



Artistic Freelance Writing:
How to Use Art and Imagery in Your Writing

published by <http://www.FreelanceWriting.com>

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Artistic Writing

From the many definitions of art which authors have written, the best and most useful definition is summed up by the Italian philosopher, **Benedetto Croce**. To Croce, art is "intuition." That is to say, art is vision, contemplation, imagination, fancy, figurations, representations , and so on.

Art is derived from the artist's power to conceive and bring forth images. These images are not an accumulation of parts; they are not a series; they are not a group of interdependent organs. But each image is a oneness, a totality, a nexus of parts. It is an intuition conceived and brought forth perfect. When we see a person, we do not see an accumulation of arms, legs, ears, hands, feet, and so on; we see a human being. Art is like that. The artist conceives images complete, and (if he is a true artist) he conveys them to other people complete.

These two principles — **imagination** and **completeness** — are the bone and sinew of art. **Historical fiction** differs from history in that the one makes the reader see the past, and the other makes him know it.

Architecture differs from mere construction in that one makes an observer see a building as an image, and the other makes him know it as something to be used. **Painting** differs from photography in that one creates a unified image, while the other creates a collection of unselected images.



Art need not be beautiful; it need not teach a lesson; it need not be true or untrue; it need not be moral or immoral; it need not be useful or non-useful; it need not be realistic or unrealistic. That which is perceived as a complete and unified image merely that is art.

With this conception of art as intuition, or perfectly conceived image, **Benedetto Croce** includes another idea. The real source of the image is feeling; the image is but a symbol of feeling; **art is feeling the image**.

Suppose we give a concrete illustration. The neighbor owns a police dog. To me the dog is a useless, noisy, meddlesome animal; to the neighbor he is a joyous, faithful, courageous friend; to the casual passerby he is a dangerous and detestable creature who may bite unoffending strangers without provocation. If the three of us described the dog or painted a picture of him, we would create three unique images. Our individual feelings about the dog would determine what he would look like in our writing efforts.

In the same way, the last decade, for example, may be imaginatively conceived as dashing and adventurous, superstitious and ridiculous, gentle and beautiful, or mysterious and supernatural. A story of New York City in December may be romantic and gallant or sordid and ugly. Life as a writer may be gently humorous, grimly tragic, or broadly farcical. *Feeling*, by itself, *determines what the image is to be*.



Kinds of Images

We have been speaking of images as if all of them were pictures. And as a matter of fact, the great majority of images do appeal to the sense of sight by being made up of details of color, form, and motion. Yet other sorts of images are equally the material of art images of sound, of taste, of touch, of smell, of temperature, of sensations in the vital organs and in the muscles. Except for images of sound, most of the list seldom play a part in writing. They deserve attention not only because they are neglected, but because when they are used, they are generally effective.

An appeal to the senses is the only way to create images. Mere factual knowledge is worse than nothing so far as art is concerned. To say that a building faces south; that its reception hall is forty-five feet long and twenty-two feet wide; that the hall contains three tables and fourteen chairs this means nothing at all to one looking for artistic writing. And no more does it mean anything that a man is about five feet and ten inches tall; that he weighs about one hundred and fifty pounds; that his eyes are blue and his hair dark. **Such exact details are not imaginative. They are scientific. They have no place in artistic writing.**



Imaginative Words

Some words, or patterns of words, make pleasing or suggestive sound-images irrespective of their meaning. But since we have already spoken of these sound-images made by words, we must confine ourselves to the images involved in the accepted meanings of certain words. That is, we must talk of words that recall sense impressions.

a. Concrete Words. It is an old principle that concrete words are preferable to abstract. They are preferable because they are imaginative.

"*It was autumn,*" is not so imaginative as, "*The last of the leaves were falling, and the earth was spread with brown and gold.*"

"*The sun rose,*" is not so imaginative as, "*The red and swollen sun lifted itself over the eastern wall.*"

"*In winter,*" is not so imaginative as, "*When icicles hang by the wall.*"

Every good writer has a similar urge to transform the abstract into the concrete. Hardly a bald, factual statement exists but it can be dignified and vivified by concrete imaginative expression.



Scottish novelist **Robert Louis Stevenson** does not say, "*Death makes life lonely for the living*," but, "*There are empty chairs, solitary walks, and single beds at night*."

American author and essayist **Washington Irving** does not say, "*It grew darker in Westminster Abbey*," but, "*The chapels and aisles grew darker and darker. The effigies of the kings faded into shadows; the marble figures of the monuments assumed strange shapes in the uncertain light; the evening breeze crept through the aisles into the cold breath of the grave*."

b. Polly Symbolic Words. All words symbolize something; but some words symbolize several things. Naturally, a writer's meaning becomes richer if he can substitute the latter sort of word for words that symbolize only one object, idea, or emotion. The following is a list to suggest the possibilities of such substitutions. In the list, the first of each pair of words appeals to one sense only; the second word appeals to several senses.

1.

Black sight

Pitchy sight and touch

2.

White sight

Snowy sight and temperature



3.

Gray sight

Leaden sight and weight

4.

Sticky touch

Viscid touch and sight

5.

Sore touch

Raw touch and sight

6.

Hot temperature

Fiery temperature and sight

7.

Soft touch

Cottony touch and sight

8.

Weep sight

Sob sight, sound, and motion



9.

Cut sight

Chop sight, sound, and motion

c. Atmospheric Words. These words with their complex imagery are close kin to the next sort of words we will consider, namely, words with atmosphere. To indicate what is meant by "atmosphere," we have only to recall the old joke about the foreign gentleman who complimented the American woman: "What a lovely hide you have!" Hide was just what the gentleman meant; but the atmosphere of the word is wrong: no lady would endure it.

In the same way, we cannot write (as in the old example), "The lady held a lily in her fist," though that is what she did. We cannot write, "George went crazy," but must say, "George became insane." We cannot write, "Heifetz is one of the world's greatest fiddlers," but must say, "Heifetz is one of the world's greatest violinists."

These illustrations explain atmosphere very well. It is the aura which surrounds a word, the associations linked to it, the ideas, images, and emotions which come to the reader when he chances on the word.

The business of the writer is not merely to avoid such ludicrous errors as those mentioned above, but to find words which will enrich his meaning by adding clusters of appropriate images to his words. Thus, to use an



example already mentioned in another connection, the sentence, "*She lay between white sheets*," tells the reader merely that the linen was clean. But if it reads, "*She lay between snowy-white sheets*," it tells the reader that the sheets are cool as well as clean.

To the sick man, the wrinkles in the bedclothes looked enormous.

To the sick man, the wrinkles in the bedclothes looked mountainous.

The last word has associations of vast irregularities spread over wide spaces, of laborious travel, of unfeeling ruggedness. Since these words fit the sick man's conception, the word mountainous enriches the simple idea of bigness.

He moistened the sick man's face with a damp cloth.

He swabbed the sick man's face with a soggy rag.

The first sentence does the sick man a kindness; the second abuses him. "Swab" is associated with mops roughly handled; "soggy," with solids left too long in questionable liquids; and "rag," with casual salvaging from dirty clothes.

Poet John Keats writes, "I set her on my pacing steed." Suppose he had substituted the plain word "horse" for "steed." How different would have been the effect. **Sir Walter Scott** writes, "He mounted his charger." What if he had written "pony" instead?



Shakespeare begins a sonnet:

*In me you can see that time of year
When a few yellow leaves or none at all hang
On the branches, shaking against the cold,
Bare ruins of church choirs where lately the sweet birds sang.*

The word "choirs" calls up far more images than the word itself actually signifies. It calls up a picture of the entire abbey ruined and desolate, with a winter wind wailing through it.

Diction such as this means more than it says. It makes sense not only of the reader's knowledge of word-significance, but also of his experiences, his reading, his emotions, his imaginings. It is like music which calls a thousand pictures to mind, though each picture may be only half-perceived and half-comprehended. Poet Laureate **Alfred Tennyson** had this kind of diction in mind when he wrote of Virgil's poetry:

All the charm of all the Muses often flowering in a lonely word.

d. Figures of Speech. Figures of speech, like the reflections in a lake, interest us, somehow, even more than the realities themselves. It is a human characteristic to find pleasure in recognizing similarities. We like to see imitations and miniatures; we like toys and dolls and manikins; we



like to note how well the imitation resembles the real. This trait it is which makes us think on looking at a picture, "*How like reality!*" and on looking at a landscape, "*How like a picture!*" It makes us think of a story, "*How like real life!*" and of an incident in real life, "*How like a story!*" This pleasure which we derive from the recognition of similarities makes us always interested in figures of speech.

For instance, we may not be at all interested in an ordinary drop of water, or in a lamp globe. But when someone says, "*The lamp globe clung to the ceiling like a heavy drop of water just ready to plump down to the floor,*" we take notice.

We may not be interested in either ladies' veils or flies. But when someone says, "*The veil over the woman's face was like a spider's web with black flies caught in it here and there,*" we take notice.

And we may not be interested in either church choirs or dead boughs. But when someone writes, "*Boughs that shake against the cold, Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang,*" we take notice.

This demonstration of an essential unity in objects stimulates the imagination, and gives the reader an opportunity to exercise the faculty for recognition. The recognition may not involve mere pictorial images, as in the three examples just given.



(a) It may involve the recognition in inanimate objects of attributes essentially human, as in, "*He carried a sort of suitcase made of imitation leather which had long since grown too tired to keep up the illusion.*"

(b) It may involve the recognition in abstract ideas of concrete processes, as in, "*Cast the emeralds upon the waters; for you will find it after many days*"; or, "*Silence falls like dew*"; or, "*Goodness and mercy follows me.*"

(c) It may involve the recognition of an object or of a process from the mention of a word that suggests the object or the process, as in, "*The scepter of Egypt shall pass away*"; "*Cold steel will solve the problem*"; "*He keeps the finest stable in the county*"; "*He that lives by the sword shall die by the sword*"; "*The machine he drives is the handsomest in the city*"; "*The whole country was in arms.*" The difficulty with most of these last, however, is that one must be acquainted with them to understand them; yet if one is already acquainted with them, one finds them trite.

The use of figures of speech can be abused. A writer, especially a writer of prose, may produce so many figures that his work sounds affected; or (a much more common fault) he may make comparisons so far-fetched that his work seems strained.

A third abuse of figures is the over-elaboration of comparisons. When the freshman wrote the following, he also was guilty of tiresome over-elaboration:



Life is a game of bridge in which luck is always trumps. [If he had left off here, he would have had an interesting metaphor, but he dragged out the comparison.] The suits are the different parts of our career, Spades being our profession, Diamonds being material fortunes, Hearts being our loves, and Clubs being our power to overcome opposition. The ace in each suit is our natural ability; the king is our education or training; the queen is the wife or mother who helps us; and the jack is our closest friend. The other cards are merely our acquaintances. In the game, we are matched against other people who have different gifts from those of ours, and who try to gain what we gain. Our business is to know our own strength and the strength of others, and to play our cards wisely. We try to get what we can by means of the small cards, and guard our more important cards closely to keep others from overcoming them with their superior gifts.

And so on. Much of this is ingenious, but it soon grows boresome.

A fourth kind of fault sometimes accompanying the use of figurative language is the mixed metaphor. Probably few people would say, as did the freshman, "*I may be up a tree; but I will fight to the last ditch.*" Nor would few people correct the mixed metaphor, "*He went drifting down the sands of time on flowery beds of ease,*" as did the freshman, who made it read, "*He went drifting down the sands of time on an oasis.*"



Imaginative Details

The subject matter of the artist or writer is not the general, as it is with the scientist, but the particular; not the class, but the individual. French writer **Maupassant** tells how his colleague **Gustave Flaubert** trained him to observe a cab horse until he found how that one horse differed from fifty other cab horses, and then to express in words the distinctive details of that particular horse. Finding distinctive and imaginative details should be the chief business of any writer.

a. Familiar Details. The details need not be garnered from remote or visionary places, or from marvelous and romantic happenings. In general, they are more pleasing if they come from the realm of the commonplace and the familiar.

Such images as the following, familiar as our own hand, delight us:

1.

She put down the dish, wiped her palm along the side of her hip, and shook hands with the visitor.

2.



Fantastically, as if ghosts were eating, she heard only the clinking of spoons touching glasses, and the low clatter of forks against plates; but no voices.

3.

Putting his thumb to the side of his nose, and leaning far forward at the waist, he blew with a loud, fluid snort.

4.

As she ascended the stairs before him, he noticed her cheap cotton stockings with tiny bits of lint sticking out all over them.

5.

I watched her buy a package of gum, open the end of the cerise waxpaper wrapper, and extract a flat stick.

6.

In preparing lemons for the tea, she first carefully sliced off the pithy nipple at the end of each lemon.

b. Unfamiliar Details. Even when we are describing objects or scenes unfamiliar to the reader, we must translate them into terms of the familiar.

Thus, English writer **Rudyard Kipling** gives us: *Now and again a spot of almost boiling water would fall on the dust with a flop of a frog.*



American writer **Willa Gather** speaks of "*the thorny backbones of mountains*," and describes sunset on the desert as : "*The scattered mesa tops, red with the afterglow, one by one lost their light, like candles going out.*"

In one sentence writer **John Ruskin** pictures "*the heaving mountains rolling against [the sunrise] like waves of a wild sea*"; glaciers blazing in the sunlight "*like mighty serpents with scales of fire*"; and the "*whole heaven one scarlet canopy . . . interwoven with a roof of waving flame.*"

All these figures make us perceive images beyond our experience by recalling to us images within our experience. Much image-making proceeds in this way.

c. Incongruous Details. The matter of old images in new connections deserves further comment. We may call up particularly vivid images by means of an incongruity between details as they usually occur and as they appear in some newly imagined situation. The Greek poet Homer, for example, describes one of his warriors as having forgotten his whip when he drove out in his chariot, and belaboring the horses with the butt of his spear. The incongruity between the object and its use makes the incident highly visual. **Similar descriptions follow:**

1.



The carpenter took up a sharp wood-chisel, and proceeded to pare his nails.

2.

As he sat in the chair, he bent over and scratched his shin with a ruler.

3.

His arms piled full of books, Dr. Watson gave directions to the librarian, pointing here and there with his chin.

4.

She stood at the kitchen table vigorously rolling out biscuit dough with a short length of iron pipe.

Sometimes an incongruity of environment creates visual images:

1.

The tops of a dozen parked automobiles showed above the parapet on the roof of a six-story building.

2.

A large yellow butterfly had drifted into the room through an open window, and was hovering over a vase of cut-flowers at the visitor's elbow.

3.



The burro stood motionless, with head down and lower lip drooping, full in the blazing sunlight; two or three panting chickens had taken refuge in the shadow of his body.

An incongruity between the object and the thing of which it is made may serve the purposes of visualization:

1.

The front gate was merely the ornamental head-piece of an iron bed swung by one side to a fence post.

2.

The sideboards of the yard-man's small cabin were two green Venetian blinds placed on edge.

3.

The chief had a pierced lower lip through which he had stuck a new yellow pencil stolen from the men's camp.

4.

He wore a finger ring of braided hair.

The types of details mentioned in this section do not by any means exhaust the possibilities of the imagination. *Far from it!* They constitute



some of the most vivid types of details, but, after all, they are only suggestive. They are guideposts to imagery, not the entire kingdom.

Imaginative Construction

Often a writer can construct complete images only by the use of several details, not just one like those mentioned above. What these details should be, and what the writer's method of presenting them, depends entirely on the purpose of the writer. His first duty, therefore, in trying to create a full and unified image is to ask himself what his purpose is in presenting the image to the reader.

a. Purpose in Imaginative Writing. The imaginative writer's purpose is always one of the following: to paint a picture, to convey an idea, or to convey or rouse a feeling. Most of the details cited in the last section attempted to paint pictures. This next, a longer description from author **Gustave Flaubert's** historical novel, *Salammbô*, does the same:

The heavy mill-stones were revolving in the dust, two cones of porphyry laid one upon the other, the upper, which had a funnel, being turned upon the lower by means of strong bars which men pushed with their breasts and arms, while others were yoked to them and pulled. The friction of the straps had caused purulent sores about their arm-pits, such as are seen on



asses' withers; and the ends of the limp black rags which barely covered their loins hung down and flapped against their hocks like long tails. Their eyes were red, the shackles clanked about their feet, and all their breasts rose and fell in unison. They were muzzled to prevent them from eating the meal, and their hands were enclosed in gauntlets without fingers so that they could not pick it up.

This next, from **George Eliot**, is also intended to convey an idea of quietness on Sunday morning:

You might have known it was Sunday if you had only waked up in the farmyard. The roosters and hens seemed to know it, and made only crooning subdued noises; the very bull-dog looked less savage, as if he would have been satisfied with a smaller bite than usual. The sunshine seemed to call all things to rest and not to labor; it was asleep itself on the moss-grown cow-shed; on the group of white ducks nestling together with their bills tucked under their wings; on the old black sow stretched languidly on the straw, while her largest young one found an excellent spring-bed on his mother's fat ribs; and Alick, the shepherd, in his new smock-frock, taking an uneasy siesta, half-sitting, half-standing on the steps.

And this next, from poet **John Keats**, does not attempt to give a picture of autumn but to convey an idea of what autumn does:



*Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruits the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;*

*To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells.
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm summer days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells.*

The third purpose an imaginative writer may have, to convey or rouse a feeling, is often intermingled with the other two. Thus, both the George Eliot paragraph and the Keats stanza just quoted are probably intended as much to awaken a feeling of peace and lassitude in the reader as to convey an idea.

Much imaginative writing, however, is concerned with both pure imagery and feeling. **Edgar Allen Poe**, for instance, is famous for his passages which create pictures, and at the same time rouse emotions:

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been



passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher... I looked upon the scene before me upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain upon the bleak walls upon the vacant, eye-like windows upon a few rank sedges and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees with an utter depression of soul.

American author **Washington Irving's** description of evening in *Westminster Abbey*, already quoted, is another excellent example of imagery created and feeling roused in the same passage; and the first three stanzas of poet **Thomas Gray's** "*Elegy in a Country Churchyard*" are another.

b. Selection of Details. Now, suppose a writer has determined the purpose he has in mind in creating an image; his next step is to decide just which details of the image he wants to use. Obviously he cannot possibly use every detail; for if he did, he might spend days describing a three-inch fish, or write an encyclopedia on what he sees in walking across the campus. He must select, and select rigorously. Selection is so vital a business to the writer that it has given rise to the observation that "*art is but selection*"; that a piece of art "*should be judged less by what it contains than by what it does not contain*"; and that "*the genius of the artist consists in his knowing what to leave out.*"



If, for example, the writer is trying to give an idea that the weather is very cold, he will not tell the reader that the cattle are tucked away snug and content in their barn, and that people are cozy on the warm hearthstone. If he is trying to give a feeling of sadness, he will not tell about the private parties, the gaiety, and the love-making which will occur no matter how many people die. And if he is a criminal lawyer trying to paint a picture of a murder, he will paint it far differently from the way the district attorney paints a picture of the same murder.

In all these descriptions, nobody is necessarily falsifying details; but each is selecting certain details and omitting others. A man may be a regular church attendant, he may be charitable, he may be a good husband and a kind father, he may have friends among the most honest people in his city but he may falsify accounts in the bank of which he is president. A cold morning may be brisk and cheerful weather to some people, and it may be bitterly hard to others. The bankers may be a subject of humor to some people, and a subject of tragedy to others. Seldom can any writer paint things just as they would appear to the scientist, to the camera, or to the impartial observer. Nearly always the image created depends on the writer's selection of certain details which affect him, and which, he hopes, will affect the reader, and on the omission of certain other details. And his selections and omissions depend altogether on his purpose.

This does not mean that the writer should give the impression of being biased or purposeful. Quite the contrary! The reader must never be



allowed even to think that other details exist, or that the writer is not being scrupulously exact in his description. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the entire responsibility for the image, the idea, or the feeling conveyed rests squarely in the writers hands. What the image, the idea, or the feelings should be depends on him, and not on what he is describing.

c. Arrangement of Details. Up to this point, we have seen that the fundamental requirement for good imagery is a certain purpose on the part of the writer, which purpose guides him in the selection of details. Furthermore, his purpose sometimes guides him in the arrangement of details after he has selected them. Thus, if his purpose is merely to convey an idea that a day is cold or hot, that a family lives in squalid surroundings, that a room looks neat, that a certain street corner is busy, or other such ideas, he need do no more than give a series of details selected for the purpose in mind and arranged more or less at random. Shakespeare's winter song, Keats's stanza on autumn, and Eliot's description of a Sunday morning are examples of such random arrangement of details.

The same sort of random arrangement, with usually a more careful effort toward climax, is common in description the purpose of which is to rouse emotion.

But when the writer's purpose is to paint a picture, he can seldom resort to a mere series of details and depend on their cumulative effect. Instead, he



must arrange his details with such care that the reader will receive a unified and complete image.

If the subject of description is changing, or if the author's point of view is changing, the chronological order of arrangement of details is usually best. The description of a butterfly emerging from its cocoon, of a tide coming in, of a boat race, of a prize fight, of a football game, of the emotion one feels during a battle, of inward sensations one has when he takes opium, of bodily pains the description of all such changing subjects must almost necessarily begin with the first thing that happens, and proceed to the next, and the next, and so on to the end.

Similarly, a description of what one sees during a walk down the street, or an automobile ride into the country, or a canoe trip down the river, or a tour abroad such descriptions of objects observed while the writer's point of view changes must almost necessarily begin with the first thing that happens, and proceed to the next, and the next, and so on.

Describing changeless objects from a motionless point of view requires a more elaborate technique in the arrangement of details. Various objects require different methods. But most of the methods may be included under one of two sorts of possible arrangements: details as they are arranged in space, and details as they are observed.



As for the first of these objects may be described according to their arrangement in perspective. **For example**, I may describe the lawn I see directly under my window, then the hedge on the far side of the lawn, then the street beyond the hedge, then the patch of woods beyond the street, then the houses beyond the woods, and then the fields beyond the houses stretching away to the horizon. **Thus I should proceed from the nearest objects to those successively farther and farther away.** Or I may reverse the process, begin at the horizon and work inward toward the lawn beneath my window. It makes little difference which method I follow as long as I stick to the order I have adopted.

Somewhat similar to perspective description is **description of details according to their arrangement** in space regardless of perspective. In describing a room, for instance, I may begin with objects on my right as I enter, and then proceed all around the room until I have made a complete circle back to the objects on my left. Or in describing a man, I may begin with his head and work downward to his feet. In this method, too, an order once adopted ought not to be changed without a warning to the reader.

Now about the other method of arranging changeless objects observed from a motionless point of view. Details may be presented as they are observed. For example, a person pictured as coming from the darkness into a brightly lighted room would not notice at first a book lying on a small table over in the corner of the room. Instead, dazzled for a moment, he would see only bright lights and people; he would observe next the



larger pieces of furniture, the rugs, and the hangings; then he would become aware of more subdued colors here and there, and of smaller objects in the room; and finally he might perceive the book on the table. The same sort of gradual accommodation of vision would occur if the person went from light into darkness, or if he suddenly struck a light or extinguished one. The writer must accommodate his arrangement of details to the stages of accommodation which the person's eyes undergo.

But even where there is no change of light, an observer ordinarily sees certain aspects of an object before he sees others. Usually, he first gets a general impression, forms a large, vague image, and later on fills in his outline with particular details. Accordingly, a writer should usually follow this arrangement in his work by proceeding from the description of general details to the description of particular details.

If he is describing a man, he says something about "a short fat man" (the general impression) and then adds details about "rolls of fat overhanging his collar," "a deep crease running around his wrist between hand and arm," "little dimples on each knuckle," and so on (the particular details). He says of a house, "a brick house of the English type" (general impression) and then adds something about "steep gables," "small-paned, casement windows," "a beam of timber over the door," and so on (particular details).



Often the general image may be given first as a type image. For example, a type form might be "a horseshoe-shaped bend in the river," "an L-shaped house," "an enormous round man."

A type color might be "a village of red roofs and white walls," "a hillside rainbow-colored with flowers," "the chartreuse green of the shallow sea."

A type movement might be "rotation," "undulation," "oscillation," "convergence," "divergence," "descent," "ascent." A type sound might be clatter, hum, murmur, roar, swish, ring.

Finding the type image in the other common senses requires a little knowledge of physiology. The vaguely defined sense of touch is limited to distinguishing between the following sensations: *soft or hard, smooth or rough, sharp or blunt, wet or dry, large or small, adherent or non-adherent, resistant or non-resistant, heavy or light, thick or thin, hot or cold, moving or resting*. But we frequently use figurative words to express type images of touch: *velvety, silky, icy, syrupy, glassy*, and so on.

The type images that we can make from the sense of smell are said to be confined to the following odors: *spicy, flowery, fruity, resinous, burnt, and foul*. But here again we are likely to use comparisons to express the image.

All images of taste are composed of *salt, sour, sweet, or bitter*. To these, however, may be added irritants or caustics such as *peppery* or *burning*;



textures such as *greasy, soft, tough; humidity, or relative dryness or moistness; and temperature.*

In expressing type images of any class, we often find it useful to bring in figures of speech, as in some of the examples already given: *L-shaped, rainbow-colored, and silky.*

Rules to cover all images are out of the question; the writer must decide for himself what method he is to follow. Yet he will find it nearly always safe to begin with the large and the general, and to proceed, by any method that seems fit, to the small and the particular. This is a good working principle.



Interpretative Description

The pure image, the way a thing looks, is not always sufficient. **Croce's** definition of art, if we recall it, has it that art is *feeling made image*, and *image symbolizing feeling*. This definition is perfectly sound, for the best imaginative writing passes beyond pure description to interpretative description. That is, to description not only of the external appearance of objects, but also to the implications which the writer feels lie behind the surface.

In passages quoted above, the writers read into details of their characters "*faint astonishment*," "*animal simplicity*," "*irritable tension*," "*cold lire*," and "*fellness of terror*." And daily people speak of a "*weak chin*," a "*malicious smile*," and a "*brutal mouth*."

Even inanimate objects or natural scenes may be rendered interpretatively: the writer may read into his subject whatever he thinks it means, as **George Eliot**, in the description of *Sunday morning* already quoted, read peacefulness into farmyard objects, and as Poe, in the beginning paragraphs of *The Fall of the House of Usher*, read nameless terror and desolation into scenes along the way.

What the interpretation should be depends, of course, on the personal feeling and the personal judgment of the writer: to one person, a mouth



may look "brutal" to another, "affectionate"; to one person a smile may look "malicious" to another, "mischievous." But all this brings us back to where we started: the picture any reader receives from an imaginative description depends entirely on the writer's purpose, idea, and feeling in constructing the description.

~ END ~

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