Ballast Quarterly Review

Spring 1987

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

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.uni.edu/ballast/7

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, amusing, 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. 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 stamped envelope. BALLAST may be xeroxed, in order to provide readers with copies, but it must not be sold or altered. When subscribing to BALLAST, please send good-looking or unusual stamps.

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 him 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.


T. S. Eliot amused himself by attracting the great horned owls as twilight came on. To do this he made a peculiar sucking sound with the back of his hand, and the owls began magically to appear almost at once. One was so deceived by Thayer's calls that he swooped down and lit for a moment on the top of Thayer's bald head.


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.


Woody 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. 8G.

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, "P'ere God, imposters!" Moving like a risen Becamier, Mary said, in her light ping 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, afflication, and death; the true springs of our actions and the reasons of our varied thought and desires. Our first lessons, I think, should teach us how to rule our behavior and understanding, how to live and die well.

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).

The horse and mule live 30 years
And nothing know of wines and beers.
And nothing know of wines and beers.
And the goat and sheep at 20 die
And nothing know of wines and beers.
And the goat and sheep at 20 die.
And the goat and sheep at 20 die.
And the goat and sheep at 20 die.

The dog at 15 cashes in and
And at 18 is mostly done.
And at 18 is mostly done. And at 18 is mostly done.

The cat in milk and water soaks
Without the aid of rum or gin.

And the cow drinks water by the ton
And lays eggs for nogs, then dies at 10.

They sinless live and swiftly die;
All animals are strictly dry:
Survive for three score years and ten.
And ten.

And some of them, a very few, stay pickled till they're 92.
Anonymous. Suggested by Barbara E. Cline, 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 stones single and in handfuls on this crystal drum.


...to 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 a schizoid type, who laughs and cries at the same time.


I'll tell you about a dream I had recently. When I was a schoolboy in Bucharest, my father used to come into my room in the evening and check my homework. He would open my drawers and find nothing but bits of poetry, drawings, and papers. He would get very angry and say that I was a lazybones, a good-for-nothing. I was so taken by the dream that I got, I was so taken by the dream that I got, I was so taken by the dream that I got, I was so taken by the dream that I got, I was so taken by the dream that I got. And I open my drawers and I find only singed papers, dust and ashes. He gets very angry and I try to appease him, saying, "You are right, Daddy, I've done nothing, nothing..."

The house 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.

The cat in milk and water soaks
Without the aid of rum or gin.

The cow drinks water by the ton
And lays eggs for nogs, then dies at 10.

They sinless live and swiftly die;
All animals are strictly dry:
Survive for three score years and ten.
And ten.

And some of them, a very few, stay pickled till they're 92.
Anonymous. Suggested by Barbara E. Cline, a reader from Searchlight, Nevada.
The Zebra or Zabra of this country being about the
bigness of a mule, is a beast
of incomparable swiftness,
struck about the body, legges,
aves, and other parts, with blacke,
white and brownie circles of three
fingers broad; which do make a
pleasant shew.

Leo Africanus (16th century Moorish
explorer) in R. Brown, ed., The
History and Description of Africa
(Hayluyt Society, 1896).

It is probably immaterial that
economic necessity compels Mondrian
way when one visits his studio.

Oskar Schlemmer, in Tut Schlemmer,
ed., The Letters and Diaries of
Oskar Schlemmer (Middletown, CT:
23.

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
choips 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.

Lewis S. Feuer, "Arthur O. Lovejoy"
in The American Scholar, vol 46 no
5 (Summer 1977).

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 inquired
of him whether, when I reach Naples,
I might still hope to see Rossini's
Mellie. 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
days he was grinning openly. To cut a long
story short, this was Rossini.

Marie Henri Beyle, alias Stendhal,
Home, Naples and Florence in 1817
(London, 1818).

Picasso, you and I are the greatest
painters of our time, you in the
Egyptian style, I in the modern.

Henri Rousseau, quoted in Man Ray,
Self Portrait (Boston: Little Brown,

The patient displayed an
unusual memory for exact
dates, not only of his many
previous hospital transfers,
but of trivia, such as "the day the
tv 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
twins on what day of the week they
had been born. With the above as a
cue, and with no advertisement 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.

David V. Forrest, "New Words and
Neologisms With A Thesaurus of
Coinages by a Schizophrenic Savant"
in Psychiatry, vol 32 no 1 (February
1969).
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.


Quaker, Cope refused to take a gun with him on his fossil-hunting forays, despite the fact that Cope led him into territories populated with hostile Indians. On one occasion, finding himself surrounded by a distinctly unfriendly band, Cope distracted his captors from their murderous intentions by removing and putting back his false teeth. Enthralled by this performance, they made him do it over and over again and eventually released him unharmed.


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!

Soup of the evening, beautiful Soup!
Beau--ootiful Soo--oop!
Soo--oop of the e--e--evening,
Beautiful, beautiful Soup!

Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (London, 1865). Suggested by Dean L. Schwarz, master potter, in his lecture on "Remembering Marguerite Wildenhain." Each summer Schwarz conducts a school, in which is taught the Dornburg (Bauhaus) pottery tradition at his gigantic rural home in Northeast Iowa. Many of his former students are professional potters. The first of three 4-week sessions begins this year on 2 June. For further information, write: Dean L. Schwarz, South Bear School, Rural Route 5, Box 163, Decorah, Iowa 52101-9340.
One Sunday afternoon after a little skirmish we both sat reading. The door and windows were closed, and the stove was burning full blast. I opened the door and he shut it. I opened a window and he shut it. I shut the door of the stove to diminish the draught and he opened it. (Neither of us had spoken.) I felt that I was losing, and fast losing my self-control. What could I do next? My eye fell upon a jar of water in which the brushes were soaked. I picked it up, and, lifting up the lid of the stove, poured the contents over the red-hot cinders. There was an explosion and I was half-blinded by the steam and ashes. When I recovered my sight, I looked at Corvo. He hadn’t budged. He only interrupted his reading from time to time to blow the ashes off his book. I had lost again.


M an likes to bring two things together into one... He lives by making associations and he is doing well by himself and in himself when he thinks of something in connection with something else that no one ever put with it before. That’s what we call a metaphor.


Y oung women are very immoral, not because their natural average disposition is either better or worse than of women of other tribes and races, but because public opinion is all in favor of what may be called ‘gallantry’. When a woman is discovered in an intrigue, a great outcry is made, and the neighbors rush to the scene with much laughter. A goat is sent for on the spot for a peace-making feast between the gallant and the husband. Of course the neighbors also partake of the feast; the husband and wife both look very happy, and so does every one else, except the lover, who has to pay for the feast.


M odels, 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.


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

5005 Growing Head ........ $8.98

Your life should always be arranged just as if you were studying theology, or philosophy, or other theories, that is to say, eating and drinking 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 waver 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.

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.

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, Raphael." And I remember, a long time ago, I was walking along Fifth Avenue very briskly, and then I saw 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.


La t e 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 slo ped. 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 unblock ed 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 went 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 the legs were referred to those of a small insect which was creeping towards his soup-plate.