence
and the pigmented colour of the but-
terfly’s wing. I began to keep a
visual record. The diary itself, on
which most of this book is based,
developed over the years from the
time when I first made notes about
these colours. I started in 1966,
producing really a loose notation—
flashes of colour mostly, flowers,
grasses and butterflies. As an
adult watching as the result of a
visual training, the more I drew,
the more I wanted to know, so a
written account of what I saw began
to take place very naturally at the
sides of the drawings.

David G. Measures (contemporary
British artist). Bright Wings of
Summer: Watching Butterflies (Engle-
wood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall,
Sign above urinal in New York restaurant restroom: We aim to please. You aim too, please.

Before leaving Basle for England in 1526 and wishing to leave proof of his skill, the artist (Hans Holbein the Younger) painted a fly on a portrait he had just completed. The purchaser of the portrait, trying to remove the insect with a brush, discovered the jest. The story spread, and arrangements were set in motion to retain this virtuoso in the country. The painter therefore had to leave town in great secrecy.


Here then we have the beginnings of an answer to what relations lie at the heart of beauty. 'All beauty may by a metaphor be called rhyme.' What is rhyme like? Well, let us have an example:

cat rhymes with mat;  
cat does not rhyme with table;  
cat does not rhyme with cat.

Taking rhyme as the paradigm of beauty, let us turn at once to the fundamental question: Why do we like the relation that rhyme epitomises? What is the biological advantage of seeking out rhyming elements in the environment?

The answer I propose is this: Considered as a biological phenomenon, aesthetic preferences stem from a predisposition among animals and men to seek out experiences enjoyable when appreciated as an aesthetic whole, with its changing rhythms, its sudden grace, its dramatic tensions, finally, decisively, resolved. And classroom life is more rewarding when students experience their learnings as the climax of spirited but directed give and take. To the extent that these daily activities are charged with aesthetic qualities and relations, we experience them as fulfilling and are fulfilled.


Absolutely Mad Inventions by A.E. Brown and R.A. Jeffcott, Jr. (NY: Dover Publications, 1970) is a sidesplitting collection of the drawings and descriptions for 60 strange inventions for which there are actual patents. Reproduced here (left) is a diagram of an "improvement in foot-warmers," a gadget worn inside the shoes on the coldest winter days, with tubes and a strap which extend to the wearer's feet, to warm the breathes into the cup at the top.

Hermann Goering: When I hear anyone talk of culture I reach for my revolver.

I.J. Good: When I hear the word 'gun' I reach for my revolver.

W it may be considered a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike.

Samuel Johnson, Lives of the Poets, 1760.

A basketball game is more enjoyable when appreciated as an aesthetic whole, with its changing rhythms, its sudden grace, and its dramatic tensions, finally, decisively, resolved. And classroom life is more rewarding when students experience their learnings as the climax of spirited but directed give and take. To the extent that these daily activities are charged with aesthetic qualities and relations, we experience them as fulfilling and are fulfilled.


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Leonard Strachey was unfit, but instead of allowing himself to be rejected by the doctors he preferred to appear before a military tribunal as a conscientious objector. He told us of the extraordinary impression that was caused by an air-cushion which he inflated during the proceedings as a protest against the harshness of the benches. Asked by the chairman the usual question: "I understand, Mr. Strachey, that you have a conscientious objection to war?" he replied (in his curious falsetto voice), "Oh no, not at all, only to this war." Better than this was his reply to the chairman's other stock question, which had previously never failed to embarrass the claimant: "Tell me, Mr. Strachey, what would you do if you saw a German soldier trying to violate your sister?" With an air of noble virtue: "I would try to get between them."

Robert Graves, Goodbye to All That (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957)

He (Groucho Marx) probably was not aware of everything he was saying when a "You Bet Your Life" contestant stated she had thirteen children and could explain it only by proclaiming, "I love my husband!" "I like my cigar too," said Groucho, "but I take it out once in a while."


It is our parents, normally, who not only teach us our family history but who set us straight on our own childhood recollections, telling us that this cannot have happened the way we think it did and that that, on the other hand, did occur, just as we remember it, in such and such a sum-

... continuing to talk on this theme.


If the styles I find most useful to study are those of Hugh Kenner, Osip Mandelstam, Samuel Beckett, Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, Charles Doughty. All of these are writers who do not waste a word, who condense, pare down, and proceed with daring synapses. From Victor Shklovskii I saw how narrative can be suggested rather than rendered, and how anything can be made startling by taking it out of "its series." Shklovskii (and other Formalists) felt that art served a purpose by "making the familiar strange," a process of regeneration (of attention, of curiosity, of intelligence) the opposite of narcosis.


He following are variations on an old and admittedly chauvinist joke. Are there other variations, either invented, remembered, or found?

Who was that lady I saw you with last night? That was no lady, that was my wife.

Who was that lady I saw you with last night? That was no lady, that was your wife.

Who was that lady I saw you with last night? That was no scene, that was the entire play.

Who was that ladle I saw you with last night? That was no ladle, that was my knife.

What lady did I see you with last evening? That was no ewe, that was a deer.

One magician to another: Who was that lady I sawed with you last night?

Two magicians: Who was that lady I sawed with you last night? That was no saw, that was a chisel.

Two magicians: Who was that lady I sawed with you last night? That was no lady, that was my half sister.

Two musicians: Who was that piccolo I sawed with you last night? That was no piccolo, that was my fife.

Two Huckleberry Finn's: Who was that lady Tom saw yer with last night?

Who was that lady I saw you with last night? That was no eyesore, that was a headache.

Who was that lady I saw you outwit?".

Sitting at his cluttered mahogany desk, Wells draped a string from one side to the other, and, in a clothesline effect, pinned the various jokes and "bits of business" on the line, rearranging them as he built the scene. He kept a detailed account of the number of jokes he wrote; he tabulated the laughs per minute of every sketch. Even the malapropisms that salted his comic dialogue were uncovered in the same methodical manner. Wells would take a word and write it on one side of a file card and on the other side list similar sounding words, testing each for its comic possibility.

John Lahr (describing how vaudeville skits were made by burlesque comedian Billy K. Wells, an associate of Bert Lahr, the author's father) in Notes on a Cowardly Lion (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 41.