Ballast Quarterly Review, v02n3, Spring 1987

Roy R. Behrens
roy.behrens@uni.edu

Copyright ©1987 Roy R. Behrens

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uni.edu/ballast

Part of the Arts and Humanities Commons

Recommended Citation

This Periodical is brought to you for free and open access by UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ballast Quarterly Review by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.
Whilst stopping in Plover Bay, some of our men found a key of specimens preserved in alcohol belonging to one of our Smithsonian collectors. Having had a long abstinence from exhilarating drinks, the temptation was too much for them, and they proceeded to broach the contents. After they had imbibed to their hearts' content and became visibly affected thereby, they thought it a pity to waste the remaining contents of the barrel, and, feeling hungry, went on to eat the lizards, snakes, and fish which had been put up for a rather different purpose!

Frederick Whymper (describing an incident in August 1867 in Plover Bay, Alaska), Travel and Adventure in the Territory of Alaska (New York, 1869).

In 1948 when I was six years old, I was selected to appear on Art Linkletter's radio program People Are Funny. The night before the show, my mother worked feverishly getting me ready. On the show I was the first child to be announced. Art Linkletter asked me, "Debby, do you know what happened last night?" In my cutest little voice, I responded, "No, what?" There was hysterical laughter. Without saying another word to me, Art Linkletter turned to the next child and asked him the same question. He answered, "President Truman was elected." I have spent the rest of my life trying to figure out what happened.


Whitehead himself had moments when he was not quite sure where he had put things. One day in the early 1930s he had Professor James Melrose of Illinois to tea at the Whitehead cottage... It occurred to Whitehead that his guests might like to see the work in progress on a library addition to the house. So he led them outside, first carefully putting on Professor Melrose's hat which he found in the coatroom closet and assumed was his own. After the excursion he returned the hat to the closet, but at tea's end, when he and Mrs. Whitehead prepared to accompany the guests to their car, he went there once more for his hat. This time Melrose had beat him to it and retrieved his lawful property. Whitehead reached up to the place where his visitor's hat had been, made a little exclamation of surprise, then trotted some distance to a spot where his own hat hung on a hook. It was clear to his guests that the author of Process and Reality did not realize there were two hats, but believed that his own had in some unaccountable way changed its place.


The classical tradition of striptease... offers a valid metaphor for the activity of reading. The dancer teases the audience, as the text teases its readers, with the promise of an ultimate revelation that is infinitely postponed. Veil after veil, garment after garment, is removed, but it is the delay in the stripping that makes it exciting, not the stripping itself; because no sooner has one secret been revealed than we lose interest and crave another... To read is to surrender oneself to an endless displacement of curiosity and desire from one sentence to another, from one action to another, from one level of the text to another. The text unveils itself before us, but never allows itself to be possessed; and instead of striving to possess it, we should take pleasure in its teasing.

BALLAST is privately published. It is a journal devoted to wit, the contents of which are intended to be insightful, humorous, or thought provoking. Its purposes are educational, apolitical, and noncommercial. It does not carry paid advertisements, nor is it labeled as that. BALLAST may be xeroxed, in order to be devoted to wit, the verbal and visual wit of the sort that the journal might publish.

Copyright @ 1987 by Roy R. Behrens

BALLAST is privately published. It is a journal devoted to wit, the contents of which are intended to be insightful, humorous, or thought provoking. Its purposes are educational, apolitical, and noncommercial. It does not carry paid advertisements, nor is it supposed to be purchased or sold. It is issued quarterly, beginning in September and ending in June. There is no charge for subscriptions as such, and (to the extent 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 in payment for each of the issues they want. In other words, to subscribe for one full year (a series of four issues), you need only send in a total of 8 first class U.S. postage stamps. 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 gift subscription orders) must be mailed to:

BALLAST Quarterly Review
Roy R. Behrens
113 West Gaston Street
Savannah, Georgia 31401

BALLAST is published in a limited edition, and back issues are not available. As for the contents of BALLAST, there is no shortage of material for future issues, but readers should not be discouraged from sending in offbeat examples of verbal and visual wit of the sort that the journal might publish.

Copyright © 1987 by Roy R. Behrens

One day while driving my car I violated a traffic regulation. A policeman stopped me and asked my name. When I told it to him he looked up and said--"but not the Nobel Prize scientist?" Upon my affirmative answer, he tore up the ticket and held up the traffic so I could drive away more easily.


When Laurel was a child, in this room and in this bed where she lay now, she closed her eyes like this and the rhythmic, nighttime sound of the two beloved reading voices came rising in turn up the stairs every night to reach her. She could hardly fall asleep, she tried to keep awake, for pleasure. She cared for her own books, but she cared more for theirs, which meant their voices. In the lateness of the night, their two voices reading to each other where she could hear them, never letting a silence divide or interrupt them, combined into one unceasing voice and wrapped her around as she listened, as still as if she were asleep. She was sent to sleep under a velvety cloak of words, richly patterned and stitched with gold, straight out of a fairy tale, while they went reading on into her dreams.


I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself I seem to have been only a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.

Issac Newton, Memoirs.

Education and learning, while on the one hand furthering this process of discovery, on the other hand gradually brake and finally stop it completely. There are relatively few adults who are fortunate enough to have retained something of the child's curiosity, his capacity for questioning and wondering. The average adult "knows all the answers," which is exactly why he will never know even a single answer. He has ceased to wonder, to discover. He knows his way around, and it is indeed a way around and around the same conventional pattern, in which everything is familiar and nothing cause for wonder. It is this adult who answers the child's questions and, in answering, fails to answer them but instead acquaints the child with the conventional patterns of his civilization, which effectively close up the asking mouth and shut the wondering eye.

Woddy is just at a loss in the country. He comes to visit and does everything there is to do in a fraction of the morning. He fishes, he plays ball, and then he's at loose ends and it isn't even noon yet. He wouldn't dream of going swimming. We only have a lake to swim in. And he says there are living things in the lake. You ought to hear the way he says it. To him, it's not a joke.

In the evening when the sun goes down, he starts thinking of the Cutter Family, remember, in Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood?* And he talks about the possibility of deadly serpents in the lake.

Mia Farrow (describing Woody Allen when he visits her country house in Connecticut) interviewed by Chicago Sun-Times film critic Roger Ebert in Savannah News-Press (Sunday, 1 March 1987), p. BG.

On Paris once I had two strawberry finches. Having to leave the city for a few days, I asked Mary if she would save them for me. On my return, noticing that she had not removed their cover (indeed had her head up and turned, as in thought), I pulled it off myself and cried out at once, "Pere God, imposters!" Moving like a risen Becamier, Mary said, in her light pining voice, "That cat and your abominable eye! Who on earth before has known one finch from another?"


A pupil should be taught what it means to know something, and not to know it; what should be the design and end of study; what valor, temperance, and justice are; the difference between ambition and greed, loyalty and servitude, liberty and license; the marks of true and solid contentment; the extent to which we should fear disgrace, affliction, and death; the true springs of our actions and the reasons for our varied thoughts and desires. Our first lessons, I think, should teach us how to rule our behavior and understanding, how to live and die well.


I say that there should be an art exam for people, just for the right to call themselves artists—it wouldn't give you any other guarantee—if you're a brain surgeon, you have to pass a test. If you're an artist, you should be able to pass a test, too, at least something rudimentary and simple, but nobody seems to want to.


Below: Label for hypothetical Dali shaving cream, proposed by Michael Davis, a reader from Charlotte, North Carolina.

Sir Winston Churchill (when told of a Greek statesman named Plasteras): Well, I hope he doesn't have feet of clay also.

He was very proud of his beard and used to stroke it and smooth it between his hands... While the "beaver" game was in vogue he was a great prize. On one occasion three divinity students were standing at the entrance of St. Mary's College when D'Arcy passed; they shouted "Beaver" and quickly hid themselves behind the gate. D'Arcy retraced his steps, and taking off his hat to the young men said: "Were you talking to me, gentlemen?"

Look at this... It turns out there is a pop group called the Police--I don't know why they are called that, presumably to distinguish them from the punks--and they've made an album of my essay The Ghost in the Machine... A rather difficult book has become the inspiration for a pop group. It came as a great surprise to me. I'm slightly tickled by it.


...beautiful as the chance meeting upon a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella!

Isidore Ducasse, alias Comte de Lautreamont, Les Chants de Maldoror (Paris, c. 1868).

**"Exploding" Toilet Seat**

We interrupt regular programming to bring you news of a Mad Bomber on the loose! People are lifting the seat in the rest room and running for cover! Who's the Mad Bomber? (We won't tell!) Just place the little gadget under the toilet seat, load with a plastic cap and be ready for a "bang-up" time. Caps not included.

- 3964K Bang Toilet Seat $1.25
- 9064K Caps, Box of 80, 92c 3 for $2.50

The horse and mule live 30 years And nothing know of wines and beers. The goat and sheep at 20 die And nothing know of wines and beers. The dog at 15 cashes in And at 18 is mostly done. Without the aid of rum or gin. The cow drinks water by the ton The modest, sober, bone-dry hen And nothing know of wines and beers. But sinful, ginful, rum-soaked men Stay pickled till they're 92.

Anonymous. Suggested by Barbara E. Cue, a reader from Searchlight, Nevada.

At Walden pond, I found a new musical instrument which I call the ice-harp. A thin coat of ice covered a part of the pond but melted around the edge of the shore. I threw a stone upon the ice which rebounded with a shrill sound, and falling again and again, repeated the note with pleasing modulation. I thought at first it was the 'peep' 'peep' of a bird I had scared. I was so taken with the music that I threw down my stick and spent twenty minutes in throwing stonesingle and in handfuls on this crystal drum.


Laugh at yourself is the most important thing. Not at others, but yourself--that's the great thing. The day I graduated from high school, we were all asked what would we like to be. I had no idea so I said, "I think I'm going to be a clown." A symbol of man's suffering on earth, you might say, and of his conquest over it, too. Because at bottom I think there is a great deal of clown in me. I'm kind of a schizoid type, who laughs and cries at the same time.


I have a precise picture of the moment I wanted to become an artist...it happened when I was five and my cousin, who probably was ten or fifteen years older than I was, came into the house with a brown paper bag, and he said, "Do you want to see a pigeon?" I thought he had a pigeon in the bag, and said, "Yes." He took a pencil out of his pocket, and he drew a pigeon on the side of the bag. Two things occurred. One was the expectation of seeing somebody draw a pigeon; and two, it was the first time I had actually ever observed someone make a drawing that looked like the actual object--as opposed to my own rudimentary drawing. I was literally struck speechless. It seemed a miraculous occurrence, the creation of life, and I have never recovered from that experience.


Talmudic women ride better than the men. A male Talmudic on horseback looks as if he was intoxicated, and likely to fall off every instant, although he never loses his seat; but the women sit with more ease, and ride with extraordinary skill. The ceremony of marriage among the Calmucks is performed on horseback. A girl is first mounted, who rides off in full speed. Her lover pursues; if he overtakes her, she becomes his wife, and the marriage is consumated upon the spot; after this she returns with him to his tent.

Edward Daniel Clarke, Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa (London, 1816).
Two guys, one from Brooklyn and one from the Midwest, are sitting on a park bench. "Look at all dem boids," says the man from Brooklyn. "Excuse me," responds the man from the Midwest, "Those are not boids. Those are birds." "Really?" says the Brooklynite, "Well, dey shore choops like boids."

A favorite joke from the childhood of the BALLAST Subscription Boy.

The greatest tragedy that can befall a teacher, according to Einstein, is when he finds that his language, method, and problems have ceased to be those of the new generation of students, whose presuppositions he may find not only alien but willfully irrational.


Gathered about the table, I observed some seven or eight persons, amongst whom, in particular, my eyes lighted upon a fair-haired young man, of some five or six-and-twenty years of age, astonishingly handsome in spite of a slight touch of baldness. I pressed him for news of Naples, and in particular, of music in that city; he answered my curiosity with answers that were clear-cut, brilliant and humorous. I enquired of him whether, when I reach Naples, I might still hope to see Rossini's Otello. I pursued the topic, asserting that, in my opinion, Rossini was the bright hope of the Italian school; that he was the only living composer who had true genius as his birthright. At this point I noticed that, not only of his many friends, but of trivia, such as "the day the television set went out of order." A pair of mentally retarded twins who had the unusual ability to give the day of the week of dates in the past and future were concurrently in the hospital and well known to the staff, who had all been told by the patient, I and the other staff told him our birthdays at his initial interview, and were amazed to find that he too had the remarkable ability to state instantly the day of the week on which they fell. Verification of his ability with a larger range of dates was achieved by the convenient procedure of checking with the twins. The twins were asked the dates individually as a check of their accuracy, but this was superfluous, as they never disagreed.

I eat my peas with honey
I've done it all my life
It makes the peas taste funny
But it keeps them on the knife.

Anonymous. Suggested by Dickerson Tuttle, a reader from Rushsylvania, Ohio.

Russell saw the world in terms of clear-cut logical distinctions, while Whitehead concentrated on the interconnectedness of things. Russell expressed well the difference between himself and his old mentor when he said that he, Russell, saw reality as a bowl of treacle. When father carves the duck, while Whitehead thought it was born cross-eyed. I could see only large patterns, houses, trees and outlines of people—and all coloring was blurred. I could see two dark areas on human faces, but I could not see a human eye or a teardrop or a human hair. Not until I was four years old, in 1899, was it discovered that my cross-eyedness was caused by my being abnormally farsighted. Lenses fully corrected my vision. Despite my new ability to apprehend details, my childhood's spontaneous dependence only upon big patterns has persisted.


When you get to the point where you cheat for the sake of beauty, you are an artist.

Max Jacob, Art Poétique (1922).

Beautiful Soup, so rich and green, Waiting in a hot tureen! Who for such dainties would not stoop?
Soup of the evening, beautiful Soup!


I was born cross-eyed. I could see only large patterns, houses, trees and outlines of people—and all coloring was blurred. I could see two dark areas on human faces, but I could not see a human eye or a teardrop or a human hair. Not until I was four years old, in 1899, was it discovered that my cross-eyedness was caused by my being abnormally farsighted. Lenses fully corrected my vision. Despite my new ability to apprehend details, my childhood's spontaneous dependence only upon big patterns has persisted.


When you get to the point where you cheat for the sake of beauty, you are an artist.

Max Jacob, Art Poétique (1922).

Beautiful Soup, so rich and green, Waiting in a hot tureen! Who for such dainties would not stoop?
Soup of the evening, beautiful Soup!


I was born cross-eyed. I could see only large patterns, houses, trees and outlines of people—and all coloring was blurred. I could see two dark areas on human faces, but I could not see a human eye or a teardrop or a human hair. Not until I was four years old, in 1899, was it discovered that my cross-eyedness was caused by my being abnormally farsighted. Lenses fully corrected my vision. Despite my new ability to apprehend details, my childhood's spontaneous dependence only upon big patterns has persisted.


When you get to the point where you cheat for the sake of beauty, you are an artist.

Max Jacob, Art Poétique (1922).
models, however, aren't real. And metaphorical models are even less so. Light does not travel in straight lines, we only represent it that way. Nor are all the features of our mathematics features of our data. Twice 25 is 50, but 50 Farenheit is not twice warmer than its half. With metaphorical models the discrepancies are even greater.


Secret Thumb Tip

Complete magic act by itself! Easy way to fool any audience. The most popular secret device ever devised for magical purposes. Do dozens of tricks with little practice. Device is fast-colored & fits over the upper part of either thumb. Virtually impossible to detect by audience. Use over & over, every time you perform or several times during a performance. Some tricks possible with thumb tip include: vanishing & appearing money, cigarettes, burning handkerchief; spirit effects; sting silk, match tricks; mental effects; card tricks; many more. Every magician, amateur or pro should have one. With instructions for several tricks.

3200 Secret Thumb Tip $1.98
1168 Manual of Thumb Tip Magic $2.98

The art of writing consists of putting two things together that are unlike and that belong together like a horse and cart.


Pottery Head With Growing Green Hair

Plant grass seed on head, fill with water, watch green "hair" grow in days. Amusing, comical man's head, attractively made of porous pottery. Hair grows in few days. Use over and over! High. With seeds & instructions. Guaranteed to grow.

5005 Growing Head $8.98


Liam O'Flaherty, interviewed in The New York Post (27 November 1937).

The most accomplished monkey cannot draw a monkey. Only man can do that, just as it is only man who regards this ability as a distinct merit.

Georg Christoph Lichtenberg.

While hunting and trapping skunks I could not avoid being sprayed with their scent. I reeked of their nauseous odor, and there was loud protest from members of the family when I came into the house. While the strong odor was disagreeable to me, I considered tolerating it an exhibition of heroism. I was not in the least humiliated by being a great nuisance to the family, but persisted in renewing contacts with the fetid animals in a spirit of daring without attempting to defend myself against scolding and reprimands from every member of the household. After one year of this I gave it up.


Our life should always be arranged just as if you were studying theology, or philosophy, or other theories. that is to say, eating, drinking and exercising moderately, at least twice a day; eating digestible and wholesome dishes and light wines; saving and sparing your hand, preserving it from such strains as heaving stones, crowbars, and many other things which are bad for your hand, from giving them a chance to weary it. There is another cause which, if you indulge it, can make your hand so unsteady that it will wave more, and flutter far more, than leaves do in the wind, and this is indulging too much in the company of women.

Cennino Cennini (Renaissance artist regarding how artists should live), in Robert Goldwater and Marco Treves, eds., Artists on Art (New York: Pantheon, 1945).

It is impossible for a creative artist to be either a Puritan or a Fascist, because both are a negation of the creative urge. The only things the creative artist can be opposed to are ugliness and injustice.

W. F. S. Skunks I could not avoid being sprayed with their scent. I reeked of their nauseous odor, and there was loud protest from members of the family when I came into the house. While the strong odor was disagreeable to me, I considered tolerating it an exhibition of heroism. I was not in the least humiliated by being a great nuisance to the family, but persisted in renewing contacts with the fetid animals in a spirit of daring without attempting to defend myself against scolding and reprimands from every member of the household. After one year of this I gave it up.

Sidney Hook: Even more than an actor, a teacher is a sculptor in snow.

E. U. Condon (after a bad day in the classroom): I have just been casting false pearls before real swine.

We looked exactly alike.

People would greet me and say, "Hello, Moses," and Moses would be greeted with "Hello, Raphael." And I remember, a long time ago, I was walking along Fifth Avenue very briskly, and then I see Moses walking along too, and I was astounded. I mean, I didn't expect Moses to be there at that time. But it turned out to be myself, my reflection in the mirror, from far away.


Our Lady of ArtPolice.

ARTPOLICE IS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATION (TAX EXEMPT I.R.S.). SEND AN S.A.E. WITH SUBMISSIONS TO US AT 3131 FIRST AV. S0. MPLS., MN 55403.

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE $15 OR A YEAR; 5 ISSUES $20 FOR LIBRARIES; 25 COPIES OUTSIDE OF U.S. SINGLE ISSUE PRICES VARY FROM ISSUE TO ISSUE. VOL. 13 NO. 1 $2 TO MARCH, 1987. 1,000 COPIES OF THIS EDITION. NEXT ISSUE IN JULY.

Ronald Reagan In Over His Head

Above: Page from ARTPOLICE, an unusual magazine published in the twin cities, Minneapolis and Indianapolis.

L ate that afternoon, Mr. Wright decided to drive back through Milwaukee. It was a little out of the way, but he wanted a good dinner and he liked the Old Heidelberg Restaurant there. The restaurant was on a slope. We stopped at the entrance for Mr. Wright to alight. I parked the car in a space behind another car, but forgot to leave it in gear or pull the brake. The two cars were bumper to bumper. When we came out after dinner, our car was gone. But no, there it was, a block away, at the foot of the slope. The owner of the car we leaned against had driven away and the unblocked Zephyr had rolled down the hill, driverless, right into the back of another car. Beyond that car was the river. The owner of the damaged car was stalking around, steaming, looking impatiently for the master of the errant Zephyr. He took Mr. Wright by storm, but Mr. Wright was calm. "It's not my fault," he told the fellow in all seriousness. "If you didn't have your car here in the first place, it wouldn't have got hit." Then, my cue: "Come on, Edgar, let's go. We're needed at Taliesin." And off we went.

Edgar Tafel, Years With Frank Lloyd Wright: Apprentice to Genius (New York: Dover, 1979), p. 68.

Grandmother always spoke with a strong accent and was never able to distinguish the word "kitchen" from "kitten."


The 'Divines' were the Church students of the College, wearing the cassock and biretta and studying for the priesthood. So far as I can remember, Rolfe was with us only a short time—a thin, somewhat emaciated, rather good-looking young man. In the course of his first week he took us by surprise one dinner time by exclaiming aloud, in an interval of silence—"Oh! What lovely legs!" This, in those far-off days of the past, was considered a somewhat outrageous exclamation to come from the lips of a Church student. But it turned out that he was referring to those of a small insect which was creeping towards his soup-plate.