

The Writer as a Balancing Artist

"40 years ago in New York, the French artist Philippe Petit managed to sneak into the almost finished World Trade Center, and balanced on a steel wire between the two towers without a safety net, some 500 meters up in the air. After that, he was in need of a psychiatrist."

http://www.deutschlandradiokultur.de/philippe-petit-drahtseilakt-am-world-trade-center.932.de.html?dram:article_id=293857

"The American extreme sportsman Nik Wallenda is planning to put his sense of balance to the ultimate test: he is going to cross the Grand Canyon, balancing on a steel wire 457 meters above ground." Wallenda This, he says, is the "dream of his life".

<http://www.spiegel.de/reise/aktuell/nik-wallenda-will-grand-canyon-ueberqueren-a-889772.html>

Video of a Balancing Artist

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZxfYKCIPC4>

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The writer as a balancing artist is history. One has to position oneself clearly to complete the work.

And: The writer exists between two or more worlds, or realities. This is something one has to know to avoid going mad.

Writers have to recognize, that like all mortals, they live in a marinade. They have to put themselves in many different kinds of pickles, that is: risks, and, at the same time, they must take care that none of these makes them go sour. Sour their head and their heart.

The writer can perfectly well tell being alive from being dead. When dead, one has to take care to return to the living. Then one may need help from others. The writer has to be aware of his or her needs.

Writers have to make themselves helpful, as catalysts, perhaps. One can be a tube between the world and the afterlife. A telephone wire. A wireless tube. That's the most fun part in being a writer.

One must know what one can take and what is too much.

Compared to other people, there's nothing unique in a writer. The very same associations and feelings reside in everyone. What may be unique is the soup the writer makes of these materials to show what a human being can be, at worst, and at best. Or something in between.

The writer must strive for self-improvement, for empathy in particular, so one will get wiser and understand oneself and one's kind as much as possible, and be able to tell as much as possible about them, about oneself, that is: about them.

For a one-year-old child, you reiterate the limits of the world so long the child understands and believes the word "no" and learns how the limits of the world are defined - i.e. the words "wall", "hot stove", "high chair". For a two-year-old, you explain how the world functions and why it functions the way it does. But six months after that, the child already reaches a negative age, and no longer believes what you say. Which is as well. The writer must not treat people like they were children younger than the negative age, someone you can explain the world to. You have to trust people. You have to challenge them to grow, and to assume responsibility over their own thinking.

"Feeling" is based on two things: memory, that is: experience, and bodily sensations. As you close your eyes in silence, there's nothing you can trust but your own feeling. Can you stand it for fifteen minutes? Can you stand yourself for fifteen minutes? All those feelings? Can you keep on breathing? With your eyes closed?

What does it mean to be a balancing artist? It means you are in between, on a knife's edge, almost falling on one side or the other, almost but not quite, hopefully. You strive forwards or backwards. Which ones, then, are the dimensions you can move in. Is there a safety net. Is there an assistive device. Can you get upwards. Does it count.

A memory: When I failed in balancing: as a child, I will never forget it, we went swimming, I slipped on the ladder, one foot on one side of the rung, the other foot on the other side, oh how it hurt.

Maybe it is about phenomena. But it never is about phenomena only, because behind everything there is a human being, one's deeds, one's view of the world, one's consciousness. This is the trend. This individualism. Not in literature, but in history, now. What is the trend in literature right now? In thinking? Which is the right way to think right now? Will imagination do? How about basic research?

Self-discovery is not navel-gazing but assuming responsibility. One must take action instead of being a reactive automaton. One can't steer one's machine if one doesn't know how it works.

I want to advance people's self-awareness. I believe this to be the only option. They say a person does not know what he or she does. Yes: one should learn to know. Learn about oneself. There are things that other people know about me which I don't know myself. There are things that I know about others which they themselves do not know. There are things that everyone knows. And there are things that no one knows. There is a word for all of these four categories: yet. One should not be embarrassed to say: I do not know.

The best story is one that convinces the reader: I can see the truth better now. But when the writer says "This is evil" and does it so well you believe it, thank the writer gracefully, say this clarifies and explains a lot of things, but say also right away that you aren't convinced, you are going to find out yourself. Even better: at the very moment someone says hey, here's a fine piece of writing, the writer has to be the one to shout no! Go look somewhere else.

Skillful writers are the most dangerous ones.

As a matter of fact, most of the time the writer should just stand in the middle of the marketplace, pointing at some direction. This would help people keep in mind that they should be looking for answers and not be satisfied with putting their imagination to sleep. One must not believe any kind of explanation, especially one that has an OVERALL or UNIFYING quality. And you always have to look somewhere new. The writer's finger never points at any direction except one that keeps constantly changing. Nothing can be said. Nothing can be maintained. And: you have to keep looking for the right argument all the time. You must never fall silent.

There's this story, too, about Hedwig: to begin with, Hedwig is a child, a girl or a boy, then grows up, becomes a father or a mother, a grandmother or a grandfather etc., and changes into something else, a perpetuum mobile, an indestructible being. Self-assured, with all the correct thoughts, Hedwig bends year by year closer to his or her own toes and finally becomes a ball, rolling around the house, from the kitchen to the living room, from the living room to the hall, and back to the living room and the bedroom. And gathers. Dust. Outlives all his or her children. The whole world. Survives. It/ its own upkeep has become its/his/her only mission. Until another human being, a thought, an idea or a creature interrupts the rolling. And says: hey, I'm rolling around here, too, challenging your rolling. Making a hole in it. What do you say now? You open your mouth. With surprise, joy, horror, puzzlement, curiosity. Flabbergasted in the face of something alien, something from beyond.

The writer refuses to be the advocate of his or her own thoughts. The writer says: *"I believe in man's capability to think or at least to learn."* and *"You shall not look for deficiencies in the world. The world is enough as it is. Only we are not. We and our senses and intellect and beliefs."* A possible structure of thinking: A braid. Or a chromosome. Modal verbs. Can may must.

The writer can/may be calm. And must be quite sure of his or her message -
A writer advertises.

A writer is a politician.

A writer sells.

A writer entertains.

At the same time, the writer disclaims all of these, and claims, for instance, to be *revealing a truth*.

Why do writers want to be writers, and not salespersons, politicians, teachers, doing the same kind of work as they are. Why do they want to be called writers. What is the difference between these professions? Is literature a package. Prose, for example, is it an instrument? Instrumental prose using various pieces of apparatus? Like in rhythmic gymnastics?

Is the writer angry? Are the writer's fascias glued to the muscles and the internal organs because one sits so much? Because one does not move, stretch into new postures, but stiffens? Because one is stressed, which affects one's metabolism, which shows in one's fascias, their texture. One's text? Does one's text mirror one's backache, or what? Is that maybe why one is angry? Because the back, the whole body aches and throbs, it's become a single aching tooth. Does the writer inhabit a monastery, or is the writer a citizen of the world? How can you know?

We know nothing. This is the starting point, and the point of return. From there we build up speed for new thoughts. Was Socrates right when he said we know nothing. Did he ever say so?

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