BALLAST is an acronym for Books Art Language Logic Ambiguity Science and Teaching, as well as a distant allusion to BLAST, the Vorticist magazine founded in 1914 by Percy Wyndham Lewis, who was both an artist and writer. BALLAST was founded in 1985. Initially it was a protest against illiteracy and other anti-intellectual tendencies among artists. Its editor having reached middle age, it is now chiefly a harmless pastiche of odd and indelible extracts from books and articles. Put differently, it is intended to be insightful, amusing or thought-provoking.

The purposes of BALLAST are educational, apolitical and non-commercial. It does not carry paid advertisements, nor is it supposed to be purchased or sold. It is published every three months, more or less, beginning in October 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 persons who send in their mailing address and two first class U.S. postage stamps for each issue. In other words, to receive BALLAST for one year (four issues), we ask that each reader contribute a total of eight first class U.S. postage stamps. When subscribing, please send good-looking or unusual stamps (we’ve overdosed on dinosaurs, but we love those mountain bluebird stamps with the red Idaho). We do not accept phone orders.
During

the meal, I was sitting opposite a middle-aged gentleman with a long handsome beard, who had been introduced to me as a barrister. We were having an animated conversation about criminal psychology. In order to answer a particular question of his, I made up a story to illustrate it, embellishing it with all sorts of details. While I was telling my story, I noticed that a quite different expression came over the man's face, and a silence fell on the table. Very much abashed, I stopped speaking. Thank heavens we were already at the dessert, so I soon stood up and went into the lounge of the hotel. There I withdrew into a corner, lit a cigar, and tried to think over the situation. At this moment one of the guests who had been sitting at my table came over and asked reproachfully, "How did you ever come to commit such a frightful indiscretion?"

"Indiscretion?" "Why yes, that story you told." "But I made it all up!" To my amazement and horror it turned out that I had told the story of the man opposite me, exactly and in all details.

Highly Recommended:


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**John Jay Chapman:**

Did you hear what [William Dean] Howells once said to a boring author who was trying to wring a compliment out of him? "I don't seem to write as well as I used to." "Oh, yes you do — indeed you do. You write as well as you ever did — but your taste is improving."

**William Congreve:**

[in a letter to Mrs. Edward Porter on 27 September 1700] Formy part I keep the Commandments, I love my neighbour as my selfe, and to avoid Coveting my neighbour's wife I desire to be coveted by her; which you know is quite another thing.
Non Cogito, Ergo
Non Sum, from
Tom Grothus, Errata
(Seattle: Function
Industries Press,
1984)

I DON'T THINK,
THEREFORE
I AM NOT.

He [a thirteen-year-old boy,
born blind, who had regained his sight]
was very much surprised,
that those things which he had liked
best, did not appear most
agreeable to his eyes, expecting those
persons would appear
most beautiful that he loved most, and
such things to be most
agreeable to his sight, that were so to his
taste... Being shewn his
father's picture in a locket at his mother's
watch, and told what it was,
he acknowledged its likeness, but was
vastly surprised; asking,
how it could be, that a large face could be
expressed in so little room,
saying, it should have seemed as
impossible to him, as to put
a bushel of anything into a pint.

Z. Cope, William Cheselden (Edinburgh,
England: 1953). Suggested by
Lois D. Naumanator, a reader from
Boise, Idaho.

Charles
Baudelaire:
Life is a hospital
in which every
patient is domi-
nated by the wish
to move to
another bed.
One would prefer
to suffer nearer
the fire, while
another feels sure
he would get
well if he were
by the window.

Anon:
Would you like
to sin
With Elinor Glyn
On a tiger skin?
Or would you
prefer
To err
With her
On some other
fur?
People who don't have a sense of humor are a drag. Interesting people are humorous, one way or another. Shakespeare, Mencken, Shaw...each had a wonderful sense of humor. And humor is important in every arena — especially in business.

Suggested by Barry Pye, a reader from Nags Head, North Carolina.

September 1644: Sir Arthur Aston was governor of Oxon at what time it was garrison'd for the king, a testy, forward, imperious and tirannical person hated in Oxford and elsewhere by God and Man. Who kervetting on horseback in Bullington green before certain ladies, his horse flung him and broke his legge: so that it being cut off and he theruppon rendred useless for employment, one coll. Legge succeeded him. Soon after the country people coming to market would ever be and anon asking the sentinell, “who was governor of Oxen?” They answered “one Legge.” They replied then: “A pox upon him! Is he governor still?”

Anthony a Wood, Life and Times
Suggested by Phil Tertip, a reader from Parachute, Colorado.
Tallulah Bankhead: I am as pure as the driven slush.

H.H. Asquith: "Why did you murder those workmen at Featherstone in 1893"? "It was not 1893: it was '92."

Robert Frost: [when asked to explain one of his poems]: What do you want me to do — say it again in worser English?

Philip Guedalla: Any stigma is good enough to beat a dogma with.

Fred Allen: I don't have to look up my family tree, because I know that I am the sap.
Dr. John Arbuthnot: Sir John Cutler had a pair of black worsted stockings which his maid darned so often with silk they became at last a pair of silk stockings.


Artemus Ward [referring to Geoffrey Chaucer]: Mr. C. had talent, but he couldn't spel. No man has a right to be a literary man unless he knows how to spel. It is a pity that Chaucer, who had genius, was so uneducated. He was the wus speller I know of.


I always keep a supply of stimulant brandy in case I see a snake — which I also keep handy.

When one sat to him [the British artist and writer Percy Wyndham Lewis], in his enormous studio, mice emerged from their holes, and lolled against the furniture, staring in the most insolent manner at the sitter. At last, when Tom [T.S.] Eliot was sitting to him, their behavior became intolerable. They climbed on to his knee, and would sit staring up at his face. So Lewis bought a large gong which he placed near the mouse-hole, and, when matters reached a certain limit, he would strike this loudly, and the mice would retreat.

Edith Sitwell, in a letter to Lady Snow on 8 January 1959. Suggested by Guy Nicolojojuste, a reader from Ann Arbor, Michigan.
How much depends upon the way things are presented in this world can be seen from the very fact that coffee drunk out of wine-glasses is really miserable stuff, as is meat cut at the table with a pair of scissors. Worst of all, as I once actually saw, is butter spread on a piece of bread with an old but very clean razor.


Emily Dickinson (describing herself in a letter): I had no portrait, now, but am small, like the Wren, and my Hair is bold, like the chestnut Bur, and my eyes, like the Sherry in the Glass, that the guest leaves.

Hill house bedroom chair by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, 1902.
M was married twice before she married my father, but she never told me this until after he died. She couldn’t remember her first husband’s name.


When Freud visited me in Zurich in 1918, I demonstrated the case of Babette [a patient] to him. Afterward he said to me, “You know, Jung, what you have found out about this patient is certainly interesting. But how in the world were you able to bear spending hours and days with this phenomenally ugly female?”

But the scenes [of growing up on a farm] that I have described, and many others of the same nature, such as the searing of horses' tails, the killing of poultry, the birth of cattle, even the lewdness of a half-witted laborer, were witnessed by us children with complete passivity — just as I have seen children of the same age watching a bullfight in Spain quite unmoved by its horrors. Pity, and even terror are emotions which develop when we are no longer innocent, and the sentimental adult who induces such emotions in the child is probably breaking through defenses which nature has wisely put round the tender mind. The child even has a natural craving for horrors. He survives just because he is without sentiment, for only in this way can his green heart harden sufficiently to withstand the wounds that wait for it.

Jack Benny: I was born in Waukegan a long, long long time ago. As a matter of fact, our rabbi was an Indian. He used a tomahawk...

Dr. Spooner: I want you to come to tea next Thursday to meet Mr. Casson. But I am Mr. Casson. Come all the same.


I studied journalism in college intending, to expose the world's ills. It was the late 1960s, and radicalism was pervasive. I learned valuable lessons: that bell bottoms are truly unattractive; that you can successfully challenge the status quo; and that you are free to use your imagination to change the real world. And within the inevitable self-seriousness of this process, I discovered that humor can be a critical medium. Everywhere, especially where it least belongs.

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BALLAST doesn't have a budget really. It has always operated at a loss. At the moment, we spend about $1200 a year on printing, collating, folding and stapling about 800 copies per issue, or about 37 cents per copy. Of the two contributed stamps, one is used for mailing, while the other goes into the kitty. If everyone would send in stamps, we would still lose 15 cents per copy just on printing, without beginning to account for research, typesetting, paste-up, and correspondence, all of which are donated. The printing losses are made up with donations from enlightened subscribers, and generous deductions from the subscription boy's paycheck. If anyone feels compelled to make a contribution to the magazine (probably not tax deductible, since, while certainly not profitable, we are not officially non-profit), we will not refuse a monetary gift (make checks payable to Roy R. Behrens), a page of newly minted stamps, or even a bottle of single malt scotch, good-looking or unusual labels preferred.