

Winter 1989

Ballast Quarterly Review, v05n2, Winter 1989

The Art Academy of Cincinnati

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Ballast Quarterly Review
Volume 5 Number 2

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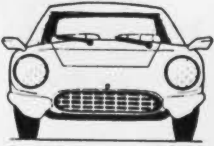
After his return from America, Dickens began a tradition of performing magic tricks at the Twelfth Night celebration. He and Forster had purchased the stock of a conjuror who was going out of business, and together, with Dickens as conjuror and Forster as his assistant, they astonished young and old alike on Twelfth Night and selected birthdays during the Christmas season. Dickens turned watches into tea caddies, made pieces of money fly through the air, burned up pocket handkerchiefs without burning them. He caused a tiny doll to disappear and then to reappear with little messages and pieces of news for different children in the audience. But his greatest trick, the climax of all, was his manufacture in an ordinary gentleman's hat of a plum pudding.

Phyllis Rose (speaking of Charles Dickens), *Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), p. 159-160.



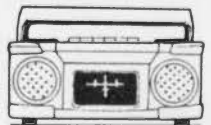
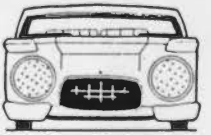
Robert Benchley:
One, two, three.
Buckle my shoe.

**Did
you
know?**
That
Frank
Lloyd
Wright's
son
invented
Lincoln
Logs.



Champagne for my real friends.
Real pain for my sham friends.

Jonathan Williams, as quoted by
A.D. Moore and suggested by Phil
Fass, a reader from Urbana, Illinois.



Neil F. Smith

My father had ordered a carpenter on Amsterdam Avenue to come and give him an estimate for shelves in the basement to house the overflow of law books for which there was no room in his downtown office. The man came just as the family was sitting down to dinner. Father gave orders for him to wait in the kitchen and proceeded calmly and slowly to enjoy his dinner. The workman's long wait made the boy nervous: not the father, or probably the carpenter. The boy felt guilt, although he did not even try to guess whether the guilt came from the indifference of the parent to the comfort and time of the workman or from his—the boy's—failure to take his superiority for granted, which would have made the discourtesy to the carpenter a small matter.

Waldo Frank, in Alan Trachtenberg, ed., *The Memoirs of Waldo Frank* (Boston: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1973), p. 3.

The most pleasant author I might see socially is John Updike. First time I met Updike, incidentally, which was very funny, was on the Boston shuttle down to New York. The plane was not crowded, and as I walked down the aisle, this voice came from a seat saying, "Are you really him?" And so I turned to see who said it and it was John Updike, and we sat down together and became friends.

Kurt Vonnegut, in William Rodney Allen, ed., *Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988), p. 68.

George Miller:
The trouble with eating Italian food is that five or six days later you're hungry again.



His batman brought him a box which contained a strange looking and weird skeleton, claimed to be the "skeleton of King Charles the First's favorite parrot." It was in fact the skeleton of a rabbit which some troopers had cleverly arranged to give the superficial appearance of a bird's skeleton...It was the type of humor that appealed to Buckland; he saved the worthless object and put it into his private museum. It was also typical of his humor to have his little capuchin monkey, Jack, dressed in the coat of a Troop Corporal Major of the Life Guards. The garment was made by the regimental tailor, who had repeatedly to repair it, as the mischievous animal tore off the crown and three stripes. Eventually, the monkey was reduced to a Private, with disgrace.

G.H.O. Burgess (regarding the life of Frank Buckland, 19th century British naturalist), *The Eccentric Ark: The Curious World of Frank Buckland* (New York: Horizon Press, 1968), p. 66.

■
Flannery O'Connor:

Everywhere I go I'm asked if I think the university stifles writers. My opinion is that they don't stifle enough of them. There's many a bestseller that could have been prevented by a good teacher.

**Robert
Benchley:**

I do
most
of my
writing
sitting
down.
That's
where
I shine.

During the summer of 1950, my parents put my sister and myself in a Swiss boarding camp while they toured Europe by themselves. Since we had been attending a New York City progressive school during the academic year, the camp's strict regime was especially abhorrent. We had to get up early and do calisthenics before breakfast, while the remainder of the day was similarly regimented. As the swimming pool water was changed only once a fortnight, it turned increasingly yellow. The director insisted upon censoring our letters before she mailed them. So I wrote our parents in Pig Latin, detailing our disgust. The director asked me what language it was? I replied that it was an American Indian dialect. She grunted her frustration and posted the letter. Within a week we were out.

Richard Kostelanetz, *Autobiographies*
(Santa Barbara, CA, and New York,
NY: Mudhorn Press and Future Press,
1981), p. 183.

Eric Wright: The trouble with letting it all hang out...was the difficulty of stuffing it all back in.

Ted Wood: When you hear hoofbeats, think horses, not zebras.

Anon: Two farmers each claimed ownership of a certain cow. While one pulled on its head and the other pulled on its tail, the cow was milked by a lawyer.

For some, the enjoyment of the distinguished company seated round his table for a meal could be marred by the bizarre foods that occasionally made their appearance. Hedgehog, of course, is not entirely unknown as a food in this country [England] but puppy, crocodile, and garden snail are perhaps more unusual. Richard Owen, the famous anatomist, and his wife, who were close friends of the family, were once given roast ostrich by the Bucklands. Mrs. Owen noted in her diary that "...it was very much like a bit of coarse turkey." Her husband had a very bad night of it. Nevertheless, Ruskin wrote: "I have always regretted a day of unlucky engagement on which I missed a delicate toast of mice; and remembered with delight being waited upon one hot summer morning by two graceful and polite little Caroline lizards, which kept off the flies."

G.H.O. Burgess (regarding the life of Frank Buckland, 19th century British naturalist), *The Eccentric Ark: The Curious World of Frank Buckland* (New York: Horizon Press, 1968), p. 11.

Will Kommen: If you look like your passport photo, you're too ill to travel.

The Place of Value in a World of Facts is of course taken from a book by...the late [gestalt psychologist] Wolfgang Koehler...In the first months of Nazi rule, while he still held his chair at Berlin, he dared to write a newspaper article against the purges of the Universities. When I was fortunate to meet him again in Princeton, shortly before his death, conversation fell on this episode, and he described how after the publication of his protest he and his friends spent the night waiting for the final knock on the door which fortunately did not come. They were playing chamber music all night long. I cannot think of a better illustration of the place of value in a world of fact.

E.H. Gombrich, "Art and Self-Transcendence" in Arne Tiselius and Sam Nilsson, eds., *The Place of Value in a World of Facts*, Nobel Symposium 14 (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1970), p. 132. Suggested by Joseph Podlesnik, a reader from Milwaukee.

I am told that soon after I was hatched out my father and my godfather, the late Sir Francis Chantrey, weighed me in the kitchen scales against a leg of mutton, and that I was heavier than the joint provided for the family dinner that day.

Frank Buckland, quoted in G.H.O. Burgess, *The Eccentric Ark: The Curious World of Frank Buckland* (New York: Horizon Press, 1968), p. 6.



Highly Recommended: Tom Parker, *Rules of Thumb 2* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). Hilarious generalizations about everything from "stocking an ice cream truck" to "running a light in New Jersey." For example:

Gerry M. Flick: If you find ants around a toilet, suspect that a diabetic is using it.

Mrs. G.H. Moore: The hymn "Onward, Christian Soldiers," sung in a not-too-brisk tempo, makes a good egg-timer. If you put the egg into boiling water and sing all five verses, with the chorus, the egg will be just right when you come to "amen."

Keith Allen Hunter: To avoid lunatics on city buses, sit in the middle of the bus. The firendly lunatics sit as close to the driver as they can, and the unfriendly ones sit as far away as they can.

[Caveat: There are exceptions to general rules. For example, while reading this last rule of thumb, we were seated in the middle of a city bus with a lunatic sitting directly behind us.]

Calvin Trillin: The most remarkable thing about my mother is that for thirty years she served the family nothing but leftovers. The original meal has never been found.

Rudolf Arnheim (*Parables of Sun Light*): As one gets older, it happens that in the morning one fails to remember the airplane trip to be taken in a few hours or the lecture scheduled for the afternoon. Memory does return in time, but the suspicion remains that in the end dying will consist in simply forgetting to live.

Anon:
Bad
spellers
of the
world,
untie!

William James (*Principles of Psychology*): The aesthetic principles are at bottom such axioms as that a note sounds good with its third and fifth, or that potatoes need salt.

A former student of **Paul Rand** [American graphic designer] recalls the week when everyone in the class was too busy to do much work on Rand's new assignment, redesigning the Parchesi game. Rand arrived at class, paced up and down in front of the sketches, then turned to the class and said, "You mean I drove all the way to New Haven to look at this stuff?" He walked out, went to his car, and drove off. The next week, the work was their best of the semester.

Philip Meggs, "A Pantheon of Design Eccentricity (And Other Useful Bits of Information)" in the AIGA (American Institute of Graphic Arts) *Journal of Graphic Design*, Vol 7 No 2, Fall 1989, p. 9.

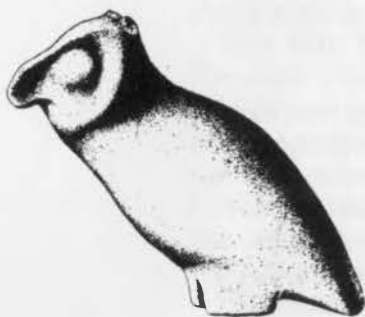


To make a prairie it takes a
clover and a bee,
One clover and a bee
And revery.
The revery alone will do
If bees are few.

Emily Dickinson, "To Make A Prairie."

There is a large body of designers, clients and consumers who don't really care very much about very much. The joy and pleasure of doing a good job for its own sake has not been discovered by enough people.

Ivan Chermayeff, quoted in Edward M. Gottschall, *Typographic Communications Today* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), p. 235.



You see, I like to do everything in my field which I love very much. This open behavior makes me different from all the other dogmatic typographers like Tschichold, or Ruder, or Gerstner. These people are fantastic typographers but fanatical dogmats. The wonderful feeling which I have every time from twenties typography: these characters were not only typographers, they were hand-workers with heart and not only with cold heads, they were genius discovers: El Lissitzky, Piet Zwart and many good persons more. What makes me so sad today is the fact, that nothing happens in the field of typography. We need new influences, which we can build on for this coming decade.

Wolfgang Weingart, quoted in Edward M. Gottschall, *Typographic Communications Today* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), p. 6.

If you make people laugh or cry about little black marks on sheets of white paper, what is that but a practical joke? All the great story lines are great practical jokes that people fall for over and over again.

Kurt Vonnegut, in William Rodney Allen, ed., *Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988), p. 188.

Fred Allen: He was the world's only armless sculptor. He put the chisel in his mouth and his wife hit him on the back of the head with a mallet.

Last night at the Academy of Arts and Sciences, I read a few hurried excerpts from a paper to be published in *Daedalus*. A friend later told me he liked what I said but paraphrased it in terms I could not understand. Another friend commented at length with sentences which did not seem to bear any conceivable connection with my own. Is universality anything more than ambiguity?

B.F. Skinner, in Robert Epstein, ed., *Notebooks, B.F. Skinner* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1980), p. 77.

Dorothy L. Sayers : Of course, there is *some* truth in advertising. There's yeast in bread...Truth in advertising is like leaven, which a woman hid in three measures of meal. It provides a suitable quantity of gas, with which to blow out a mass of crude misrepresentation into a form that the public can swallow.

According to Christopher Isherwood, Ramakrishna was fond of saying that you could get the central message of the Gita by repeating the word several times: "Gita, Gita, Gita." You then found yourself saying "ta-Gi, ta-Gi, ta-Gi," "Tagi" meaning one who has renounced everything for God. In *Verbal Behavior*, I noted the children's trick of repeating "bell-lie-mud-um," only to find themselves saying "I'm a dumbbell."

B.F. Skinner, in Robert Epstein, ed., *Notebooks, B.F. Skinner* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1980), p. 271.

Florynce Kennedy: If men could get pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament.

William MacHarg : If a guy slips a cop a ten-dollar bill they call it a bribe, but a waiter just takes it and says, "Thank you."

Ross MacDonald : "Am I supposed to know you? I have a terrible memory for faces." "I have a terrible face for memories."

Mae West: I've been in more laps than a napkin.

Mark Russell: The scientific theory I like best is that the rings of Saturn are composed entirely of lost airline luggage.

Waiting near the Post Office for a bus, I remembered meeting a man there a year or so before whose name I could not recall. A few days later, writing about feeling and states of mind, I looked at an old note about *Culture Shock*. I said to myself a few words like shock and shaken, and then remembered "Schenkman," the name I had tried to recall.

B.F. Skinner, in Robert Epstein, ed., *Notebooks, B.F. Skinner* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1980), p. 319-320.



Woody Allen: I took a course in speed reading and was able to read *War and Peace* in twenty minutes. It's about Russia.



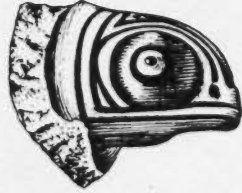
MAX LEFT THE 40'S
WORLD OF GRAPHIC
DESIGN, ONLY TO BAT-
TLE TOE-TO-TOE WITH AN
UGLY FUTURE.

1947

Left: Illustration by Charles Burns from *Circa: The Voyage for all Time* (Appleton, Wisconsin: Fox River Paper Company, 1989).

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