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Ballast Quarterly Review, v07n1, Autumn 1991

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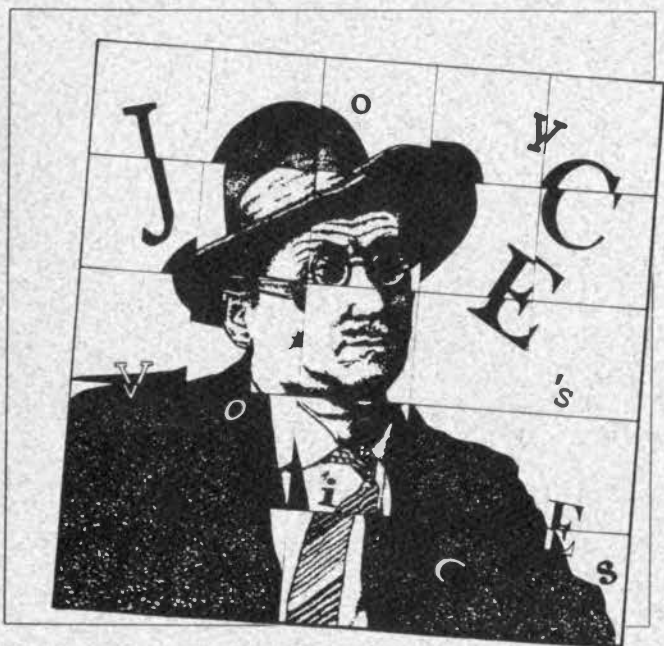
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BALLAST



Debra Goedken

Q U A R T E R L Y
R E V I E W



Volume
Seven
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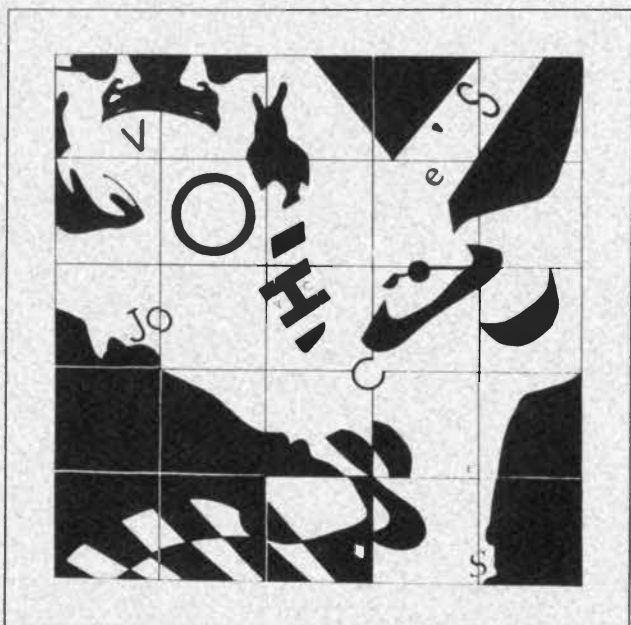
Jack Kerouac
(On the Road): I ate apple pie and ice cream -- it was getting better as I got deeper into Iowa, the pie bigger, the ice cream richer. There were the most beautiful bebies of girls everywhere I looked in Des Moines that afternoon -- they were coming home from high school -- but I had no time for thoughts like that... So I rushed past the pretty girls, and the prettiest girls in the world live in Des Moines.

BALLAST is an acronym for **B**ooks **A**rt **L**anguage **L**ogic **A**mbiguity **S**cience and **T**eaching, as well as a distant allusion to **BLAST**, the short-lived publication founded during World War I by Wyndham Lewis, the Vorticist artist and writer. **BALLAST** is chiefly a pastiche of more or less curious excerpts from books, magazines, diaries and other publications. Put differently, it is a journal devoted to wit, the contents of which are intended to be insightful, amusing or thought-provoking.

The purposes of **BALLAST** are educational, apolitical and noncommercial. 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 a 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 genuine unused U.S. postage stamps, interesting or not. Do not send postage meter stamps. When subscribing, good-looking, antique and/or unusual stamps are preferred -- ever go to a philatelists' convention, or a stamp collectors' shop? (At the moment we are especially fond of the delightful new "turban squash commemorative" -- just ask for it at your post office window.) We do *not* accept phone orders.



Peter Viereck [Archer in the Marrow]: Rhyme is the most effective sympathetic magic yet devised for undamming the contradictory Niagaras of the pent-up heart...The particular rhyme pattern you choose is the cookie form you squash down upon the otherwise shapeless dough of thought and feeling.



Chad Sires

Highly Recommended: Don Gifford, *The Farther Shore: A Natural History of Perception, 1798-1984* (New York: Vintage, 1991). Paperback ed. From a James Joyce scholar who has also authored books on the Shakers and architecture, this is an engaging, instructive account of the historical correspondence between technological invention and the transformation of human perception.

I told him despairingly that I was no nearer talking German than when I arrived, and he answered with a parable which may give encouragement to other beginners: "If you turn on the cold tap in a boiling bath, for five minutes it's still a boiling bath: then all at once it's a cold bath. A week from now you'll be talking German."

Edward Marsh, *A Number of People* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), p. 82.

Computers is a way that them that can use 'em can get pow'r over them that cain't.

Corda Lewis of Wrigley, Kentucky, suggested by Anna Martin (her granddaughter), a reader from Waterloo, Iowa.

Highly Recommended: Kelth A. Smith, *Structure of the Visual Book* (1984) (paperback \$15.00) and *Text in the Book Format* (1989) (paperback \$17.50). Two self-published classics on composing in sequential formats, or the art of making books. Being visual artists, we were particularly interested in the first, which should make an excellent textbook for a course on "artists' books." Both volumes are available from the author at 22 Cayuga Street, Rochester, New York 14620.

Anon: Regionalism is the opiate of the people.

On one occasion, when stationed at a post of several companies commanded by a field officer, he [Confederate General Braxton Bragg] was himself commanding one of the companies and at the same time acting as post quartermaster and commissary. He was first lieutenant at the time, but his captain was detached on other duty. As commander of the company he made a requisition upon the quartermaster -- himself -- for something he wanted. As quartermaster he declined to fill the requisition, and endorsed on the back of it his reasons for so doing. As company commander he responded to this, urging that his requisition called for nothing but what he was entitled to, and that it was the duty of the quartermaster to fill it. As quartermaster he persisted that he was right. In this condition Bragg referred the whole matter to the commanding officer of the post. The latter, when he saw the nature of the matter referred, exclaimed: "My God, Mr. Bragg, you have quarrelled with every officer in the army, and now you are quarrelling with yourself!"

U.S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* (New York: 1885-86), p. 343. Suggested by Mark McBride, a reader from Silver Spring, Maryland.



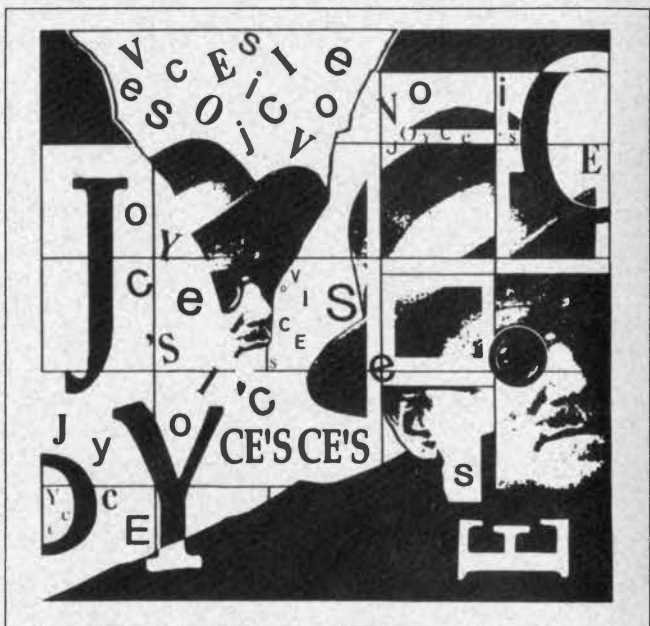
Gary Kelley

Henry Moore describes in his memoirs how, as a small boy, he massaged his mother's back with an oil to soothe her rheumatism. Reading this suddenly threw light for me on Moore's sculptures: the great, reclining women with the tiny heads -- I could see in them the mother through the small boy's eyes, with head high above, in diminishing perspective, and the back close before him and enormously enlarged.

Alice Miller, *Prisoners of Childhood* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), p. 4. Suggested by Kim Thompson, a reader from Cincinnati, Ohio.

Recommended: Barbara Lee Smith, *Celebrating the Stitch: Contemporary Embroidery of North America* (Newtown, CT: Taunton Press, 1991). A full-color overview of the artwork of 100 young "fiber artists," whose works are constructed of fabric and thread. Hundreds of rich visual examples are accompanied by edited excerpts about methodology, techniques, and narrative significance.

Tom Pickard:
writing poems
(keeping rabbits)
each day the shite
to be cleared
fresh straw to be laid.

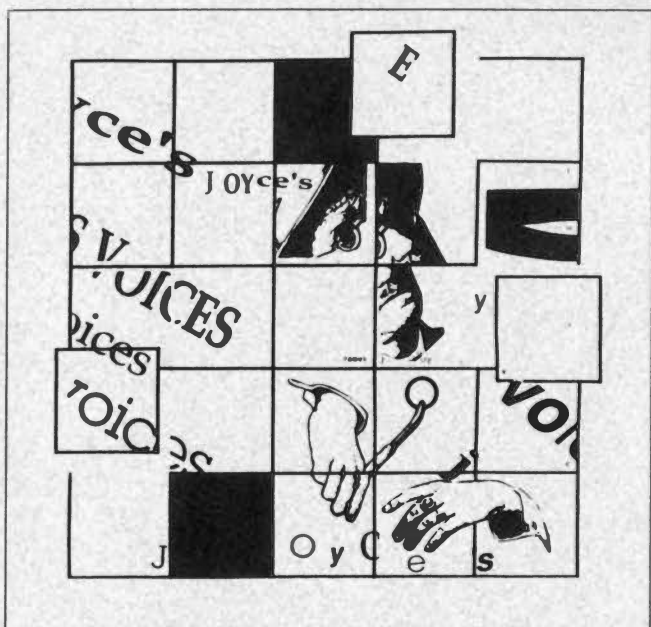


Linda Kleismeyer

His [Einstein's] one source of vanity, which he delighted in showing off to children, was his ability to wiggle his ears. Invariably, they wanted to know why he did not wear socks. One little girl even warned him, "Your mother will be afraid you'll catch cold." To a group of small boys who posed the question, he replied, "I've reached an age when if somebody tells me to wear socks, I don't have to." To others he claimed that he objected to someone having to mend the holes in his socks.

Jamie Sayon, *Einstein in America* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1985), p. 86.





Mindy Hauge

Note: The illustrations in this issue, with one exception, were developed by undergraduate graphic design students in the Department of Art, University of Northern Iowa, during October 1991. Most of the works resulted from a classroom problem in which each student was asked to produce an equivalent of the literary style of James Joyce, incorporating a 5x5 linear grid, the typographic phrase "Joyce's Voices" (from Hugh Kenner's book of the same title), and variations on the famous photograph of Joyce by Berenice Abbott.

Highly Recommended: F. Gonzalez-Crussi, *The Five Senses* (New York: Vintage, 1991). Paperback ed. Nomadic, eclectic, yet perfectly paced, these essays regarding perception consist of childhood memories, anecdotes, and unexpected comparisons from a medical pathologist, author of *Three Forms of Sudden Death* and *On the Nature of Things Erotic*.

Highly Recommended: John M. MacGregor. *The Discovery of the Art of the Insane* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989). Among the most outspoken champions of the art of the mentally ill was Paul Klee, the Bauhaus painter, who advised that the work of psychotics be "taken seriously, more seriously than all the public galleries when it comes to reforming today's art." This large and unusually thorough account (with hundreds of visual examples) is the first history of the art of the insane. To our knowledge, there is no better analysis of the transformation of attitudes toward the work of professional artists who became psychotic (Franz Xaver Messerschmidt and Richard Dadd, for example), as well as nonartists who practiced art as therapy.

...the Prime Minister's sister-in-law, Lady Arden, stopped in her carriage outside a shop which I will call Mangold and Wurzel. One of the partners, as was in those days the custom, came out to attend on Her Ladyship; and taking a dislike to his appearance she said: "If you're Mangold, send me Wurzel. If you're Wurzel, send me Mangold."

Edward Marsh. *A Number of People* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), p. 2.

One [of my students] was T.S. Eliot...He was extraordinarily silent, and only once made a remark which struck me. I was praising Heraclitus, and he observed: "Yes, he always reminds me of Villon." I thought this remark so good that I always wished he would make another.

Bertrand Russell, quoted in Wayne C. Booth, *The Vocation of a Teacher: Rhetorical Occasions 1967-1988* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

He [the British critic Roger Fry] was taking Lady Violet Bonham-Carter round the Post-Impressionist Exhibition, in which Cezanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin, etc., first blazed upon London, and finally led her up to *La Ronde* [the celebrated painting of dancing nudes by Henri Matisse]... "What do you think of *that*?" Lady Violet, whose soul was already a little fatigued by its adventures among so many novel masterpieces, gazed upon it in stupefaction, and at last brought out apologetically, "I don't think I quite like the shape of their legs." "Ah!" said Roger in a tone of triumph, "but don't you like the shape of the spaces *between* their legs?"

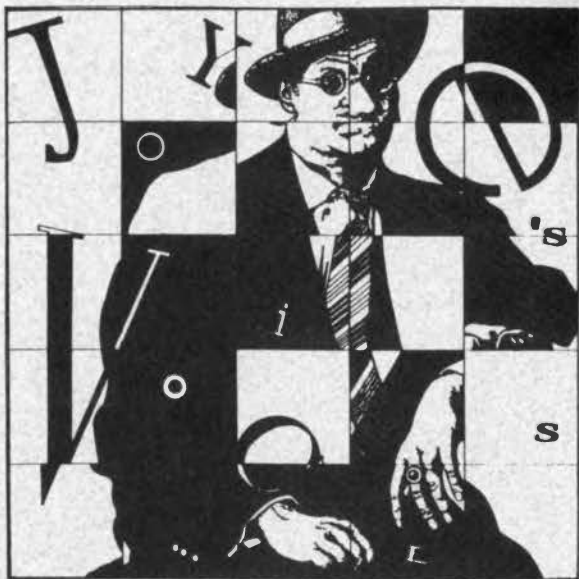
Edward Marsh, *A Number of People* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), p. 55.

The pursuing, baiting, or killing these animals, never at that time struck me as being cruel. The mind had not as yet been impressed with the feelings of humanity. This, however, came upon me at last; and the first time I felt the change happened by my having (in hunting) caught the hare in my arms, while surrounded by the dogs and the hunters, when the poor, terrified creature screamed out so piteously -- like a child -- that I would have given anything to have saved its life. In this, however, I was prevented; for a farmer well known to me, who stood close and, pressed upon me, and desired I would "give her to him"; and, from his being better able (as I thought) to save its life, I complied with his wish. This was no sooner done than he proposed to those about him, "to have a bit more sport with her," and this was to be done by first breaking one of its legs, and then again setting the poor animal off a little before the dogs. I wandered away to a little distance, oppressed by my own feelings, and could not join the crew again, but learned with pleasure that their intended victim had made its escape.

Thomas Bewick, *Memoir of Thomas Bewick Written by Himself 1822-1828* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961), pp. 9-10.

When I visited the States the first time in 1928, learning my first English on the boat from "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes," I came across a strange word which I tried promptly to use over the phone to the desk clerk at the Plaza Hotel. Wishing to have my shoes cleaned, I asked for the *bootlegger*.

Walter Gropius, quoted in Reginald Isaacs, *Gropius* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1990), p. 145.



Debra Goedken

Highly Recommended: Reginald Isaacs, *Gropius: An Illustrated Biography of the Creator of the Bauhaus* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1990). We approached this book expecting to be disappointed, in part because author and subject were friends, and because Walter Gropius, architect and educator, is unfairly but typically tied to the Modernist maxim "Less is more." But as this book freely and fluently shows, his life was perpetual intrigue (his love letters to Lily Hildebrandt are especially wonderful), with lacework and gingerbread at every portal.

At a party of old Mrs. Tennant's he [Sir Henry Morton Stanley, the famous explorer] crossed the room to where I was standing forlorn, and said: "I see you're looking neglected, so I've come to talk to you." This well-meant gambit completely froze the genial current of my soul, and neither of us could think of anything further to say.

Edward Marsh, *A Number of People* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), p. 41.

Johnny Carson: If God didn't want man to hunt, he wouldn't have given us plaid shirts.

The young composer, working that summer at an artist's colony, had watched her for a week. She was Japanese, a painter, almost sixty, and he thought he was in love with her. He loved her work, and her work was like the way she moved her body, used her hands, looked at him directly when she made amused and considered answers to his questions. One night, walking back from a concert, they came to her door and she turned to him and said, "I think you would like to have me. I would like that too, but I must tell you that I have had a double mastectomy," and when he didn't understand, "I've lost both my breasts." The radiance that he had carried around in his belly and chest cavity -- like music -- withered very quickly, and he made himself look at her when he said, "I'm sorry. I don't think I could." He walked back to his own cabin through the pines, and in the morning he found a small blue bowl on the porch outside his door. It looked to be full of rose petals, but he found when he picked it up that the rose petals were on top; the rest of the bowl -- she must have swept them from the corners of her studio -- was full of dead bees.

Robert Hass, "A Story about the Body" In Jack Myers and Roger Weingarten, editors, *New American Poets of the 90s* (Boston: David Godine, 1991), p. 131.

Recommended: Kurt Vonnegut, *Fates Worse than Death: An Autobiographical Collage of the 1980s* (New York: Putnam, 1991). In truth we have never been Vonnegut fans, largely because, as he confesses, he "will do anything to be funny" and, of course, anything isn't funny. Nevertheless, we were delighted with this book, maybe because it is just what it is, an autobiographical collage.



Karla Hackett Miller

Out of just a little string and matchboxes and so on, he [Albert Einstein] could make the most beautiful things. As a matter of fact, he always liked to improvise things of that sort, just as he would also like to improvise in his work in a way: for instance, when he had to give a talk he never knew ahead of time exactly what he was going to say. It would depend on the impressions he got from the audience in which way he would express himself and into how much detail he would go. And so this improvisation was a very important part of his character and of his way of working.

Hans Albert Einstein (Einstein's son), quoted by A.P. French in *Einstein: A Centenary Volume* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 174.

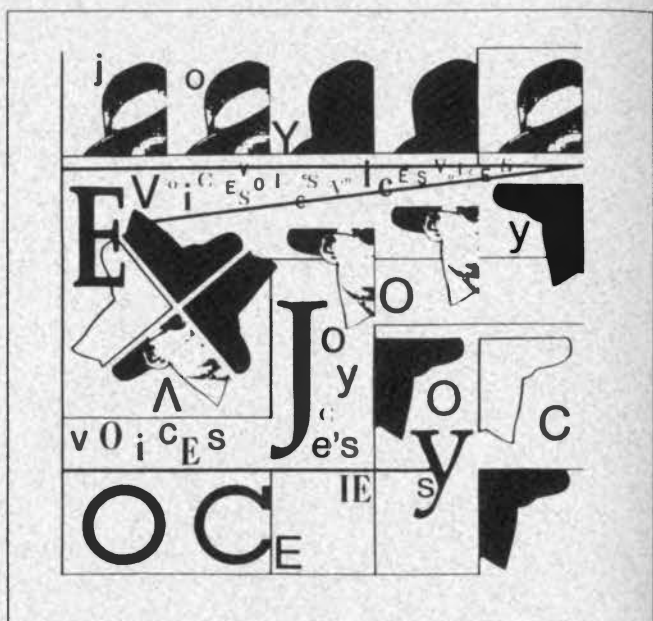
A sweet disorder in the dress
Kindles in clothes a wantoness:
A lawn about the shoulders thrown
Into a fine distraction:
An erring lace, which here and there
Enthrals the crimson stomacher:
A cuff neglectful, and thereby
Ribbands to flow confusedly:
A winning wave (deserving note)
In the tempestuous petticoat:
A careless shoestring, in whose tie
I see a wild civility:
Do more bewitch me, than when art
Is too precise in every part.

Robert Herrick, "Delight in Disorder" quoted in Jerry Newman, editor, *The Faber Book of Seductions* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 21.



Left Hypothetical postage stamp by Carolyn Carpenter

Highly Recommended: Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New York: Vintage, 1991). Paperback ed. Outrageous yet inoffensive, this book is not easy to dislike, regardless of whether one buys what it says. Nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award, it proposes that art was invented by males to counteract natural chaos. Sexuality is our closest connection with nature, with women more closely connected than men. "Art is a *shutting in* in order to *shut out*," says Paglia, "a ritualistic binding of the perpetual motion machine that is nature."



Linda Kleismeyer

Lucky accidents seldom happen to writers who don't work. You will find that you may rewrite and rewrite a poem and it never seems quite right. Then a much better poem may come rather fast and you wonder why you bothered with all that work on the earlier poem. Actually, the hard work you do on one poem is put in on all poems. The hard work on the first poem is responsible for the sudden ease of the second. If you just sit around waiting for the easy ones, nothing will come. Get to work.

Richard Hugo. *The Triggering Town* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979). Suggested by Phillip Fass, a reader from Cedar Falls, Iowa.

BALLAST is published in Iowa in a region increasingly listed among the most desirable places in which to live (alright so why not move here soon before we all go stir crazy!). All subscriptions (including gift subscriptions) must be mailed to the following address:

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BALLAST doesn't have a budget really. For six years, it has operated at a loss. Even if we demanded stamps from everyone who receives the magazine, we would still lose money on printing, without beginning to account for research, typesetting, paste-up, correspondence, picking raspberries, cutting firewood, staring at the autumn stars, listening for the Great Horned Owls (hoo hoo-hoo hoo hoo), and taking the puppy named Ruskin for walks. The losses are currently offset by donations from enlightened subscribers and generous deductions from the Reader Service Twerp's paycheck. If anyone is foolishly philanthropic (foolish because such contributions are surely not tax deductible), we will *sometimes* accept a check (made payable to Roy R. Behrens), encouraging words, and outlandish neckties.

AN APPEAL TO READERS

We are eager to hear about people who, standing in a field of clover, can point out four-leaf clovers at a glance. We know four such persons, all of whom have given us clusters of clovers as proof. Are there **BALLAST** readers, friends, or relatives who have the same ability? Ask around. Send stories, especially eyewitness accounts.

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