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:


**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] “For my 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.”
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.


Charles Baudelaire:
Life is a hospital in which every patient is dominated 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.


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 therupon 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?”

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 Gue della: 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.
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.

Dr. John Arbuthnot: Lives with a few familiar ideas. Two or three...one polishes them and transforms them. It takes ten years to have an idea fully one's own — about which one can talk. Naturally this is a little discouraging. But in this way man gains a certain familiarity with the beautiful face of the world. Up to that point he looked at it face to face. But then he has to step to the side to gaze at its profile. A young man looks at the world face to face. He hasn't had time to polish the idea of death and nothingness, the horror of which, however, he has tasted.


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


"Have you ever been in France, Monsieur Martin?" said Candide. "Yes," said Martin, "I have been through several provinces. There are some where half the inhabitants are crazy, some where they are too tricky, others where they are usually rather gentle and rather stupid; others where they try to be witty; and in all of them the principle occupation is making love, the second talking slander, and the third talking nonsense."

W.C. F
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.

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.
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.

ONE

day Lady Onslow, being desirious of knowing the most remarkable planets and constellations, requested Mr. Harvest, on a fine starlight night, to point them out to her, which he undertook to do; but in the midst of his lecture, having occasion to make water, thought that need not interrupt it, and accordingly directing that operation with one hand, went on in his explanation, pointing out the constellations with the other.


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.

Mr. Casson: But I am Mr. Casson. Come all the same.

Dr. Spooner: 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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