y mother did the first terrible thing for which I never forgave her. "Y'know...my mother...she says to me, "Henry, I have a wart." I'm only four years old and I'm sitting in this little chair and she says, "Henry, what shall I do with this?" And I say, "Cut it off. With a scissors." Two days later she got blood poisoning and she says, "And you told me to cut it off!" and bang bang she slaps me, for telling her to do this. How do you like a mother who'd do that?


One Saturday night I come home pretty well filled up with liquor, and I was mighty cold. Sally and all the children had gone to bed, and the house was dark. I saw a few coals in the fireplace, and got down on my knees to blow 'em into a flame. I blowed and blowed, but nothing happened. Then I seen I was just blowin' at a patch of moonlight that come through the window and fell on the ashes. I got up and tried to go to bed, but the bed was going round and round, and I couldn't catch up with it. So I just stood by the door and waited for it to come around to me. Every time the bed would come around I'd make a jump for it, and every time I jumped I'd hit the floor, kerpplank. Sally woke up and got me onto the bed and took off my shoes and covered me up. This oughta broke me from drinking, but it didn't.


Albers encouraged students to bring in any material they found, and on at least one occasion (this was later, in the mid-forties) he himself tested the "solution." Several students hostile to Albers, and impatient of what they took to be endless mechanisms of the course, decided to do a three-dimensional construction out of a material not singular to Black Mountain but found there in plentiful supply: cow dung. That day in class, as always, the constructions were placed in front of the room, without names attached to them. Albers—again, as always—picked up each piece in turn, examining and criticizing it. "Ah (as he passed down the row), a good swindle: marbles made to look like fish eggs...and what's this one? Wonderful—it looks exactly like muddy cow (t--d)! So real you want to pick it up and smell to be sure ..."—at which point he did; and was sure. But he never batted an eye. He simply put the (t--d) back down, omitted his usual comment on the "material's" color and form, and blandly proceeded on to the next construction.

Martin Duberman, Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1972), pp. 68-69 (which features a lengthy description of the teaching practices of the Bauhaus painter Josef Albers, during the years that he taught at Black Mountain College in the North Carolina foothills).

Which craft was persecuted by the Puritans of New England?

What was the name of the inventor of the steam engine?

The name of the inventor of the sewing machine is pronounced how?
Dedicated to Jules Kirschenbaum

BALLAST is privately published. It is a journal devoted to wit, the contents of which are intended to be insightful, amusing, or thought provoking. Its purposes are educational, apolitical, and entirely noncommercial. It does not carry paid advertisements, nor is it supposed to be purchased or sold. It is issued quarterly in September, December, March, and June. There is no charge for subscriptions as such, and for the moment that finances allow the journal will gladly be mailed to people who send in their mailing address, accompanied by two first class U.S. postage stamps (current value $1.76). No other currency will be accepted. Do not send cash, checks, or money orders. Nor can the journal be ordered by phone. All subscription orders (as well as requests for gift subscriptions) must be mailed to:

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As for the contents of BALLAST, there is no shortage of material for future issues. But our readers should not be discouraged from sending in offbeat examples of verbal and visual wit of the sort that the journal might publish. Original material must be explicitly labeled as that. Material which is not original must clearly make note of its author and source. Unsolicited material will not be returned unless it is accompanied by a self-addressed envelope with adequate postage affixed.
Cassirer was rector of the University of Hamburg during the academic year 1929/30... there was a close relationship between the departments of psychology and philosophy at Hamburg. So, when Cassirer became rector, the two joined forces to celebrate the occasion at one of the big dance halls in Hamburg. The assistants had prepared a number of skits as part of the festivities. I played Pavlov's dog in one of them. I remember that Cassirer said that my bark was very convincing—he even thought that he could detect a Russian accent.


I'm a dog. I yawn, the tears roll down my cheeks. I feel them. I'm a tree, the wind gets caught in my branches and shakes them vaguely. I'm a fly, I climb up a windowpane, I fall, I start climbing again. Now and then, I feel the caress of time as it goes by. At other times—most often—I feel it standing still. Trembling minutes drop me down, engulf me, and are a long time dying. Wallowing, but still alive, they're swept away. They are replaced by others which are fresher but equally futile. This disgust is called happiness. My mother keeps telling me that I'm the happiest of little boys. How could I not believe it since it's true? I never think about my forlornness. To begin with, there's no word for it. And secondly, I don't see it. I always have people around me. Their presence is the warp and woof of my life, the stuff of my pleasures, the flesh of my thoughts.


When a man has reached old age and has fulfilled his mission, he has a right to confront the idea of death in peace. He has no need of other men, he knows them already and has seen enough of them. What he needs is peace. It is not seemly to seek out such a man, plague him with chatter, and make him suffer banalities. One should pass by the door of his house as if no one lived there.


Above is reproduced a stamp issued by the Swedish government in 1981. It is one of a group of commemorative stamps which celebrate Swedish film history.
well-mannered

had a dime and a nickel in my pocket. With the dime, the tenth part of a dollar, I bought a ticket. I went in and heard the ventriloquist and his dummy: "Will you spell a word for me, Danny?" "I'll try, what's the word?" "Constantinople." "Why do you tell me you can't stand on an apple?"


Robert Williams Wood was a professor of physics at Johns Hopkins University who was known for his work in optics and spectroscopy. In 1917 he published an illustrated children's book in which normally separate classes of things (for example, the cow and the cowry) are made to look and sound alike. Reproduced here (at right) is a page from the book. All his illustrations were pen and ink drawings, but Wood could not help calling them Wood-cuts. From How to Tell the Birds from the Flowers by Robert W. Wood (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), an inexpensive paperbound edition.

Never play cards with any man named "Doc". Never eat at any place called "Mom's". And never, ever, no matter what else you do in your whole life, never sleep with anyone whose troubles are worse than your own.

Nelson Algren.

The Cowry seems to be, somehow, A sort of mouth-piece for the Cow: A speaking likeness one might say, Which I've endeavored to portray.

46.

When I was a child my mother said to me, "If you become a soldier you'll be a general. If you become a monk you'll end up as the pope." Instead I became a painter and wound up as Pablo Picasso.

Pablo Picasso.

A question that could be addressed to Duchamp: Who was that Lydie we saw outwit you last issue?

Suggested by Flossie M. Jetsam, a reader from Norfolk, Virginia.

DURING one of our daily talks, my grandmother told me that my grandfather had told her he had seen a child coming to him with a bunch of flowers. He is, of course, she said, already in the next world—which news I accepted almost as a matter of fact; she had spoken often of the journey to the next world my grandfather was about to take. I was not shocked. My grandmother was not grieving. She spoke as though my grandfather had just moved into a beautiful sunlit room. Several days later (so I have always maintained in telling the story), when I came home from kindergarten (which was across the street), my mother said quietly, "Your grandfather is in the next world." "Yes, I know he is," I said with matter-of-factness, "Grandmother has already told me." "But she couldn't have," my mother exclaimed, "it only happened this morning while you were at school."


The secret of teaching is to appear to have known all your life what you learned this afternoon.

The secret of teaching is to appear to have learned this afternoon what you have known all your life.
Robert Motherwell wrote that Josef Albers told how Kurt Schwitters used to tell a hilarious story about a parrot with a hernia, but Albers couldn’t remember how the story went.

M. Kasper, "The Transmission of Dada" in All Cotton Briefs: Illustrated Short Prose (Cedar Falls, Iowa: North American Review, 1984). This is an uncommonly curious book which readers of BALLAST will certainly like. It is both written and visual throughout, as shown here in one of its pages (at right). To order a copy directly, send $3.95 postpaid to: The North American Review, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614.

Why do I like puns? In part it is a form of intellectual snobbery because it shows an ability to think laterally; in part it is companionable in that if you understand a pun or one of yours is understood, it implies a rapport.


The cat’s eyes were bigger than saucers, a 19th century engraving. Artist unknown.

The first dead that I encountered were young comrades-in-arms of my own, men with whom, only a few nights earlier, I had been sitting round the camp-fire in those Ukrainian forests, playing cards and joking... The horses lay in the forest with their hooves in the air, swollen-bellied, swarming with flies. At the sight of this huge dung-hill my own horse reared, so that I had to dismount in order to quiet her. My patrol had been sent out to relieve these friends, who now sat there together as peacefully as if they were picnicking. Only now they would never speak again, and when I thrust my hand into the hair of the youngest among them, his scalp slipped sideways and came off in my hand.

Virtually all that we know of this man, there are very few accessible, it loses what I call its holy power—its capacity to inspire awe. Based on the little we know of this man, there are very few artists whose work is as fine.

Federico Fallini.
RECOMMENDED


**The Excavation of the Apasht**

CURATED BY DR. BEAUVS Lyons,
DIRECTOR OF THE HOKES ARCHIVES


Children of Mercury: The Education of Artists in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Department of Art, 1984).


Marcia Eaton, Art and Nonart: Reflections on an Orange Crate and a Moose Call (East Brunswick, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1983).

People who see a drawing in the New Yorker will think automatically that it's funny because it is a cartoon. If they see it in a museum, they think it is artistic; and if they find it in a fortune cookie, they think it is a prediction.

Saul Steinberg.

Driven by insatiable curiosity about these newcomers to the land where they had hunted, an occasional group of Assiniboine would pay their visit. In the daytime they sat silently on their horses and watched us as we went about the chores. At night they studied us from the darkness, little concerned whether they were detected, and obviously concluding that if the white man insisted on windows in his lodge he must expect the passer-by to look inside. The Indians did us no harm. They only baffled us with their stoicism and imperturbable countenances.


What is sauce for the goose may be sauce for the gander but it is not necessarily sauce for the chicken, the duck, the turkey, or the guinea hen.

Alice B. Toklas.

Once I gave a crazy old beggar lady some coins. She put them in her mouth. I had no food on me so I gave her my Chiclets. She took them out of the box and put the box in her mouth.


At a local auction, he bought an antique writing desk. When he got home, he opened it up, and a dozen people fell out. Apparently it was a missing persons bureau.

Every day, Sancho," said Don Quixote, "you are becoming less foolish and more sensible." "It must be that some of your worship's good sense is rubbing off on me," Sancho replied. "Lands which by themselves are dry and barren, if they are manured and cultivated, bring forth good fruit. I mean to say that your worship's conversation is the manure that has been spread upon the barren ground of my dry wit; the time that I have spent in your service and company has been the cultivation..."


M y assistant, Isadore Grossman, one day came to me in a fury, saying that the teacher had been talking about modern sculpture and a girl had asked him what he thought of the sculpture of Lipchitz. The teacher had had a lump of clay in his hands and had let it fall on the floor, where it splattered, saying that that was a Lipchitz. I only said, "That is a rather interesting idea, I think I might try to make some such sculptures."


Peter Ustinov (remembering his childhood in Europe), Dear Me (Middlesex, p. 98), mentions thought up by those in the FBI.

How much simpler a method of disposal than all the latterday complexities

"Secret" and some of them "Most Secret". How much simpler a method of disposal than all the latterday complexities

... thought up by those in the FBI.

"Secret" and some of them "Most Secret". How much simpler a method of disposal than all the latterday complexities

or could I sing "The Birmingham Jail" at Granny Pant's? No.

U.

ual modern collection. Wilson Steer, water in watercolour; Matthew Smith, victim of the crime in slaughtercolour; Utrillo, whitewashed wall in mortarcolour; Matisse, odalisque in sortacolour; Picasso, spatchcock horse in tortacolour; Gilbert Spencer, cocks and pigs in thoughtacolour; Stanley Spencer, cottage garden in tortacolour; Braque, half a bottle of half and half in portercolour; William Roberts, pipe dream in portercolour; Wadsworth, rockses, blockses, and fishy boxes all done by self in nautacolour; Duncan Grant, landscape in strattacolour; Frances Hodgkin, cows and fows and sows in choracolour; Roquefort, parsley Saint in portercolour; Epstein, Leah waiting for Jacob in squavtacolour.  


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On December 19, 1941, Moholy was appointed to the Mayor's personal staff in charge of camouflage activities in the Chicago area. During blizzards and rainstorms, in fog and in brilliant sunlight, he had to take flights to absorb air views of the city under diverse weather conditions. While he fought air sickness, which he never overcame completely, he pondered how to conceal the vastness of Lake Michigan with a simulated shore line and floating islands.