
Verbal Equinox

The Weber State University Writing Center Journal

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*Studies on how the right and left sides of the
brain function have shown that...people think in
images not words... (Barbara Ganim)*

Editorially Speaking --Mike Vier

Most of the writers I talk to are just as frustrated as they are pleased when the magical flow of metaphors and slippery concepts begin to crystalize onto a page. The ghost of the abstract has become concrete, but like trying to remember a dream, the process creeps back into the fog as we attempt to study it, and we seem to be left in a mysterious "aahhh--." We are pleased with our product, but frustrated with the realization that we have no idea how or why this level of writing came to be.

Often, in trying to describe the process, we use these words: "It just came to me." We feel powerless, and yet, we sign our names at the bottom and we imagine our readers' thoughts about us. "Wow, how do they do it? I wish I could write like that any time I wanted to." We let them think it about us, and we wish it were true. But that's not the only reason we sign our names. We also sign because we know that our lack of understanding the process doesn't mean we had nothing to do with the outcome. We own our better writing in the same way we own our subconscious--we are not sure whether we are creating it or it is creating us.

When I say "better writing," I am referring to that writing which is both concrete and abstract. Much like

looking at a good piece of art, it is concrete in that it is recognizable and understandable; it is abstract in that it is symbolic and mysterious. The things an artist paints are themselves concrete, but the way they are

painted to be somehow more or less than they really are, is abstract. The same holds true for writing. When Frank Decaria says, "Night is a creature squatting on its haunches in the crawl

space under a house," night has become abstract. This combination of concrete and abstract is what art and writing are all about.

But how is it accomplished? Is it just luck? Joseph Campbell, professor of philosophy at the University of Glasgow, once said, "The exact formulation of a problem takes one a long way on the road to its solution" (386). So today, I will first define the problem in more detail and then introduce nine tools to enhance abstract thinking.

The problem, to be exact, is this: good things come out of our subconscious mind and show up in our writing. We don't know how to make this happen on command because we don't know how to get our conscious mind into our subconscious mind. When we become conscious of our subconscious, it is no longer

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subconscious but conscious. One may argue that the problem may be solved by simply awaking from a dream, (subconscious) and then recording what is remembered of the dream (conscious) onto paper. But this is really no answer at all because it brings up an even bigger problem. How do I dream about what I want to write about, and would I be able to remember enough of it to benefit my writing if I could dream on command?

Further defined, the dilemma is that we are trying to bridge left (concrete) and right (abstract) brain thinking, and we have been taught in this society that only left brain thinking is acceptable. A stem finger points at abstract thinking and tries to make it concrete. This intimidator shows up in the off-hand comments we were raised with, comments like: "What exactly do you mean?" "Stay on task!" "Explain yourself." or even just "Why?" These comments have their place in the functional world in which we live; however, they also tend to become a curb for the mind. They foreclose any mental drifting that could occur with the threat of, "You had dam well better be able to explain what you're doing over there in the weeds!" This is not always possible for a child (or a natural abstract thinker) to do. So, rather than look like an inarticulate idiot every time we have disconnected thoughts, we curb our thoughts and we institutionalize the weed thinkers. We are too much concerned with making sense; we are too much concerned with even flow; we are too much concerned with a finished product; we are too much concerned with mental institutions.

All of these concerns can really be funneled into one fear, a fear of becoming lost in the weeds without a North Star, and this fear has one thing in common with all other phobias-it is not rational. It is not rational to think that if you cannot explain every thought, feeling, or idea you have, you're going to become autistic. For example, most people talk about romantic love as

being the ultimate experience in life; however, when asked to explain it, they almost always include in their explanation this phrase, "words cannot express." Do we throw them into mental institutions? No! We look at the object of their new-found affection and we see a pudgy teenager with pimples. Do we accuse them of hallucinating? No! So why don't we accept other inexplicable thoughts and feelings within ourselves as being wonderful thoughts too?

The actual reality of this world is that the larger part of it is unexplained. One of the most fascinating aspects of the subconscious mind is that it has the ability to reason on its own. Scary. It is creating and pushing out ideas constantly, but as logical, rational, white-knuckled adults we have learned to dismiss anything we cannot explain to local authorities. Now that we, as writers, are agreed to let drifters drift, how do we join them? How do we get over the curb without bending the wheels of our bikes? It is simpler than you may expect. We stop dismissing our fragmented ideas. Realize that dismissers are like insidious little minus signs. They subtract from the whole person those interesting parts that give us definition-leaving nothing memorable. When a drifter jumps the curb and heads for the weeds, we need to understand that he/she is only feeling without explaining. He/She is only thinking without censoring and, if you want to know the truth, this is what the psychologist means by "risking." This is what the poet calls a window to the soul. It is the capacity and willingness to be intimate. It is a bubble that surfaces from the core leaving a pink moist tunnel to intimacy-Don't cork it with a question!

--Look for Mike's tools throughout this issue--

Never Too Late

--Marie C. Alvarez (1st Place Short Story Winner)

She was waiting for me at the edge of a glen, a shy little girl with wispy hair and large mischievous eyes. There was something oddly familiar about her, as if she reminded me of someone somewhere in my past. I looked at her through half-closed eyes, waiting for that moment of recognition to dawn and found that I could not help but giggle. She had such a comical look on her face.

I got closer and closer to her and still she clung to that old fence post. It leaned so precariously I could not tell for sure if she was holding it up, or if it was the other way around. One thing I was sure of, this child was bound to be covered with splinters. When I reached her side, she took my hand and led off at a gallop. She looked back and smiled in reassurance, and I smiled back, surprised at my agility in keeping up with her.

The trees at the edge of the glen became a blur as we plummeted headlong into unknown destinations, but it did not matter. An overwhelming sense of curiosity had taken hold of my other hand and I found I was quite helpless to stop, even if I had wanted to. In the distance, I could see what seemed to be a field of snow, something quite incongruous in the middle of such an obviously summer day. But as we ran toward it, I realized that what had seemed to be snow was actually a choking mass of dandelion puffballs. It did not matter to her. She kept on running right through it, and the air exploded in a burst of stars. The seeds were like tiny little air ships setting out in quest of new fields to conquer. They were everywhere: on my hair, in my nose, my mouth, above, and around me. My little friend looked back and beamed. Not a word, not even a sound, just that look of victory on her face.

The exploding field quickly gave way to sand dune --- hot, dry, and shifting. We had no choice but to slow down. She held on to my hand as she scampered with practiced steps down the sloping dunes and onto the shore. She finally halted her breakneck plunge at the edge of the water and we walked silently toward some rising cliffs. We found a cave at the foot of one of them and walked in. It was deep and the sand was dry. The wind that blew in constantly made sure that whatever humidity had been left by the last incoming tide was well dissipated by the time we got there. We found a likely spot and sat down. My little waif, I still did not know her name, sat on my lap and snuggled as close to me as she possibly could. The smell of the sea seemed to concentrate itself inside and we could hear the echo of the crashing surf as it bounced off the back of our cave.

Soon, I started to notice that the water was creeping closer and closer. The tide was coming. Startled, I made a move as if to rise, only to be held back by "Waif." She looked up at me with a gentle, knowing smile and reclaimed the comfort zone I had so rudely displaced. So we sat there, and looked as the water came and finally engulfed us.

This child, this day, was full of surprises. Ever since I toppled off a boat many years ago, I had been scared of open water. Yet, here I was, swimming--without a snorkel, without a mask, without a fear in the world.

Waif led me toward a coral reef and, with experienced hand, reached out and touched the corals, the sponges, the fish. I just held my place and looked, transfixed, at the ease with which she swam among these creatures. Each

was more dazzling, more brilliant than the one before. We hesitated in front of an oyster bed and watched them rhythmically open and close their shells, taking in whatever nutrients the swarming tide offered up. They reminded me of diners at a Chinese restaurant, curiously eyeing steaming platters of Dim Sum and picking this or that morsel. Waif looked at me with expectation in her eyes. Somehow, I knew exactly what she wanted me to do. So I waited for one of the oysters to open its shell once more and this time I reached in. The shell remained open, and mingled feelings of awe, respect, Jove, and trust swept over me like the waves that surrounded us. Tenderly I stroked it willie remembering something I had read years ago . . . "Crises are to the spirit as grains of sand are to an oyster. A few create pearls, too many kill the mollusk." I ran my fingers around the edge of the mantle and gingerly placed them under its body. I felt something there, somethings, actually. They felt smooth and round and I touched three of whatever they were. The child at my side watched intently while I, who had thought myself too old, played with my new-found friend. Gently, I pinched the three objects and pulled them out from their hiding place. Laying them on the cupped palm of my hand I gazed, wonder struck, at the little pearls. The largest one was a pinkish color, just about the right size for a ring for her finger, the other two were smaller still. I placed them back where I had found them to grow some more, stroked my oyster one last time, and carefully removed my hand. It was then, and only then, that it closed its shell, leaving me feeling very humble indeed.

Waif looked at me out of ancient eyes and once again smiled. It was then that I remembered. No longer nameless, she reminded me of myself, or rather, a photo of myself when I was around five years old. There it was all over again, that same determined step, that same look

of self-assuredness. Where had it all gone? When? Slowly, we swam back to shore with me doing the hand holding this time. As we walked towards the dunes, I noticed a certain resistance from Maggie. She was not yet ready to join me in my adult world, and I--well, I was not yet ready to abandon myself to my lost childhood. We looked at each other, realizing this had been but the first of many visits.

She turned back towards the shore and busied herself picking and choosing from among the myriad shells that dotted the seascape. Halfway up the dunes I stopped and turned, looking back at the tiny speck of humanity; and sensing my gaze, she looked up at me. For the briefest of moments our gazes locked, then we smiled, and went our separate ways.



Distort Your Senses

Tool #5 deals with the five senses.

These senses have much to do with the way we experience and perceive life.

So if you want an abstracted or distorted way of experiencing life, why not start by distorting one or several of your five senses?

- Look at your house through several layers of cellophane.
- Listen to your spouse's favorite monologue with your ears submerged in water.
- Walk around the block on stilts.
- Drink a glass of milk with a chunk of tuna wedged in one nostril.
- Run through a sanctuary.
- Make love on the roof (better use an anchor).

Now you're ready to write descriptively in an abstract way.

THE BOX

--Xaidie Newey (First Place Winner, Essay)

In front of me sits a pewter jewelry box. It is small, about the size of a large man's fist. The cold gray metal contrasts with the raised figures of dancing common folk. The scenes depicted every aspect of life. On the lid, there is a man and woman dancing gaily in front of a woodsman's hut. The engraved lines, representing the ground, swirl beneath them-- adding a sense of motion to the happy commoners. The top is round with a lip on one side for easy opening. On the lip is an outline of a shield. The lines on the shield are not straight, implying that they were drawn by hand. The front side of this quaint little box displays the king's hunt. In a thicket lies a murdered buck at the mercy of two men with bows. A resting horse stands nearby. Below the scene of the hunt are the pewter legs of the box, raising it about a finger's width off the flat surface. These legs are intricate with swoops and swirls, an indication of a time when kings built castles and ladies promenaded in their gardens. The ridges and peaks, on the box and in its scenes, have a polished sheen while the inverted areas are darkened, leaving one with a sense of vacancy.

I pick the box up off the shelf. Lots of interesting antiques are in this one-roomed basement store. I chose this store because of the stairway that led down into it; I am not disappointed. The stairs were unreasonably steep and it took some careful foot work and rail holding to descend them. The cement of the stairs was chipped away and, under native circumstances, would have caused me to steer clear of such a forbidding basement stairwell. But in Odessa, Ukraine in 1993, it is rather well-kempt. The door at the foot of the stairwell is made of hard wood, painted green long ago. Now the paint is

peeling and the door is warped, letting the cold November air haunt the antique dealership.

"How much?" I ask, holding up the recently examined box for the store keeper to see. The store keeper is a woman of about forty-five. She sits at a desk, bent over receipts, trying to decipher the authenticity of her antiques under a forty watt bulb. She looks up and growls, "You have American money?"

"Yes." I reply, as I take out a dollar bill to prove I'm not lying.

"It will cost more than one dollar. It will cost fifteen."

"Oh, that's too much." I say, and put the box down. I'm used to this. Fifteen is not too much for the box, but it's the principle of the matter. I'm not going to let her get my money without a fight.

"How much you got?" she stammers.

"Five." I really have fifty.

"I must to eat; my son starves. I need twelve." It's a cheap blow, but she's probably telling the truth.

"I'll give you seven."

"Ten."

"Ok." I carefully pull out a ten dollar bill and hand it to her. She examines the bill closely to check for counterfeiting, then takes the box, wraps it in tissue, and places it in my hand. I, in turn, carefully tuck the box into the corner of my bag, wrap my scarf around my neck, button my wool trench coat up to my chin, place my gray rabbit fur hat on my head, fold down the earflaps, put on my gloves, smile at the antique dealer, and turn to the heavy green door.

Out on the street the wind whistles. I tuck my chin closer to my chest in an effort to keep the last draft out,

and in doing so, I see the decrepit sidewalks already crystallizing over with promise of a winter storm. Under foot, the leaves swirl. Old women try to sweep them, but the wind makes their efforts futile. I play "don't step on the cracks or you'll break your mother's back" as I start down the street. It is impossible not to break my mother's back. Between dodging the cracks in the pavement and the frozen phlegm spots, I find myself leaping all over. As I tire of my game, I notice a woman sitting on a staircase. Her hands are red from the chill of the air, and she rocks back and forth, trying to keep the blood flowing. The building not sheltering her is tall. Single cement slabs the size of the rooms are precariously glued together by thin cement. Sixteen stories loom over the old woman, looking as if they might fall and bury her beneath their rubble. She does not look opposed to this idea. Next to this modern phenomenon of Soviet architecture stands a smaller building which now contains a store where one can purchase food for dollars. It looks like a Venetian townhouse, or something one would find on the banks of the French Riviera. The pale, yellow, stucco store contrasts sharply with the paintless monster beside it.

The sky begins to darken as night promises to blanket the old dilapidated town. Odessa was the famous sea port of Peter the Great. The main street is named Yekaterinskaya after Katherine the Great. Near the old opera house is a sultan's palace that has existed from the time of the Byzantine Empire. This is the home of the formerly famous Black Sea Fleet, pride and joy of the Soviet Union. Now drunken sailors, beaten women, and starving strays defeat the grandeur of its former days as a vacation spot to Tsars and Communists. The Black Sea is frozen.

I look for Andre, my money changer. I feel guilty

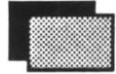
when I support the Russian Mafia by spending dollars in their almost-American grocery stores, so I need to change my remaining forty dollars and buy some cabbage and potatoes from the local farmer's market. I trust Andre.

I have traded with him before and he wants to keep my business. I see him across the street but, as he sees me, he gives me a forbidding look and turns his back to go into a store. Surveying the graying scene, I notice five of the Ukrainian Guard rounding the corner and understand why Andre won't change with me today. The Mafia wants to keep their business flowing through the "legitimate" banks, which are open one hour per week, so they hire the Guard to arrest all who undercut them. Then again, Andre may be part of the Mafia and the Guard is actually upholding peace, justice, and the Ukrainian way. Whatever they are doing, I don't want to be a part of it. I turn the other way, my heart beating along with the pulsating drums in my head. I walk quickly home to my apartment between Yekaterinskaya and Pushkina.

In my apartment, I sit down to survey my purchase. My happy little pewter box. I can only imagine where it came from, a world which contrasts so sharply with the reality outside my door. I tuck it safely away in my suitcase, saying a prayer that I will be able to get it through customs a year from now when I am able to leave this country and go home where I feel safe.

It is November 1995. I don't know what Odessa is like now, but as I sit at my computer looking at my little box and listening to Chopin, I remember. And remembering, I do not open this box. I already know what I will find there. It will be a mishmash of collected earrings from all over the world, encased in purple velvet. They are uninteresting to me in comparison with the box. I absently switch off my computer and slowly place my box back on the window sill. It seems so far from me

now, almost like a dream or a James Bond movie. Details of conversations, frustrations of living conditions, and mentalities of brainwashed citizens now out to scrape a living for their families fade, but the smell of human hopelessness, the feeling of entrapment, the heartache for people who are so beautiful and in so much pain lingers on, seared into my heart and soul. I am worlds away from them; yet they are, and will always be, a part of me. I love my little box because I see the dignity of the craftsman. This same craftsman was also dehumanized, raped; he is alive in the box. And in retrospect, I see the dignity of the soul of man timidly peak around the facade of terror as I remember the brave souls who continue to live and fight and believe that tomorrow, at least, has a chance of being better than today.



Create Your Own Mistake By Combining the Unlikely

Tool #3 may surprise you, but it shouldn't because we do it all the time without trying.

Create your own mistake.

That's it.

Create your own mistake.

One may argue that it is not a mistake

if you're doing it on purpose, but humor me by going along with the terminology for now.

One way to do this

is the same way

Reeses Peanut-butter Cups were created.

Simply try

putting two unlikely object together

--like chocolate and peanut butter.

Or experiment with an object and a concept.

There are countless combinations.

Poetry, Essay, and Short Story

Writing Contest

Fall Quarter

Writing Center 1995 Winners

Poetry: (65 Entries) Judged by Margaret Rostkowski, teacher of English and author of After the Dancing Days.

1st: Mariane Balay "*Tenses*"
2nd: Mike Vier "*The Lip of Loneliness*"
3rd: Mariane Balay "*Birthday Poem*"

1stHM: Megan Hansen "*In That Moment*"
2ndHM: Mariane Balay "*Painting*"
3rdHM: Susannah Rojo "*If I Had a Dog I'd Kick It*"

Essay: (15 Entries) Judged by Bob Sawatzki, editor of *rough draft*.

1st: Xaidie Newey "*The Box*"
2nd: Nancy Smith "*Rise, Take Up Thy Bed, and Walk*"
3rd: RoLayne Staffanson "*The Haystack*"

Short Story: (9 Entries) Judged by Sherry Lewis, novelist and community education teacher.

1st: Marie C. Alvarez "*Never Too Late*"
2nd: Adam Cheney "*Fish Tank*"
3rd: Adam Cheney "*ball, basket*"

*In the brush doing what it's doing,
it will stumble on what one can't do by oneself
--Robert Motherwell*

and wield us up a pretty hot metaphor.

Tenses

--Mariane Balay (First Place Winner)

|

I have seen you walk the streets.
Your army of November,
The color that leaves you hungry.

The earth has grown cold.
Chameleon tremble leaves.
You don't notice until you see
Your breath painted in the air.

The birds are shriek-shrieking,
Bawling shadows in the murked
Quiet skies.

||

Strange quiet now.
Quiet of you
Sleeping miles beside me.

I am quiet of waiting.

You dream my hair,
 "River hair," you say.
You dream river black-blue hair,
 "Water
 fall hair," you say.

|||

You are dreaming a sleep,
Movements like a child.
You throw a ball through
A glass door shatters.
I walk to you
With wet open feet.

You are dreaming of our child.
Smoothed beads worried
A faded grey.
There are candles burning
flickering with verses
From fast furious lips.
I touch the small
Of your back.
Across the distance
You turn back to me.

Above all else remember this: whatever you do to abstract, let it be you.

The Lip of Loneliness

--Michael Vier (Second Place Winner)

She lites fires to keep her warm
and she tries to understand why
they don't stay lit.
Her neighbors seem to have soft lights
coming from their windows.

Their minds at ease.
Their feet well padded.

She sleeps with her mind in a glass
next to the lamp, and when she goes to bed
at night, it is there to look at,
if she wants to.

It is what praying used to be.
It is her turn to be God.

She hopes that the bend in the road will
soon straighten, but she knows that this circle
gets smaller each time around

Leading to that dot in the center.
Leading to that center in the dot.

She sleeps with her feet out the window,
and the lamp is on both day and night. The early
walkers look to see those feet.

Out in the wind of the world.
Out lighting fires for the day.

Let that healthy self-esteem crush those insidious dismissers.

Birthday Poem

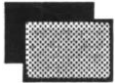
--Mariane Balay (Third Place Winner)

Across the river
Across that river
Across that river

I am not
She/ I am
Not she

My palm is bruised
I am indigo,
a twilight
mountains turning.

I wait
for the trees to break
Jarred by the rain
caught
inside me



Tool #4: Write about the Essence of the Concrete Object Rather than the Object Directly

Tool #4 came from a man named Siah Armajani.

He said this: "Conceptually I like people, but I like to be away from them" (Armajani speech). He likes the concept of people or the essence of people, but to be with the actual person is not his preference. I found this to be very interesting and occasionally true to myself. I also found a tool for abstraction in his comment. Think about what you "like or dislike in an object, and rather than writing about the object or person, write about how they make you feel.

Tool #4 is sequential because first you would have to identify the object or concept in its natural state.

RISE, TAKE UP THY BED, AND WALK

--Nancy Smith (Second Place Winner,
Essay)

I trudged wearily into Elkhorn campground, my shoes glued to my Sweaty fee and the backpack dragging on my shoulders. I thought I would be glad to be back in civilization. The din was almost deafening. Kids yelling, adult talking and clanging pans. Camper doors slamming, engines roaring, generators rumbling. Smoke clung to the trees and stung my eyes. As weary as I was from ten days of trekking in the mountains, my instincts told me to turn and run back to the hills. Panic hit me. The others in front of me shifted their heavy packs and marched on. I almost turned back, away from the effects of too much humanity in too little space.

... A part of us felt the tugging in our hearts to go back to the mountains again over our lives. The wind still blows down the steep slopes, the mood of the sky still changes in the late afternoon from sunny-warm to wet and cold. My heart still feels the drawing to a different way of life that few ever experience. Only those who have felt the wind in their face as they push themselves up a ravine to see the view of endless mountains and lakes can truly appreciate the struggle that takes place in the human heart. The struggle to find what one can do when put to the test. Life isn't always easy, the load not always light, and the road not always sure. . . I am different today because I left the ease of civilization and took the challenge: "Rise, take up thy bed and walk."

something that you will regret later because, in this case, we are not really saying it, we're writing it, and we can retrieve it before any damage is done. The biggest foreclosure to the abstraction process is that we refuse to write our sentences on paper until they are finished in our heads. This is called speed writing, or trying to write faster than you can analyze, categorize, sterilize, and hypnotize yourself into believing that you're a fit product for society.

FISH TANK

--Adam Cheney
(Second Place Winner
Short Story)

So. I know they're different and strange.
warn people that they are strange very quietly 'cause I don't want to hurt their feelings. My neighbors will usually ask me how you can know if you have a strange neighbor. I tell them the easiest way. Beware a neighbor with a fish tank in the front window. And then, as a favor, I tell them where they can get their own set of binoculars to watch them through.

HAYSTACK

--RoLayne Staffanson
(Third Place Winner
Essay)

One has to experience a haystack in spring to capture the peace and harmony of the moment--a slight breeze blowing, mixing the fragrance of the barnyard and freshly cut hay, the sound of the cows jostling for position at the feed boxes, the intense green of the pasture. I sat there, my legs dangling over the edge, absorbing the sights, sounds, and smells into my skin. "What are you doing up there?" came a voice from below. "You'll be late for school." I sighed and climbed down. Reality, like a cow's muddy tail had called me back.

Tool #5: Begin Writing The Sentence Before It Is Finished In Your Head

Do what we tell our kids not to do--speak without thinking, another way to by-pass the judgement center, or the left hemisphere of the brain. Go ahead, say

ball,basket

--Adam Cheney (Third Place Winner,Short Story)

. . . He glanced at his feet and saw the foul line seeringly demarking the floor; he sought straight ahead for the hoop finding that it also taunted him. The people behind it were jeering him and holding up pictures of women and signs that were designed to aggravate his calm. He simply didn't have any to aggravate so the signs were lost on him. His team was behind by one point and a second glance at the box told him he had no time on the clock. Maybe the number of the beast in *Revelations* should have been 0:00. He'd have to talk to John the Revelator about that later.

Time had really frozen. The referee was the only one who seemed unaffected. He walked over with a clipped pace that marked him as the other team's friend. *Are you alright, son?* he asked with a certain amount of sincerity. A simple nod in the affirmative made him go back to his side of the court.

He looked down at the ball again as if for the first time. He needed to put the ball in the basket it seemed. The hoop looked a little big for such a small ball. No problem.

He dropped it to make sure it bounced. Had to check it a second time, too. He had two shots to make, so he tested the ball once for each shot. Ball,basket--a simple, almost poetic, conjunction. He tried to remember if he had read a poem that sounded like those two words. He decided he hadn't. He'd have to write one.

He looked at the hoop and thought about what he had to do. The players on either side were getting even jumpier than some of the girls. Not all of the girls, fortunately. The ball bounced. That was good. It was

small. That was good. The hoop was big. That was good. They were behind;that was bad. He didn't know that the people in the pictures being held up could do things like that. He decided he'd have to write a poem about that, too. Ball,basket;people,picture. That was good.

He set the ball on the ground and wiped his palms off on his shorts. He thought he knew what to do. His friend, at least he thought it was his friend because their jerseys matched,reminded him just in case--*ball, basket* (people, picture): *kinda like math*. He failed math. That wasn't so good.

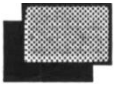
He picked up the ball. It was lighter this time. He didn't know if that was good or bad. He simply reversed his hand and set the ball into it, and then,using his other hand as a guide, he push-rolled the ball, giving it a final correction an? spin with a flick of the fingernail of his longest finger. The ball sailed in a geometrical arc toward the hoop. He wondered what the area under the arc was: if he drew a straight line from his hand at the launch point to the basket,the ball would create an arc once it went into the basket. The area of that arc should be calculable by doing something with pi. (He didn't fail math that bad,but he wished he'd paid more attention in geometry. Or was it calculus?) He wished he knew the area so he could use it for the second shot.

The ball went in. For one brief second his silence failed him. Everything crashed in on him at once. The girls screaming, the pictures being held up behind the basket, the ball bouncing on the court,his team cheering loudly, the ref with the clipped pace ... then it stopped.

He had just reminded himself that everyone was still there. That was good.

The clipped-pace ref gave him back the ball. He didn't want it. He had put it in the hoop already. Someone else could have it now. More and more games were won on the final shot it seemed. He set the ball down, wiped his hands on his shorts again, checked his metaphors, and picked the ball back up. Just do that one more time, his jerseyed friend said. He really had to find out that kid's name. He kinda liked him, he decided.

What if I miss? What if I lose the game for us right here, right now? Do any of those really excited girls know my name? Can I face the world if I miss? This is just a game. That's good.



Tool #6: Say It Plainly

Tool #6 came to me by way of Sundry

Watanabe. Sundry is a talented poet

who seems to be able to abstract

naturally. She simply writes the poem

in plain English, not necessarily in an

artful way, and without symbolism.

Just get the message, or feeling, that you

wish to explore onto paper in

a clear plain sentence. Now you can

abstract. (Watanabe) Now there is a

base to push off of. Now you can

bend this thought or melt that one and

see how far you can distort it without

losing the message. Usually, rather

than lose the message, the message is

artfully strengthened.

--Mike Vier

In That Moment

--Megan Hansen
(Honorable Mention)

Icarus, in that moment when the heat
Licked your body--

I felt it too.

Across epics, miracles, and mysteries,

A piece of me ripped away from the
Earth and flew into the sun.

That part of me that knows there is
More than just the undressed greys
Of existing.

I felt the Earth tremble from the
Impact--so far away--a mother to her
Only son.

I heard the cry torn out of your
Body--escaping into the
Charred night.

I tasted the salt as the sea rushed
Back to her lover--afraid.

You, Icarus.

A splash of color, blood, and life--
Dissolving into the blue heat of a
Perfect and beautiful death.

**Tool #7: Consider How You
Would Feel About An Issue If
You Had A Different Belief
System, or No Belief System At
All**

Painting

--Mariane Balay
(Honorable Mention)

Brush barely rusted
to sweep
yellow face
under a fool's moon.
My ears grind the music
I can't hear.
Sing with me,
I am halfway home.

Eyes of coal.
Eyes that whip.
To be that man,
full of regret.
Wanting to love
the girl with long hair.
Something close to joy,
Something close to honesty.

Whispering early,
how holy the colors
that do not belong to me.
The drunk man weaves.
He falls down like
something is missing . . .

I will
I will
I will follow.

Tool #7 has to do with an understanding of the way we think. According to Barbara Ganim, art therapist and cofounder of The Center For Holistic Development in Kingstown RI, "... studies on how the right and left sides of the brain function have shown conclusively that, contrary to popular belief, people think in images, not words" (37). She goes on further to say that this imagitic perception begins in the subconscious mind, in the right hemisphere of the brain. These images are then transferred to the left hemisphere where they are analyzed, categorized, judged, and altered to conform to one's belief system, and emotional state at the time. In this way, our beliefs shape the way we think. However, our beliefs are not always a true reflection of the way we feel because they alter our feelings by judging them. Tool #7 will facilitate combining unlikely objects because it is usually our belief system that won't allow us to do so. This is the reason that up to now, you have never heard of a "drywallogist." We believe that the "gist" endings should be reserved for professions that require a formal education.

If I Had A Dog I'd Kick It

--Susannah Rojo
(Honorable Mention)

Sighing obscenities
I shuffled across
the cold linoleum
and
picked up
the newspaper.
Wet
dripping
newsprint
spilled upon the floor
leaving
little puddles
of unfinished business
to attend to
later.

Tool #8: Write The Impossible

Fortunately, this is not as hard as it
sounds. When I write about what is
not possible, I am using the right side
of my brain because what is not
possible is also not logical, not
rational, and not left hemisphere.
Therefore, it is abstract. For example,
it is not possible to obtain funding for
the development of genetically
designed deer antlers that grow in the
shape of kitchen utensils (like rolling
pins and potato mashers) causing
women to hassle men less about going
deer hunting and thereby saving
marriages all across the nation and
reducing the money spent on welfare;
it is not possible to obtain funding for
this.



Tool #9 Write The Possible

(Why be consistent?) When we write
the possible, we are also facilitating
right brain thinking because we are
writing what could possibly be, and
that is fiction. As before, start with the lead-in
of "It is possible." For example,
I have a coarse wooden guitar. It is
possible that this guitar was made by
a bored gypsy male as an escape from
the ever-dethroning looks that his
disappointed wife cast at him from her
side of the wagon. It is possible that I
picked it up while learning to chop
wood, and that all those frayed fibers
could amount to something someday.
It is also possible that we all play
coarse wooden instruments and wear
the slivers like jewelry.

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