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AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH FOR COPYWRITERS

HOW TO WRITE HEADLINES
AND WHY YOUR CAREER DEPENDS ON IT

By Suzanne Pope



ABOUT SUZANNE POPE

Suzanne Pope is a group creative director at john st. in Toronto. She has written copy for TAXI and Ogilvy & Mather, and has taught copywriting courses at Humber College in Toronto. Suzanne's work has appeared in Communication Arts and Archive, and she is the winner of One Show Silver Pencil.

AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH FOR COPYWRITERS

HOW TO WRITE HEADLINES AND WHY YOUR CAREER DEPENDS ON IT

Hello, young copywriter. I am here today to tell you that you are a member of an endangered species. I'm very sorry, but it's true. If this website had a bigger budget, I would rent Al Gore's cherry picker, and I would use it to show you how far off the chart our troubles are becoming. As things stand, though, I'm just going to have to paint you a word picture. This word picture is no thumbnail, so before asking you to commit your time, I'm going to be completely upfront about what's in store.

The article is divided into two parts. Part One is devoted to yet another lecture about how copywriters need to actually write rather than limiting themselves to visual thinking. You may find this presentation less tedious than usual because I will provide more detail than one typically sees in support of the argument. Also, I will present my case in the terms most relevant to you right now – that is, from the perspective of launching your career.

But if seeing this dead horse get flogged once again is more than you can bear, I invite you to scroll down immediately to Part Two. There, you'll find practical tools and techniques that will take you from wishing you could write headlines to actually doing it.

PART ONE

For years now, copywriters of a certain age have been predicting the demise of the completely visual idea. "It's a fashion," we've been saying, pausing to blow on our Ovaltine. "At some point, the pendulum will swing back, and a new golden age of copywriting will be upon us."

But clearly, we have been wrong. Most of the industry's biggest awards are still going to headline-free ads. And most advertising blogs are dominated by purely visual concepts. Indeed, when I tried recently to convince my copywriting students of the relevance of headlines, I had to dust off 15-year-old annuals to prove my point.

So, from all this, copywriting students have drawn the reasonable inference that it's better to think in pictures than in words. Ads with copy are merely quaint ornaments designed to lend a soupçon of variety to your book. They serve only as a nod to your ability to write a headline in the unlikely event that something so retro should ever be required.

But it's a mistake to get career advice from annuals. Annuals may showcase the planet's best advertising, but they represent only the thinnest sliver of what creative people actually do day in and day out. For a more realistic picture of a copywriter's life, you're better off looking at billboards and newspapers and online ads. There, you'll see plenty of headlines. Most of them are pretty bad, but their badness represents a huge opportunity for writers who aren't afraid to write.

Here is the reality: Even at the finest, most award-winning agencies, ads are typically driven more by copy than by visuals. This happens for several reasons. Let's go through them now.

The main reason for headline-dominant ads is a shortage of time and/or money. If your client can't afford photography or illustration or system work, or if final art is due tomorrow, you may be forced to work with

nothing but an existing pack shot and a headline. That means your idea will have to be expressed in words.

Another reason for all-type ads is the media buy. If you're doing a banner ad in print or online or on a TV news channel, you probably won't have the space to communicate your message visually. You will need to use words, and, ideally, no more than eight of them.

A third reason for headline-driven ads stems from the requirements of the brief. Let's take cars, for example. Some brilliant car ads have been done without actually showing the car, but they are in the minority. And if the main selling message is, "What a gorgeous car," the gorgeous car will almost certainly be your main visual. So, if your ad is to have any idea at all, again, it will have to be found in the headline.

Sometimes briefs demand headline-driven ideas because of the complexity of the message. We all know that briefs are supposed to be simple, but sometimes they are not. In retail advertising, for example, your brief might be, "Buy our printer and get a \$50 rebate plus two free ink cartridges." No amount of complaining will change that brief. And, no, you are not allowed to bury the offer in your body copy. It may be possible to communicate the message visually, but the odds of a good ad are much better for writers who embrace the challenge of a headline right from the start.

And there's yet another reason for headline-driven ads: the demands of brand character or a pre-existing campaign. Canadian readers will be familiar with TAXI's long-running campaign for Telus Mobility. This hugely successful wireless brand was built on imagery of a natural world that is gentle and non-threatening. Every ad for Telus features plants, flowers or animals, always close-cropped on a white background. These visuals certainly support whatever point is being made in the headline, but the

PART ONE

main message of the ad is almost always expressed in words. And so, if you have a visual idea for Telus that is outside this natural world, or if your idea does not clearly communicate the offer, you will have more work ahead of you, no matter how smart or clever your idea is.

Add up the realities of our business and you'll see that we need to develop and maintain our copywriting chops, despite what the show annuals say. If you don't demonstrate quickly that you're comfortable writing headlines, you'll probably never get a shot at doing wordless ads.

But still there's resistance. Last year, a handful of my copywriting students asked me why we were bothering to practise headline writing when all the great ideas these days are visual. I'm sure for every student who asked, several more wondered quietly. I told them pretty much everything I've written above, but I don't know that I convinced them. So I'll try one more time, this time a little more bluntly.

If we as copywriters agree that words are now redundant, we ourselves will soon be redundant. If a writer spends most of his day looking over the art director's shoulder while she works Photoshop, really, why have a writer at all? Yes, the writer contributes ideas, but if they're all visual, wouldn't the creative director build a more productive team by just hiring two art directors? This idea would have been unthinkable ten years ago. Today, it's a definite option. Already, some very good agencies have assembled junior teams by pairing up art students. There's no shortage of copywriters applying for the gigs; the problem is that their headlines are no better than what the student art directors have written. And so, on occasion, the role of copywriter has gone to an art director. Think about what this means. Through sheer practice and focus, copywriters should be able to write better headlines than art directors ninety-five times out of a hundred. But many of us are not

practising and not focusing. If we let that trend continue, we may one day find that we're indispensable only when there's a catalogue to be written.

But you're not a wannabe art director. You're a copywriter. That's what you want to be. And if you really want to be a copywriter, you will be one. But that means learning to love words even more than you resist them. It means getting over your fear of the blank page. It means developing the confidence that you can write five decent headlines ten minutes before they're due.

How, you ask? By realizing that there are tools to help you. And by picking them up and practising with them. You need to make these tools your own. Yes, they've had lots of previous owners. But considering that they're over two thousand years old, the tools are still amazingly sharp.

PART TWO

The only tools that can dig copywriters out of this mess are the tools of rhetoric. They go by other names as well, such as “figures of speech,” “literary devices” and so on. (A purist would tell you that the terms are not necessarily interchangeable, but for the purposes of this article, they are.)

You already learned about many of these tools in high school English – devices like metaphor and hyperbole. Many of the terms are Greek because it was the ancient Greeks who first saw verbal persuasion as a subject worth analyzing. If you think the tools of rhetoric are passé, you are mistaken. They are being used to full effect right now by the very same art directors who are handing our asses to us. The only thing that’s changed is that art directors are now doing in pictures what we have stopped doing in words.

“Rhetoric” has a nasty connotation. A while ago on this website, a visitor dismissed an ad she didn’t like as mere “rhetoric.” I assume she was defining rhetoric as a device that is dishonest or transparent or inept in its expression. I guess if she had liked the ad, she would have praised it for having avoided rhetoric. And she would have been wrong. Rhetoric is, as the Greek word suggests, all about oratory. It describes any verbal technique used in the service of persuasion.

Aristotle said there are basically only three ways to bring someone around to your way of thinking. You can do it by appealing to his logic. You can do it by appealing to his emotions. Or, you can do it through a presenter who is trustworthy, authoritative or charismatic. Three main routes. That’s all. I can’t think of a single ad, good or bad, that has ever found another path to reach its audience.

And so we see that all ads use rhetoric; the only question is how well they use it. The ads that leave you breathless with their brilliance are using rhetoric so skillfully that you don’t even notice it’s there. That’s your goal – to craft an idea so arresting, so transcendent, that no one stops to ponder how the damned thing got built. And in our business, rhetoric is how things get built.

Many tools of rhetoric can be used visually, but some of them belong exclusively to writers. Here in Part Two, I’m going to talk about the tools that work best in advertising – and how they can work for you. The information will be useful if you do nothing more than read it. But it will work best for you if you practise writing headlines using each device that’s described. Don’t worry about whether the headlines are good enough for your book. That’s not the point. In due course, you will end up with portfolio pieces, but for now, think of this in the way a professional musician thinks about practising scales: It’s never done with the intention of being performed, but it’s a big part of what makes a good performance possible.

As I mentioned, some of these devices can be used equally well in pictures and in words. We’ll look at those ones first.

METAPHOR

Metaphor is the first love of English teachers, poets and advertising creatives, and it's used skillfully by pretty much anyone who enjoys talking. When people describe a bad toupee as a rug, or when they call a troubled celebrity a train wreck, they are speaking in metaphor. Equating your subject with something apparently unrelated helps guide your audience to a deeper and more specific understanding of that subject. People will grasp the wretchedness of a toupee much more quickly if you call it a rug than they will if you just describe it as unattractive.

Visual-driven ads have done very well with metaphor.

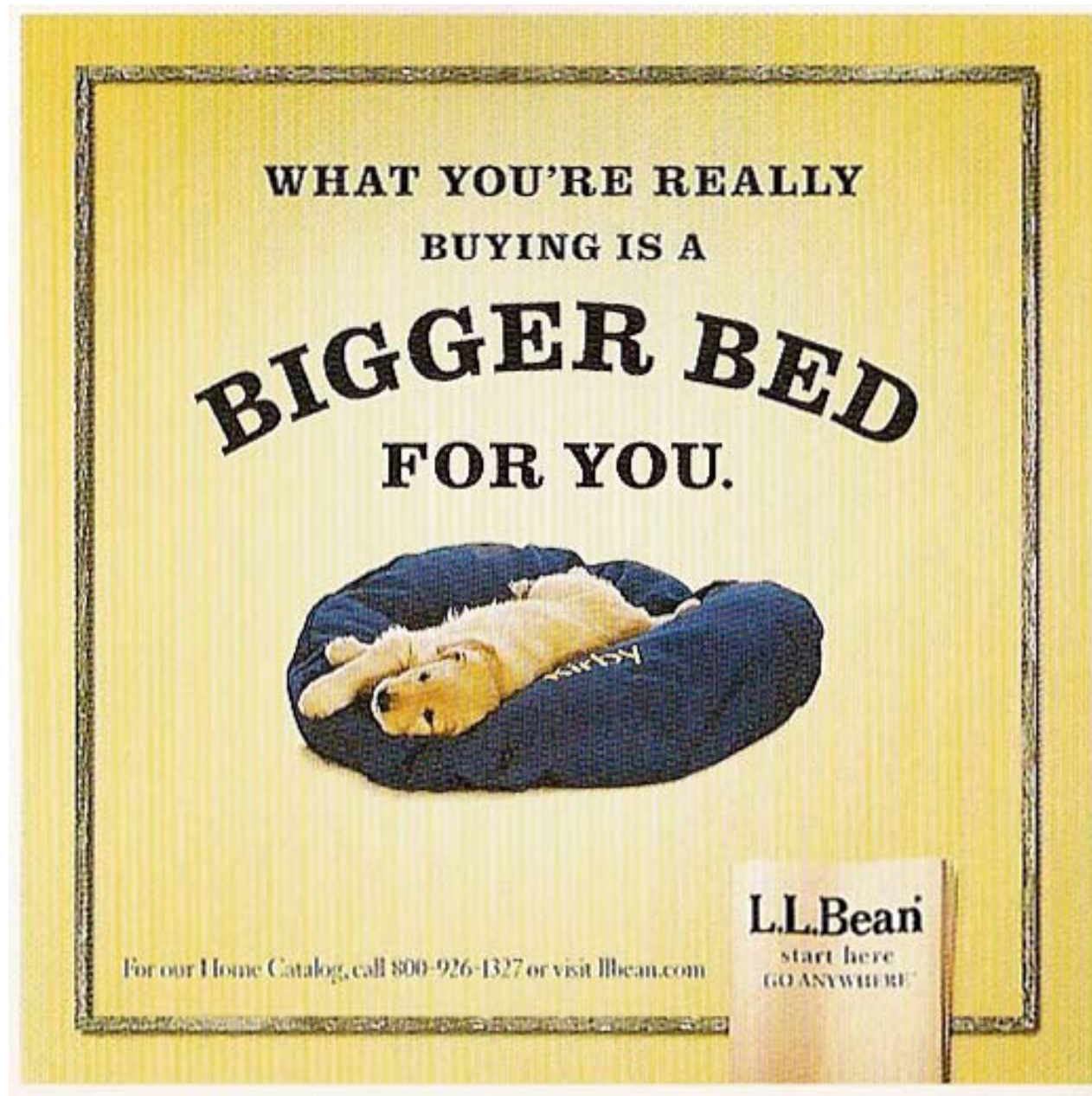
Here's one lovely example, part of a campaign for Sony Noise Cancelling Headphones done by Bagby and Company, Chicago:



By directly equating a noisy child with a loudspeaker, the ad demonstrates Sony's empathy with modern travelers, and thus predisposes those travelers to trust Sony's solution over the competition's.

But metaphor can just as easily live in words.

Here's a great metaphorical headline, produced by Martin/Williams, Minneapolis for L.L. Bean's dog beds:

An advertisement for L.L. Bean dog beds. The background is a light yellow with a subtle vertical wood-grain texture. A dark, ornate rectangular border frames the central text and image. The headline, in a bold, black, serif font, reads: "WHAT YOU'RE REALLY BUYING IS A BIGGER BED FOR YOU." The words "BIGGER BED" are arched, while the others are straight. Below the text is a photograph of a light-colored dog lying on its back inside a dark blue, oval-shaped dog bed. The dog's head is resting on the bed, and its front paws are visible. In the bottom right corner, there is a small, white, rectangular graphic that looks like a book or a tag, with the L.L. Bean logo and the tagline "start here GO ANYWHERE™". In the bottom left corner, within the border, is the text "For our Home Catalog, call 800-926-1327 or visit llbean.com".

WHAT YOU'RE REALLY
BUYING IS A
BIGGER BED
FOR YOU.



For our Home Catalog, call 800-926-1327 or visit llbean.com

L.L.Bean
start here
GO ANYWHERE™

Another example, from Carmichael Lynch, Minneapolis for Harley-Davidson:

EARTH. AS VIEWED FROM HEAVEN.

Riding along a highway
 on a Harley-Davidson[®]
 motorcycle, relaxed and
 easy. If there's anything
 better than this, we
 haven't found it. Which
 is no Chrome Flakes
 best, and there our
 roadhead. That Harley
 would point out your
 pride. And the world
 takes a joy in the
 fact. It's no wonder
 when you're smiling
 on every road. Can
 you smile like this
 on any other road?



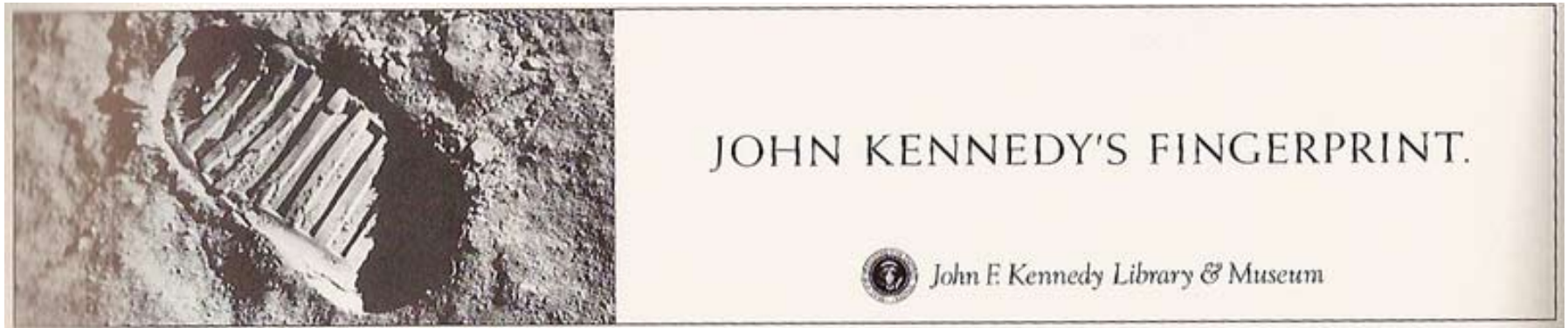
every last inch, really
over a picnic table
and over an infinity
of things you can only
experience by being on
the road boarding train
in. Generations of riders
would tell you they could
happily spend eternity
here. If you think you
could, too, call 1-800-
643-2153 or visit www.huckle-diamond.com for
your nearest H-D dealer.
The Legend Rolls On™



Crispin & Porter produced this wonderfully minimalist campaign for a homeless mission in Miami:



And the Martin Agency in Richmond used metaphor to celebrate John F. Kennedy's role in putting the first man on the moon:



Let's say the foot is your company,
the banana is a change in interest rates,
and the floor is extremely hard.

The economy can be accused of many things. Predictability is probably not one of them.

This economic fickleness can place your company in a rather vulnerable position. As you charge boldly into the future, eyes on the horizon, even a fairly minor fluctuation in interest rates can sneak up on you and bring your company to its knees.

Or to some even humbler portion of its anatomy.

The same thing can happen, of course, if exchange rates or commodity costs decide to dance a little jig.

Clearly, something should be done to deal with this threat. At Continental Bank, we suggest financial risk management.

In brief, risk management allows your company to specify exactly how much rate variation you're willing to tolerate.

If rates rise or fall beyond

the limits
you've specified,
you're protected.

Whether the rate in question is the
prime or Eurodollar, yen or deutschemark.

Beyond the obvious peace of mind it
offers, financial risk management confers numerous
other benefits.

It controls your cost of funds. It allows you to budget your interest
expense with greater confidence. It prevents unforeseen depletion of your capital.
On the whole, it permits you to do business in a much more orderly fashion.

Risk management is a relatively recent arrival on the financial scene, but it
is already being heralded as the ideal mix of prudence and opportunity. It accords
well with our philosophy—which is to bring our customers the most innovative,
most effective financial tools we can find, develop or invent.

To learn more about how risk management can help your company, talk to
a Continental banker at (312) 828-5799. There'll still be bananas in the world.
But at least you won't be stepping on them.

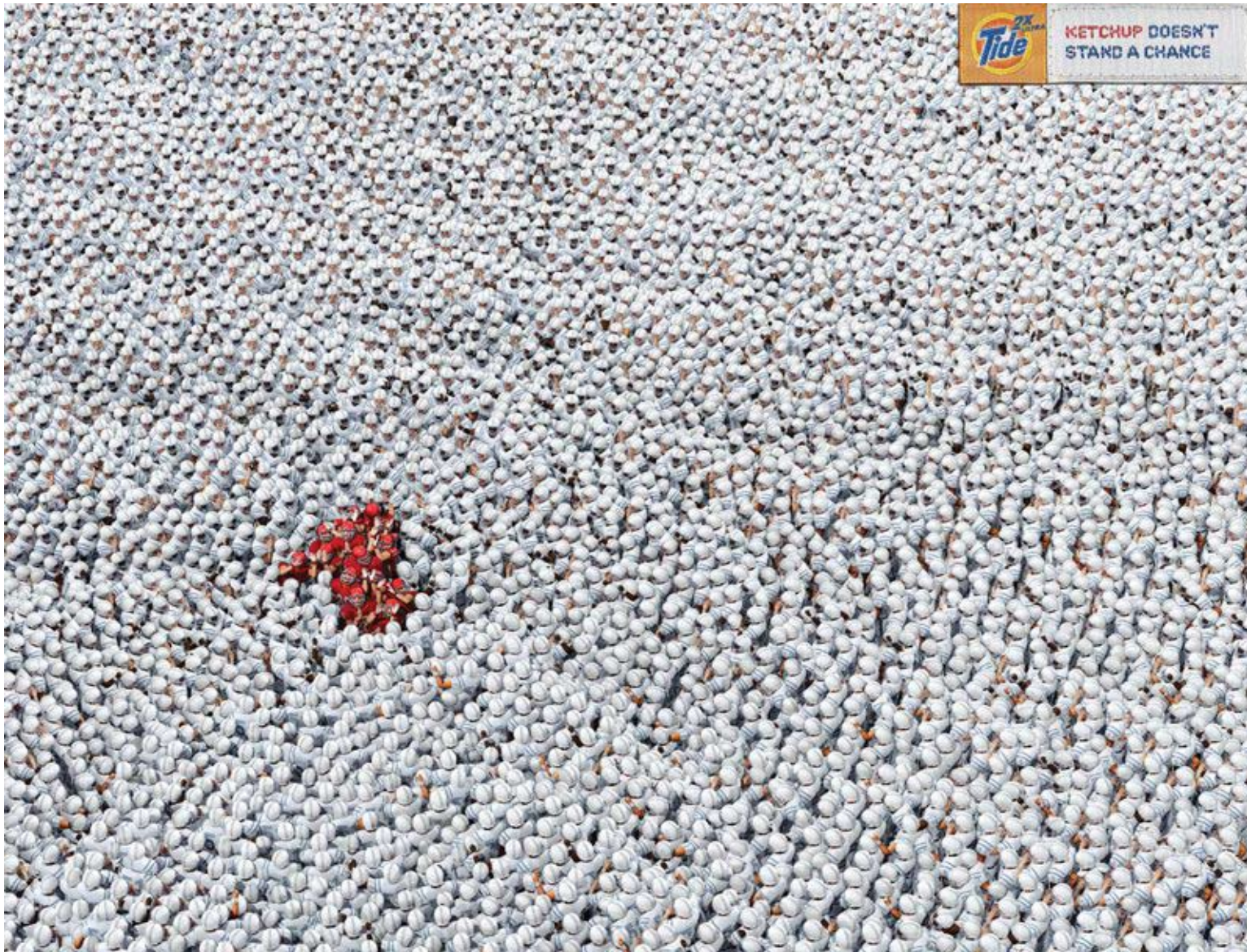
 **Continental Bank**
A new approach to business.

This ad has the added power of a twist at the headline's end. The structure of the headline leads us to expect that the floor will be one more metaphor, but it ends up being used quite literally. There's a different rhetorical term for this undercutting of expectations (it's called anesis), and we'll get to it later.

PERSONIFICATION

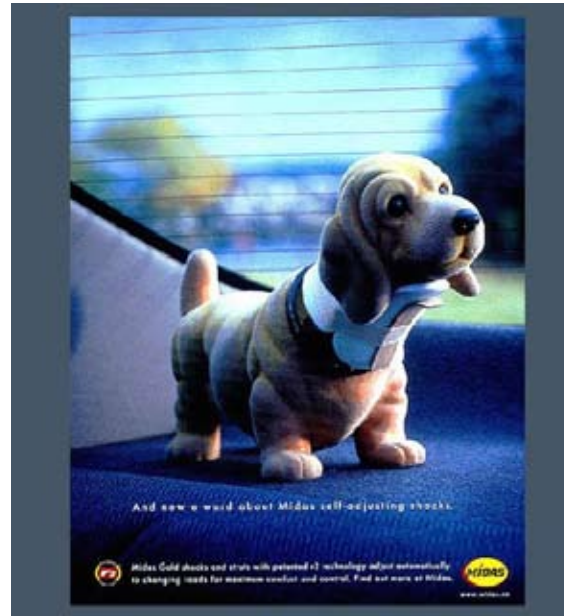
Personification is a kind of metaphor. But with personification, you're no longer comparing your subject with an inanimate object; instead, you're describing it as you would a human being. Personification allows you to present mere objects as being capable of love, hate, fear, hope and every other emotion available to humans.

Here's a visually driven example, part of a great campaign done by Saatchi & Saatchi in New York for Ultra Tide:



Detergent ads have often presented stains as the enemy, but never so literally. Here, Ultra Tide is shown as a team of overwhelming strength that leaves the opposing side, the ketchup stain, hopeless, despairing and doomed.

These next ads also demonstrate personification, but I trust you will draw from them an additional message concerning the dangers of purely visual thinking:



For the record, the Midas ad was done by me and Annie Lee at Ogilvy, several months before the Volkswagen version. Which got into The One Show. Sigh.

Identical ads aren't necessarily the result of plagiarism. The fact is, visual mashups are now so common, it's inevitable that other people will arrive at the idea you thought was yours alone. By contrast, people who write headlines stand a much better chance of developing a tone of voice that belongs exclusively to their brand. The Economist and Time are both news magazines, but an Economist headline would never make sense in an ad for Time.

(By the way, if you're interested in seeing more startling similarities in visual advertising, you'll want to visit coloribus.com, which was the source for these ads.)

Let's now take a look at how personification works when words play a larger role. This famous ad, from Carmichael Lynch in Minneapolis, imbued bathroom fixtures with emotion in a way that felt radically new:



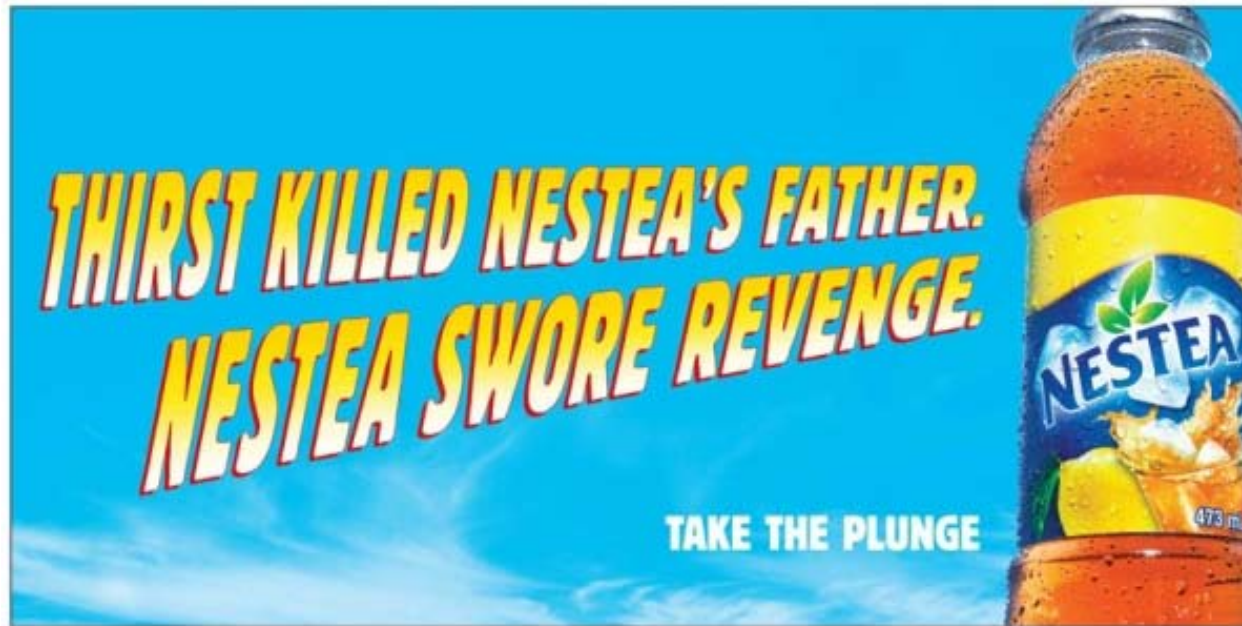
IT'S SEEN YOU
NAKED
IT'S HEARD YOU
SING

Your bathroom probably knows more about you than your own mother. So it's only fitting you make it the most wonderful room in the house. Call us and we'll send you a free guidebook overflowing with products, ideas and inspiration. 1-800-524-9797. *American Standard*



It's true that the photograph of the shocked "face" is doing half the work of personification here. But in this case, it took the headline to tell us just how intimately connected we are to our bathrooms.

Personification can work even when your only visual is a pack shot. Have a look at these two billboards from Lowe Roche in Toronto:



**Margarine is, like, so
freaked out right now.**

BUTTER THAT SPREADS.



No sane person would actually believe that margarine worries about its future. But by treating this notion as if it were fact, the ad establishes Gay Lea's superiority over margarine in a way that's funny and unexpected.

HYPERBOLE

Hyperbole is the use of outrageous exaggeration to make your point. It is well used in visual concepts, because it makes it possible to provoke shock or laughter without the need for words. You've already seen instances of it here: Laundry stains are hardly a life-and-death struggle, but Ultra Tide presents them as if they were. Similarly, no human being could ever be as noisy as a loudspeaker, but it helps Sony's Noise Cancelling Headphones to depict that situation as reality.

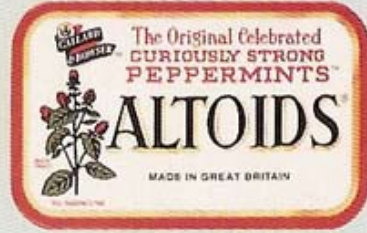
One brand built entirely on hyperbole is Axe body spray for men. Here's a very funny ambient piece that Lowe in Brussels affixed to emergency exit signs:



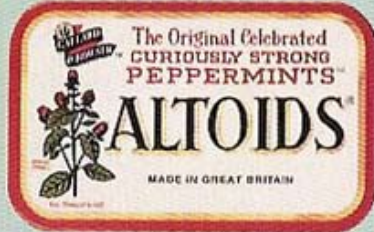
Though hyperbole is typically viewed these days as a visual device, it can also succeed wonderfully in words alone. These two Altoids ads were produced by Leo Burnett in Chicago:

**YOU MIGHT WANT TO PRACTICE
ON OTHER MINTS FIRST.**

THE CURIOUSLY STRONG MINTS™



**MINTS SO STRONG THEY
COME IN A METAL BOX.**



THE CURIOUSLY STRONG MINTS™

©1998 Galeff & Bowser-Schmidt Inc.

In this ad (from New York's Mad Dogs & Englishmen), The Economist employs obvious exaggeration to make a very believable point about its readers' business expertise:

63%

Percentage of business
magazine readers
who had lemonade stands
as children.

80%

Percentage of Economist
readers who opened
adjacent ice cube stands.

The Economist

And here, Karsh & Hagan Communications in Denver used hyperbole to arrive at a different way of telling us this knife is sharp:



SERIOUSLY, USE TWO CUTTING BOARDS.

Titanium 5" Chef's Knife
As with any of the other 3 titanium kitchen knives, you're going to want to keep all limbs and loose clothing away from this one.

 **BOKER**
BAUMWERK · SOLINGEN
TRUSTED SINCE 1869.

FOR A FREE CATALOG OF OVER 175 KNIVES INCLUDING THE TITANIUM LINE AND OTHER KITCHEN CUTLERY, 1.800.992.6537 EXT. 18, WWW.BOKERUSA.COM

Finally, Chicago's McConnaughy Stein Schmidt Brown sells us on the excellence of a steak house using nothing more than over-the-top words of "proof":

HOW GOOD IS OUR STEAK?
LAST WEEK A MAN WHO WAS
CHOKING ON A PIECE
— REFUSED —
THE HEIMLICH MANEUVER.



321 East

For the very best in American cuisine come to 321 East. The food is so good it sometimes leaves people speechless. 321 Division, Elgin IL. (708)468-0612

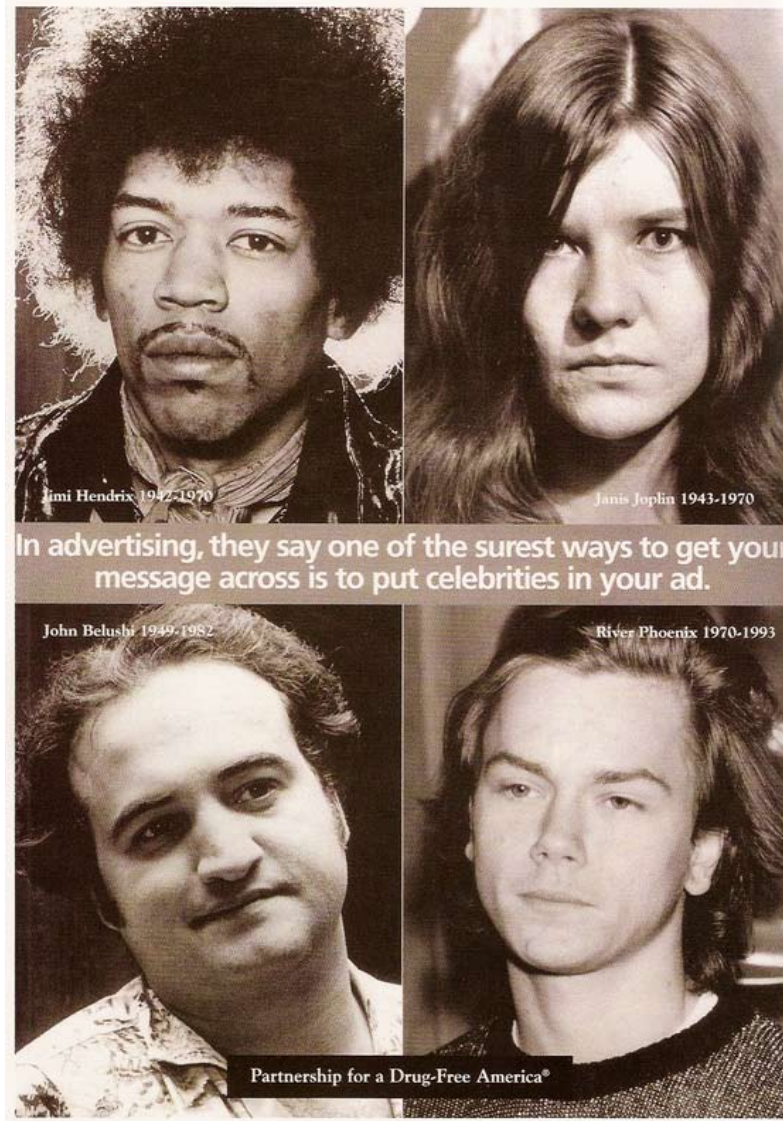
IRONY

Cicero defined irony as "saying one thing and meaning another."
A great example of visual irony is found in these anti-gun posters from john st. in Toronto:



Here, ordinary citizens are presented as perfectly reasonable targets for shooting practice. The intended message is, of course, completely the reverse.

Because irony by definition involves two messages (the explicit message plus an implied one), it's easier to achieve when you have words to help. An award-winning example, done for the American Cancer Society (by Cole Henderson Drake in Atlanta), showed a black-and-white photograph of a graveyard over the headline, "Welcome to Marlboro Country." Similarly, the Partnership for a Drug-Free America used dead celebrities as an ironic punchline to a straight headline (Saatchi & Saatchi, New York):



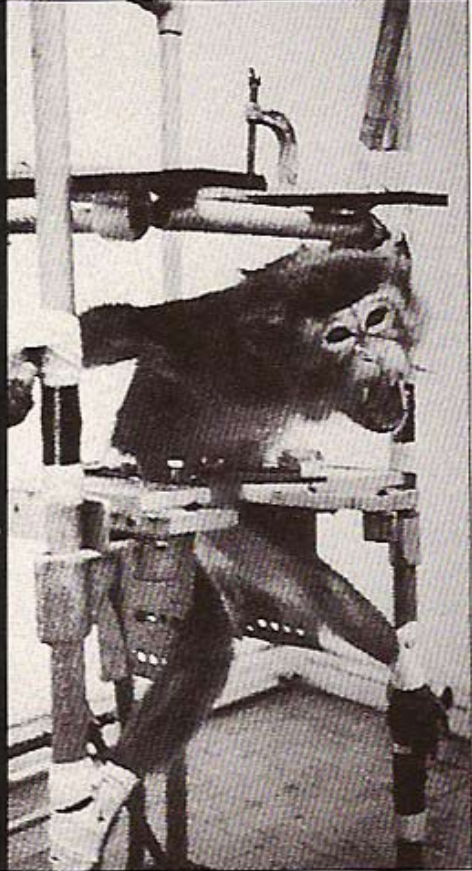
PARADOX

A paradox is a statement or situation that seems to be absurd or self-contradictory. The power of paradox comes from the fact that the contradiction often turns out to contain a thought-provoking grain of truth. The john st. anti-gun posters seen above provide an excellent example of visual paradox. The viewer might say, "Wait a minute...children aren't used in target shooting" before realizing a second later that in some communities, they might as well be.

Creating paradox with your headline can result in work that has even more edge and power. Placed in a new layout, this Luke Sullivan line would probably win awards all over again (ad from The Martin Agency, Richmond):

***Imagine having
your body left
to science while
you're still in it.***

Please join us today: write People For The Ethical Treatment Of
Animals, Box 42516, Washington, D.C. 20015. Or call (202) 726-0156.



Paradox also lets you capitalize on deliciously sharp insights about your target (Fallon McElligott, agency):

Where
the women
you hate have
their hair
done.



Downtown ~ Minnetonka ~ Edina ~ Roseville ~ Uptown

And if you're fortunate enough to be writing about one of the world's strongest brands, paradox allows you to speak about truths that are beyond words (Carmichael Lynch, Minneapolis, agency):

When was the last time you met a stranger and knew he was a brother?

A chance meeting on the highway turns into an immediate connection.

The glimmer of
recognition between
two people who are not
just passing strangers.
Two Harley® riders.

If you're one of these riders, you know: The two of you have been through quite a few of the same things. Like going out for a quick morning ride and not coming back until dark. Following a squiggly line on a map just for the pure fun of it. Forgetting to stop and eat. Common experiences that become a shared obsession.

It's this kind of
chromium that inspired
the Harley-Davidson®
FNR series—The Super
Glide®, the Low Riders®
and the Sport Glide®.



its look and sound
as much as for its
ground-grabbing
impact. The Big Tech
will have you in awe
and never imagined

When you ride a Harley for the first time, something clicks. You won't look at another Harley rider as a stranger again. Because choppers are, that is where your first on-the-road friends are coming from.

You'll understand.
It means "say to go."
It means you've got
time to converse
than bag-splattered
leathers.

It means welcome
to the family.



Six different Harleys
that share a common
mission. Power a

rides at once with the
mad. They have a
monochrome versatility.

that takes them from short cruise to long haul without error.

missing a beat. A lot of that versatility comes from a great ability

and a 10-year track that allows both stability and

means that any FNR is as much at home on the

winding back road. At the heart of it all is the

right, location mounted
for a smooth and com-

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While paradox helps you hit deep emotional places, it's also versatile enough to add power to more rational arguments (Scali, McCabe, Sloves, New York, agency):



WE DESIGN EVERY VOLVO TO LOOK LIKE THIS.

You're looking at a perfect Volvo. A Volvo that performed exactly as our safety engineers designed it to. Its front and rear ends, for example, collapsed on impact. As a result, much of the crash energy was absorbed instead of being passed on to the passengers.

The car's middle section, however, didn't collapse. That's because the entire passenger compartment is surrounded by Volvo's unique "safety cage." Made of six box section steel pillars, this protective housing is strong enough to support the weight of six Volvos.

But the passengers of this car were also protected in ways you can't see. Because inside are such standard features as a driver's side Supplemental Restraint System, a collapsible steering column and, of course, 3-point seat belts, front and rear.

Every Volvo is designed to help protect its passengers in all these ways. And, as a result, will look remarkably similar to this one after being in the same type of accident. If you're concerned about safety, you can't find a more beautiful car.

VOLVO
A car you can believe in.

LEGAL TOLL FREE 800 4 A VOLVO OR 700 4 A VOLVO. 700 4 A VOLVO. © 1989 VOLVO NORTH AMERICA CORP. (VOLVO)

PUNS

Okay, this is a tricky one. Lots of people (including me) have told junior writers that they shouldn't have puns in their books. Which seems a little unfair, when you consider that most visual-driven ads are ultimately puns executed without words. Here are two examples, great ads from Callegari Berville Grey in Paris and DDB in London, respectively:



PUNS

A pun, strictly speaking, is nothing more than a word or phrase that carries a second meaning. Today, through the magic of Photoshop, that second meaning is being given to pictures instead of words.

So maybe we should be showing a little more love to verbal puns. As George Felton points out in his excellent book, *Advertising: Concept and Copy*, verbal puns are still finding their way into the award shows. Perhaps, rather than avoiding puns altogether, we should just avoid the lame ones.

But how do you do that? One method was suggested to me by my first boss, the late Jerry Goodis, who had been the most famous and influential ad person in Canada during the 1960s and 70s. I had brought Jerry a layout featuring a particularly egregious pun, and he handed it back to me, saying, gently, "It has to kick both ways. If you're going to do a pun, it has to kick both ways." What Jerry meant was that the pun has to make sense no matter how you read it. A good example of a pun that kicks both ways is the tagline for John Deere tractors: "Nothing runs like a Deere." Actually, there are two puns in that line ("runs" and "Deere"), but all the possible interpretations coexist peaceably with the brand.

I believe an advertising pun works best when both interpretations refer positively to what you're selling. There is a chain of stores in Toronto called The Running Room. Their tagline, "From Start to Finish," says not only that the store will prepare me for a race in literal terms, but also that they're the only source I need for everything related to running.

One pun that didn't hold together was found in a headline used by not one, but two different brands of convertibles during the 1980s: "To air is human." The line worked fine if one read it to mean, "To want the wind in your hair is perfectly normal." But if it were read as "To err is human," it suddenly became a disconnect with the shot of people having fun in their car. Thus, the pun did not kick both ways, which would explain why I saw these ads in magazines, but not in award shows.

A more successful pun was produced by Rubin Postaer & Associates (Los Angeles) in this ad for the Honda Accord:

Send in the clones.

There's a good reason why more cars are looking more and more alike. It's called the Accord.

The Honda Accord has become the benchmark for other car makers. They take it apart. Study it. Take it apart again.

Now while they're busy doing that, we would like to move on to something bigger and better. The new Accord.

The new Accord was redesigned to create a new car. A car attuned to the driver. One that improves the quality of driving.

panels. So it's stiffer and more solid. The redesigned 4-wheel double wishbone suspension system works even better.

Power steering now operates at all speeds. And it progressively adjusts the amount of assistance for better road feel for the driver.

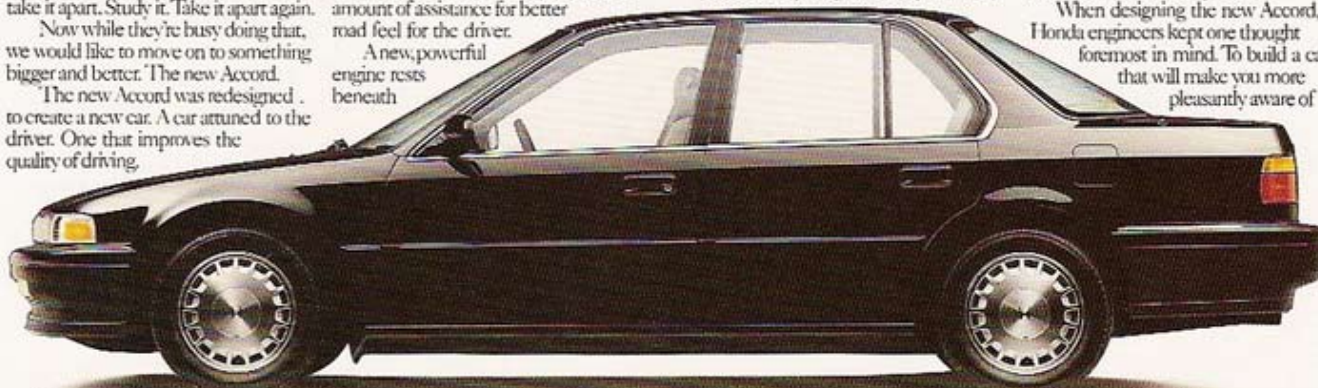
A new, powerful engine rests beneath

Once seated inside the car, you are welcomed by a bright, airy environment that immediately puts you at ease. The controls and instruments are logically placed. Everything falls into your line of

is thick and plush and helps to absorb noise and vibrations.

A new ventilation system further assures your comfort. It's quiet, efficient and the controls are easy to use.

When designing the new Accord, Honda engineers kept one thought foremost in mind. To build a car that will make you more pleasantly aware of



There is more room inside, the ride is more comfortable and the car is more responsive under all driving conditions.

You can see the smooth, flowing lines and the substantial increase in glass area. But the greater refinements are inside the car, where they matter most.

The body is built with thicker steel

the low, sloping hood. It's fuel injected. Unique balance shafts cancel inertial forces that cause other engines to twist and shake. You'll be amazed at just how smoothly and quietly it runs.

There is a new 4-speed automatic transmission available that's compact, smooth shifting and even more efficient.

sight and is easily within your reach.

The front seats are larger and offer greater support. Rear seats contour to your shape for better comfort.

The interior is designed to give the appearance of smooth, seamless space. Panels are moulded from one piece so there is nothing to rattle. The carpeting

the enjoyment of driving. You will have to drive it to believe it.

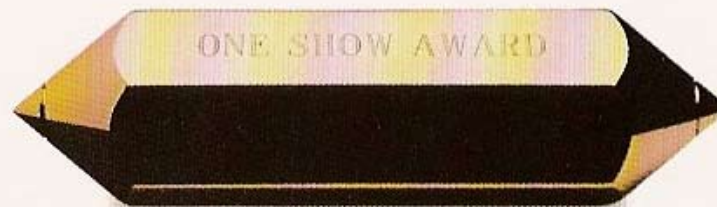
And you should keep this in mind. If you are thinking about buying a new Accord, make sure it's the one built by Honda.

HONDA
The New Accord

It's a lovely pun off "Send in the clowns," because it delivers the message that only a fool would attempt to copy this car.

Even the venerable One Show is not above punning, as we see in this invitation by Rice & Rice of Minneapolis:

Welcome
to another
evening of
whining
and dining.



Columbia Sportswear used both senses of the word "buy" to talk about its camouflage parka
(agency: Borders, Perrin & Norrande, Portland):

"Buy the Quad Parka. They did."

*Mother Gert Boyle
Chairman, Columbia Sportswear*

Over the years the Quad™ has proven more effective in the field than any other waterfowl garment made, and the numbers prove it. Why, just the other day my son Tim, our company President, listed all the knock-offs of our original 4-in-1 interchangeable jacket now on the market. This kind of flattery I can live without. So to help our Quad from becoming any more interchangeable with its lesser copies, we've engineered improvements that may go unnoticed, but not unappreciated. Changes you'll find in the Super Quad™ and Wildgoose™ Parkas, as well.

The shell features a new, snap-up storm collar and protective flap over the metal zipper tab, which can get mighty cold against your face. We've also replaced the liner's knit collar with a tall tunnel collar. For the front cargo pockets, Tim proposed an idea that won't hold water—mesh bottoms for drainage. Other than that, we haven't messed with success.

The shell features rugged, quiet Stealth Cloth™ with Gore-Tex® fabric. The reversible liner is packed with Thinsulate™. You'll enjoy unencumbered, overhead arm movement thanks to the Radial Sleeve™. Plus cargo handwarming pockets, fleece-lined chest pockets, double storm flap, detachable hood, and the subject of much sincere competitive flattery, our infamous Columbia Interchange System™.

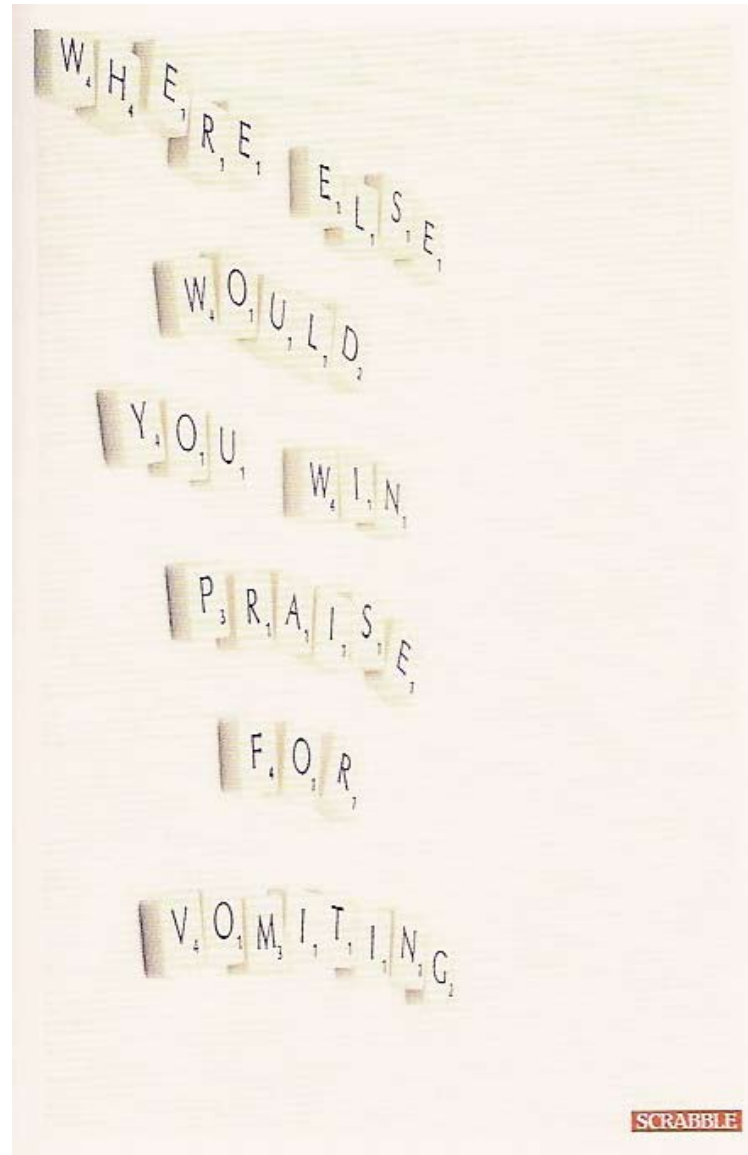
One more thing. Like all Columbia hunting garments, the Quad will set you back a few. If you just can't bring yourself to part with the money, you can always pick out a cheap imitation. Problem is, so can the ducks.

Columbia Sportswear Company
1402 N. Barringer, Portland, OR 97223. Toll-free dealer inquiries, call 1-800-295-4822.

Labels for ducks and geese:

- Sacramento, CA 10/27/98
- Heron Marsh, WI 11/2/93
- Lake Umbagog, Canada 9/29/96
- Redbank, KY 1/2/94
- Savoy Marsh, OR 11/2/94
- Heron Marsh, WI 11/2/93
- Redbank, KY 1/2/94
- Savoy Marsh, OR 11/2/94

And Ogilvy & Mather in Singapore used puns to promote Scrabble in a campaign that could have run forever:



Ensuring that your pun kicks both ways doesn't guarantee that your headline will be a good one. The weird thing about thinking up a pun is that it causes a rush of giddy glee that can lower our defenses against corniness. So, if you can, put your headline away for a couple of days and work on something else. If you still like it the next time you see it, it may be a keeper.

PARALLELISM

Parallelism is the deliberate repetition of a particular word, phrasing or sentence structure for effect. I would have described it as primarily a writers' tool, but that was before I saw these wonderful visual ads for Harvey Nichols by DDB, London:



January



But in a writer's hands, parallelism can have even more power. Consider this ad for fishing reels, done by Core in St. Louis:

IRON

**AFTER THIRTY SECONDS YOU'RE AFRAID
YOUR LINE MIGHT BREAK. AFTER THIRTY
MINUTES YOU'RE AFRAID IT MIGHT NOT.**

Two-Iron saltwater grade spinning reels from Quantum.
Available in ultra-light through heavy-duty.
Not available in wimp.

Gold aluminum side cover locks to reinforced
graphite composite body - makes sure you wear out
fish, not gears.

Angkor gears with forged brass main gear and machined
brass pinion! Always smooth - also, looking for a fight.

Oversized drag with dual surface design is 50%
larger than other drags. Smooth on drag pressure,
rough on fish.

Available with equally tough Iron Saltwater rods
for your choice of fishing applications.

For a free poster and information on the complete
line of Quantum saltwater grade equipment, call our
toll free Saltwater Green Hotline at 1-800-842-7478
(1-800-745-8907).

<http://www.quantumfishing.com>

QUANTUM

This next ad, for used Mercedes-Benz cars, uses parallelism to say something far more compelling than "affordable" (The Martin Agency, Richmond):

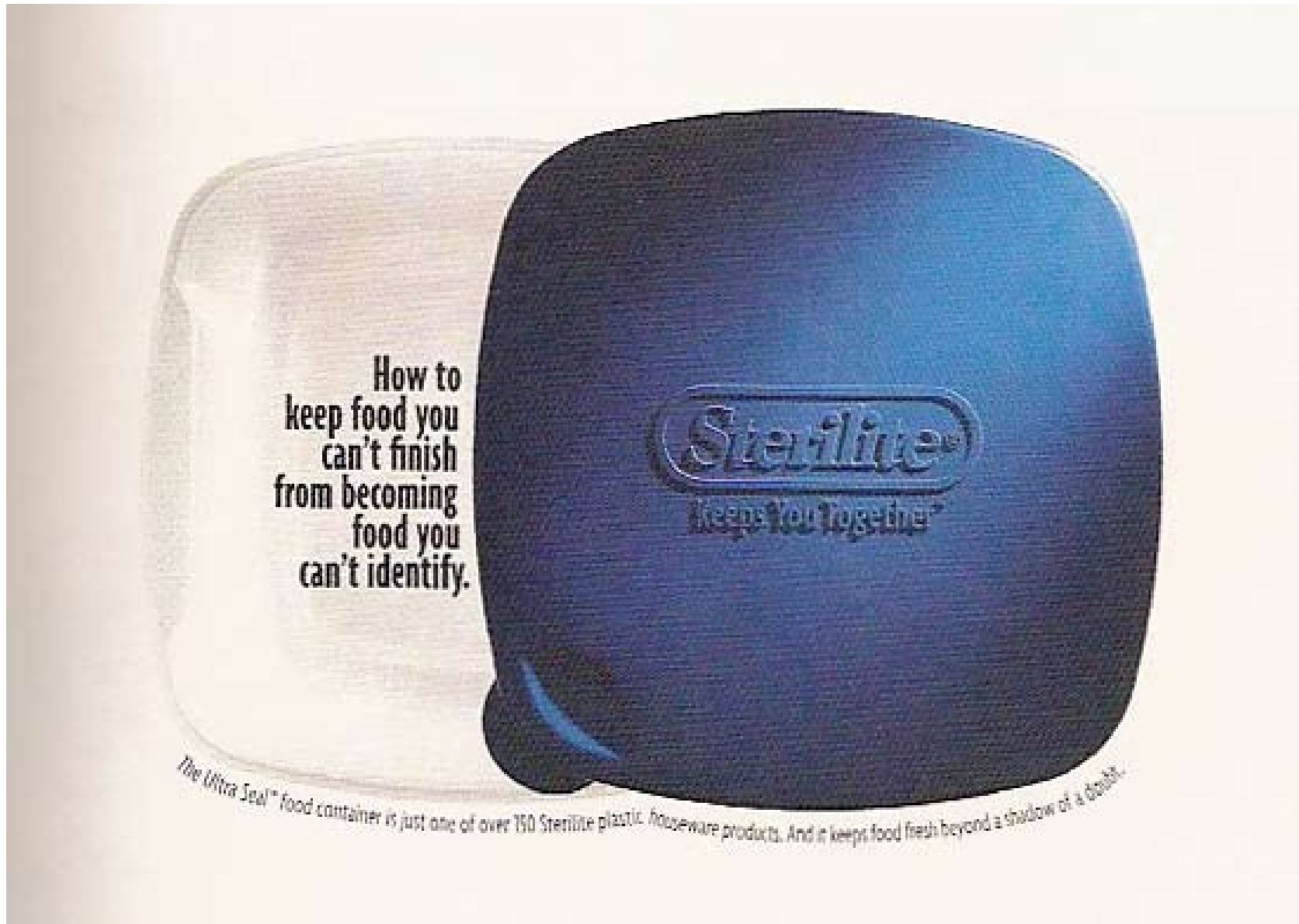
Priced so you can feel the wind in your hair while you still have your hair.



Don't be surprised to find yourself behind the wheel of your dream car a little ahead of schedule. With the Encore Program, you can buy or lease a pre-owned Mercedes that has passed a rigorous inspection. And includes a zero-deductible limited warranty and 24-hour roadside assistance. Take a test drive. And feel free to put the top down.



Parallelism is versatile enough to elevate the proposition for a humble food-storage container
(agency: Pagano Schenck & Kay, Boston):



And parallelism makes possible a slam dunk in an us-versus-them argument for a newspaper
(Cole & Weber, Portland, agency):

RUN YOUR AD ON TV
and people will head for the
bathroom.
RUN YOUR AD IN THE OREGONIAN
and they'll bring it with them.



Parallelism raises such strong expectations that if you fail to be parallel to the end, it will definitely be noticed (agency: HSR Business to Business, Cincinnati):

SHAKERS MADE
GREAT FURNITURE.

WE MAKE
GREAT FURNITURE.

SHAKERS WERE
CELIBATE.

WE MAKE
GREAT FURNITURE.



MOUNT LEBANON SHAKER CHEST
— CIRCA 1800-1850 —



Immodest? Perhaps. Unchaste? Never. Our fidelity to crafting early-American furniture the old-fashioned way is as incorruptible as the Shakers themselves. Just ask our kids. Or, better yet, call 888-353-9387 for a free catalog.

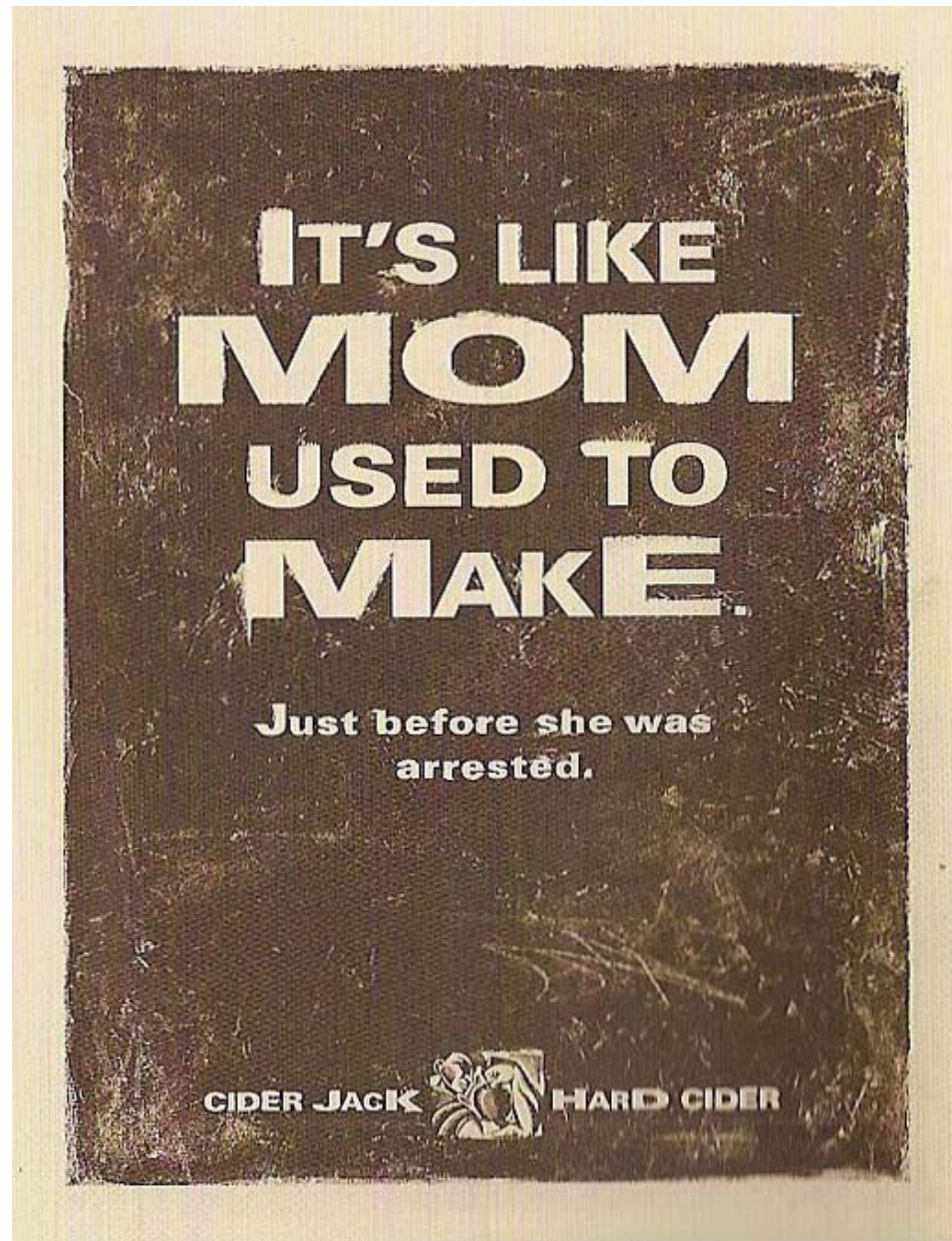
DAVID T. SMITH
& CO.
CABINET MAKERS
& GRAINERS
MORROW, OHIO

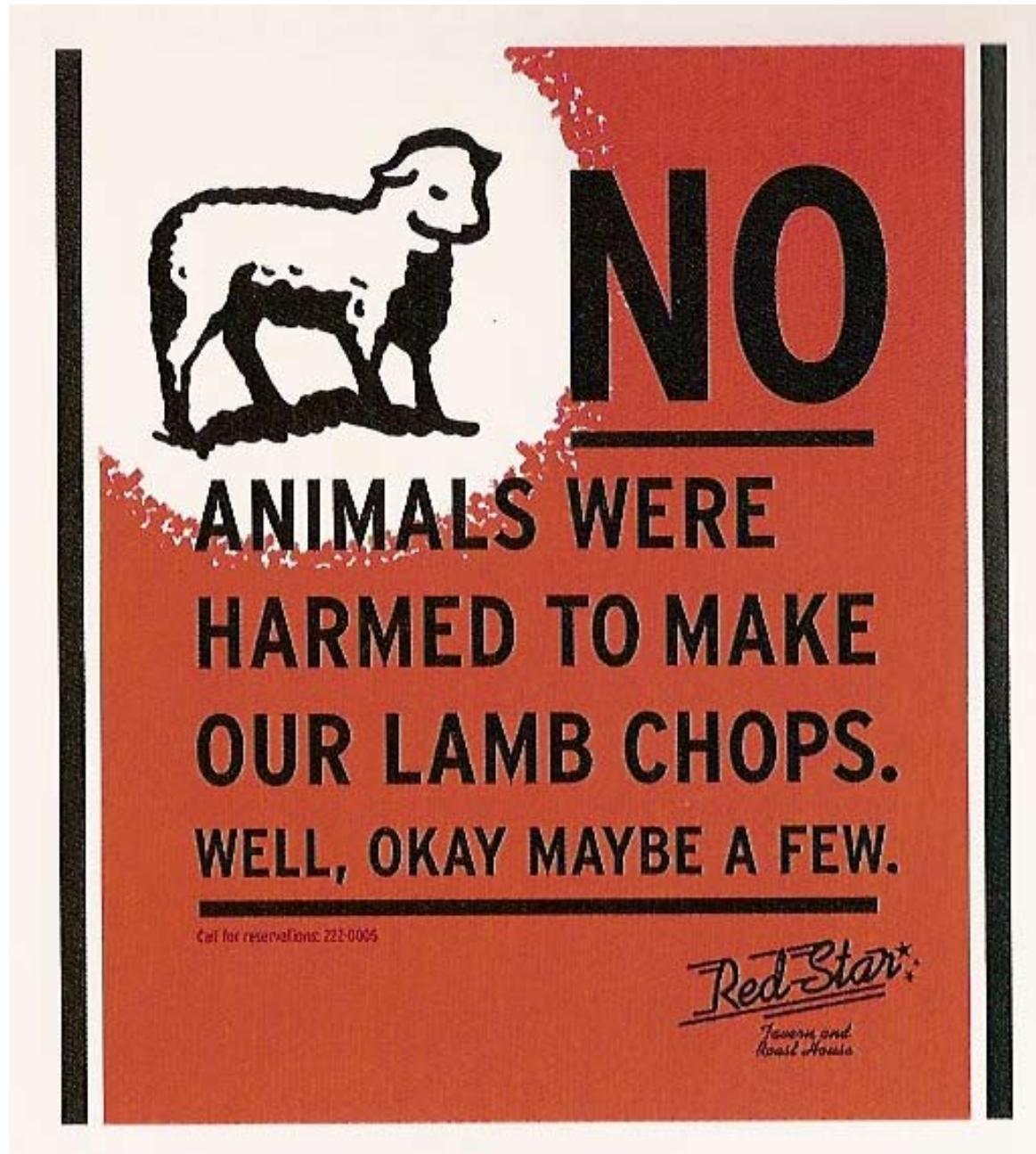
Up to now, I've been telling you about rhetorical devices that are as available to visual thinkers as they are to headline writers. But there are other tools that would be difficult, if not impossible, to use visually. These tools are almost exclusively the property of the writer. Not all of them will be your favourites, but I think you'll agree that many of them have provided the foundation for some brilliant writing.

ANESIS

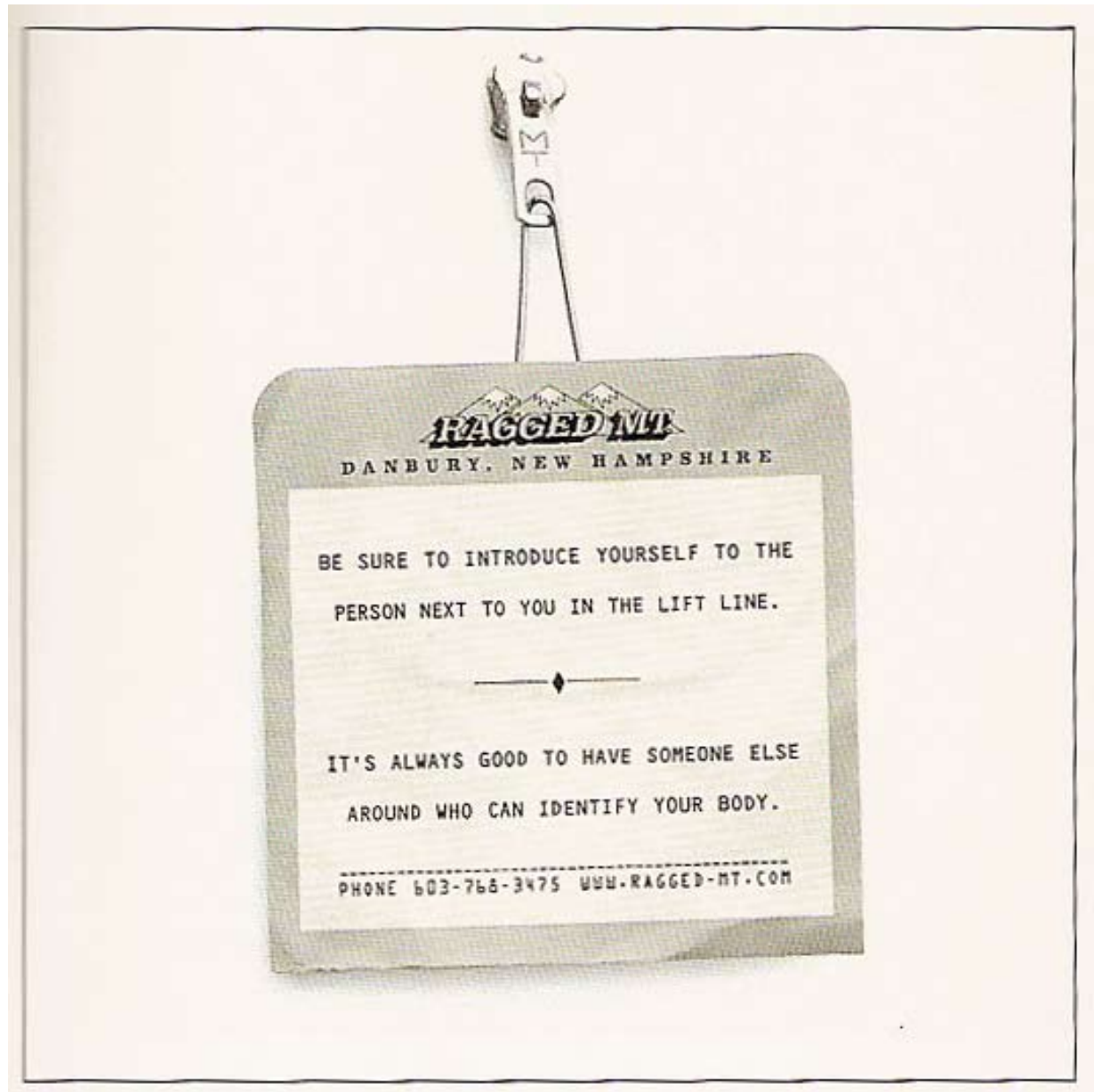
If you're looking for edginess in your lines, anesis is a tool you'll want to keep close at hand. It comes from the Greek word for "loosening" or "relaxing." It is the use of a concluding sentence or phrase that undercuts or diminishes what was said previously. Typically with anesis, one starts with a fairly lofty, dignified or respectful statement and lets it all go downhill from there.

This ad from Clarke Goward, Boston, is a good example:





This ad for a ski resort starts with a friendly exhortation, but quickly takes a turn for the worse
(agency: Clarke Goward, Boston):



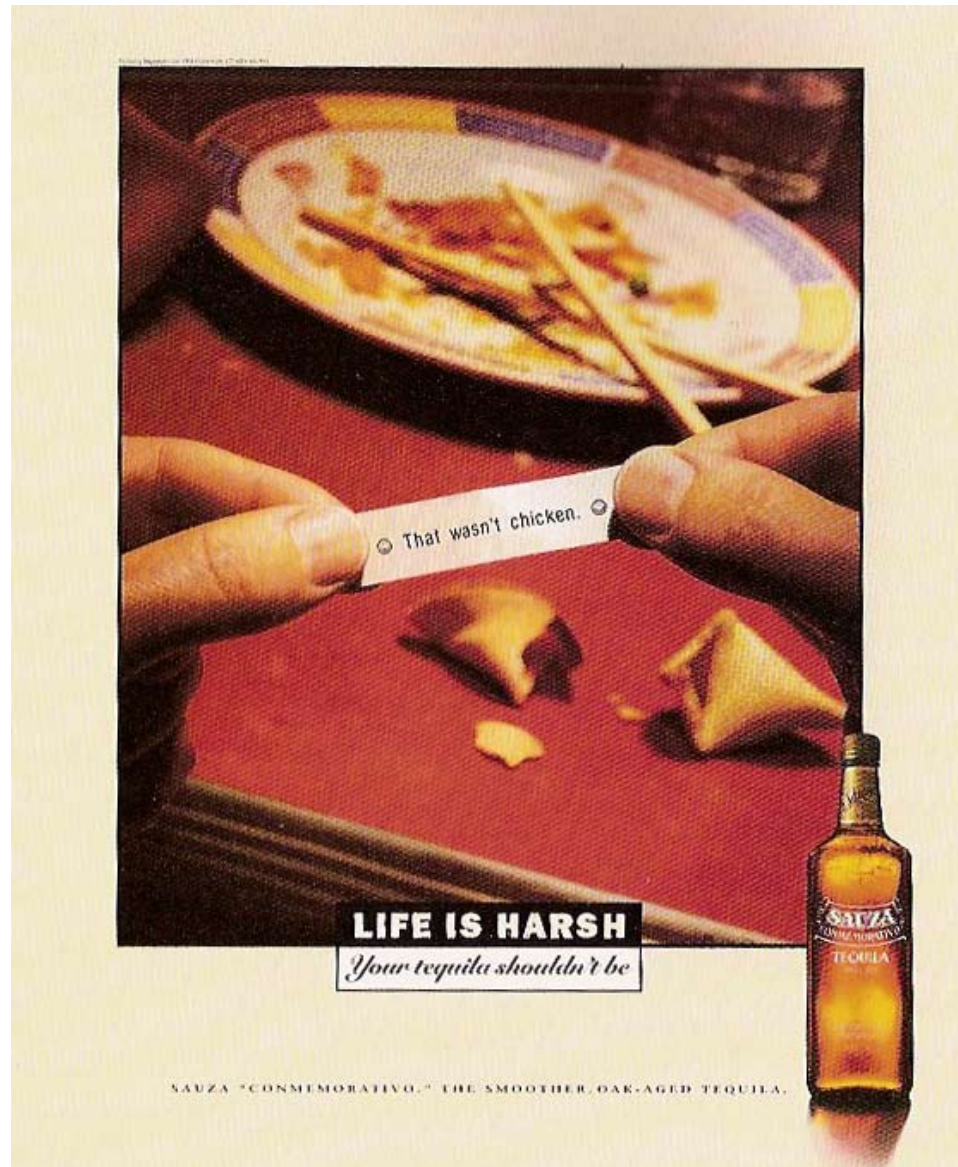
In this ad for Moon Pies, Loeffler Ketchum Mountjoy of Charlotte, NC makes fun of the language of nutritional claims:



And Cliff Freeman and Partners of New York took full advantage of a Hollywood media buy in this tri-vision billboard for Sauza Conmemorativo Tequila:



A strongly visual ad could use anesis, but it seems to me that it would still need words to deliver its final twist (agency: Cliff Freeman and Partners):

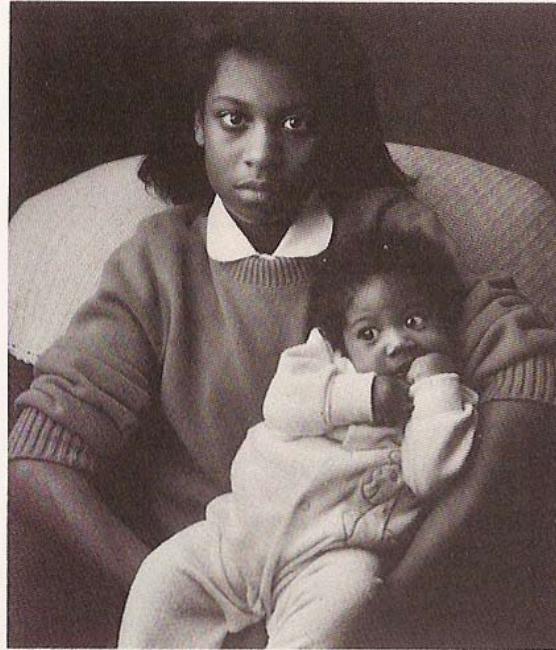


SIMILE

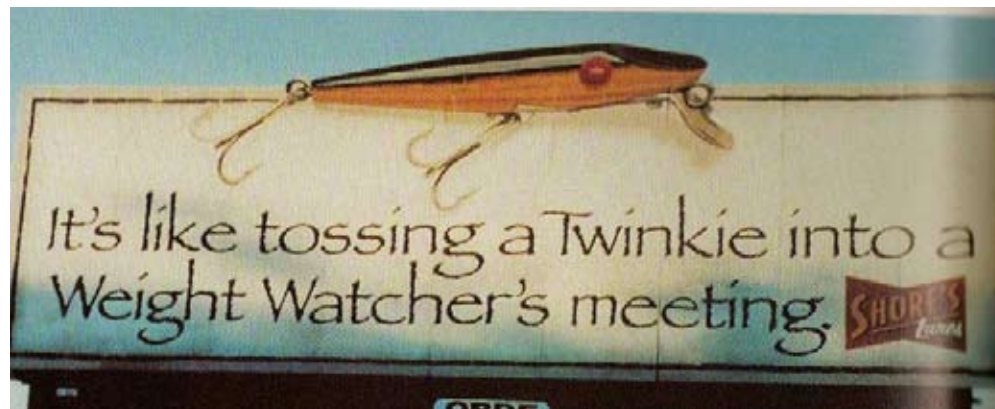
We've already seen how much metaphor gets used in visual advertising. When the equation of a metaphor ("life is a poker game") is altered by adding the word "like" or "as" ("life is like a poker game") the resulting comparison is known as a simile.

Simile gives you a subtler way to provoke mental images, a way that is not available to strictly visual thinkers.

It's like being grounded
for eighteen years.



Having a baby when you're a teenager takes away more than your freedom, it takes away your dreams.
The Children's Defense Fund.



Agencies: Fallon McElligott, Minneapolis and BVK/McDonald, Milwaukee, respectively.

RHETORICAL QUESTION

This is a question to which no answer is needed or expected. It is asked to bring your listener or reader to your chosen conclusion. When you mention something ridiculous and ask your friend, "How stupid is that?" you are asking a rhetorical question.

Rhetorical questions are powerful tools, tools that don't exist in all-visual advertising. They can be used to serve rational arguments, as we see in this classic ad from Ogilvy & Mather, Toronto:

Do you really need the alkalinity of a household cleaner to wash your face?

Undoubtedly not. Yet high alkalinity is an important part of why most soaps dry your skin. Let us explain.



household cleaner
pH 10.8



Look at the comparison on this page. There is a household cleaner at one end, distilled water at the other. In between are some familiar soaps with small numbers underneath. These are pH numbers, and tell you the alkalinity of each. The distilled water, on the far right has a pH of 7, which is neutral. Ratings below pH 7 mean a substance is acidic, above pH 7 it is alkaline. The household cleaner on the left, in this case

Mr. Clean®, measures 10.8, rather more alkaline.

Because your skin is slightly acidic (pH 5.5), its balance



Ivory®
pH 9.5



Alpha Keri®
pH 10.4



Jergens® Mild
pH 9.3



is disturbed by things that are strongly alkaline. Most soaps are made with lye, a highly alkaline substance. Alkali damages the "acid mantle" or protective layer that helps the skin hold in moisture. This is why soap is so drying.

Dove® has a superior formulation that makes it different from other soaps. You'll notice that it has the same pH as distilled water, just a little higher than that

of your skin. The remaining bars on this page, perhaps yours is one of them, are closer in pH to the household



Camay®
pH 9.8



Neutrogena®
pH 9.2



cleaner. (Of course, we're not saying that washing your face with soap is the same as using a household cleaner, simply that most soaps are highly alkaline, therefore,

incompatible with the balance of your skin.)

How does your soap measure up to Dove? It may surprise you to know that almost any soap is more alkaline

than Dove. Whether yours is natural, expensive, even "pure" it will change the colour of litmus paper. Remember,



Dove®
pH 7



distilled water
pH 7



but, litmus measures alkalinity. As the comparison shows, the more alkaline the soap, the darker the paper becomes - the darker, the harsher.

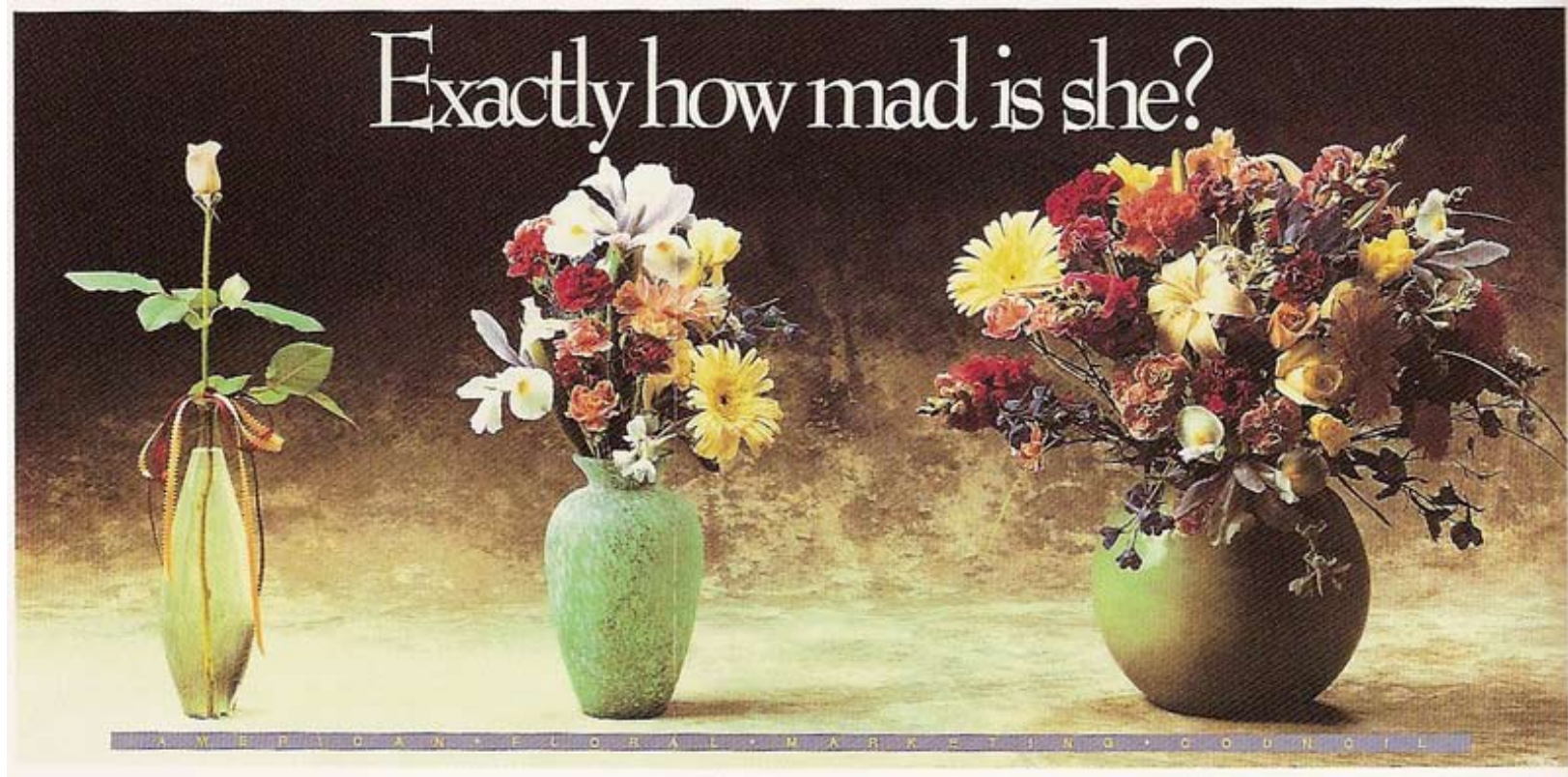
So while the question of alkalinity may never have entered your mind, you may find yourself deciding you don't want it on your face.



Can your soap pass the litmus test? Lather up your soap. First lather thoroughly. Lather up Dove. Press against each Compare. For the litmus paper water - Litmus Paper, P.O. Box 492, Inc. 92, Scarborough, Ontario M1K 5C3.

© 1992 Dove Laboratories, Inc. All rights reserved. "Dove" is a registered trademark.

They can also be used in an emotional appeal (Earle Palmer Brown, Bethesda, agency):



Rhetorical questions are flexible enough to advance even a deliberately nonsensical argument (TBWA/Chiat/Day, Los Angeles, agency):



MONOLOGUE,
DIALOGUE,
TESTIMONIAL

I have put these last tools together because they boil down to the same thing: human beings talking. When people talk, they reveal a lot about themselves, whether they mean to or not. The most brilliant visual ads in the world – and there have been a lot of them – have never captured the nuances of human speech in the way that a headline-driven ad can. This means that a huge opportunity for nailing emotions and insights has fallen by the wayside.

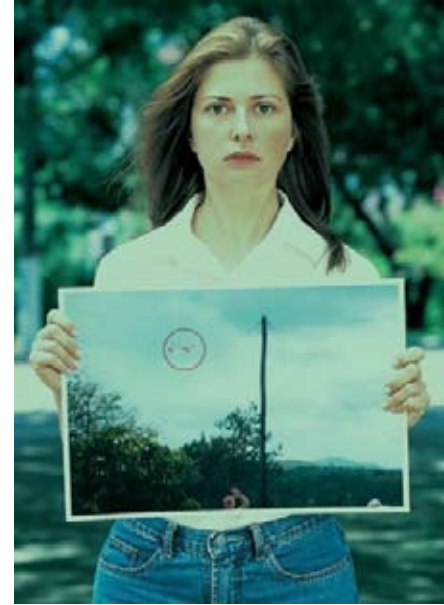
You can mimic human speech patterns simply to give your headlines a more informal, conversational feel. But you can go a step further by quoting real or invented words from your customers.

Testimonials are viewed as the oldest of old-school devices in advertising because they've so often been earnest and hokey. But even in this age of ironic detachment, testimonials can be fresh and persuasive (agency: DM9 DDB, São Paulo):



"IT WAS A FRIDAY NIGHT
WHEN I WAS TAKEN
INSIDE THEIR SHIP. THEY
DID SOME EXPERIMENTS
ON ME. THEY GAVE ME
CHAMPAGNE, SALMON.
THEY'RE VERY EVOLVED."

NEW TAM AIRBUS. YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT'S JUST A PLANE. **TAM** AIRLINES



"IT WASN'T REALLY
A SAUCER. IT WAS
SHAPED MORE LIKE
A CIGAR. I WASN'T THE
ONLY HUMAN IN THERE.
THERE WERE MORE
OF US. ALL RECLINING
IN VERY WIDE SEATS."

NEW TAM AIRBUS. YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT'S JUST A PLANE. **TAM** AIRLINES



"I WAS TAKEN INSIDE
ONE OF THEIR SHIPS.
I CAN'T REMEMBER
EVERYTHING BECAUSE
I FELL ASLEEP AS SOON
AS I ENTERED.
I WOKE UP 9 THOUSAND
KILOMETERS FROM
HOME. RIGHT IN PARIS."

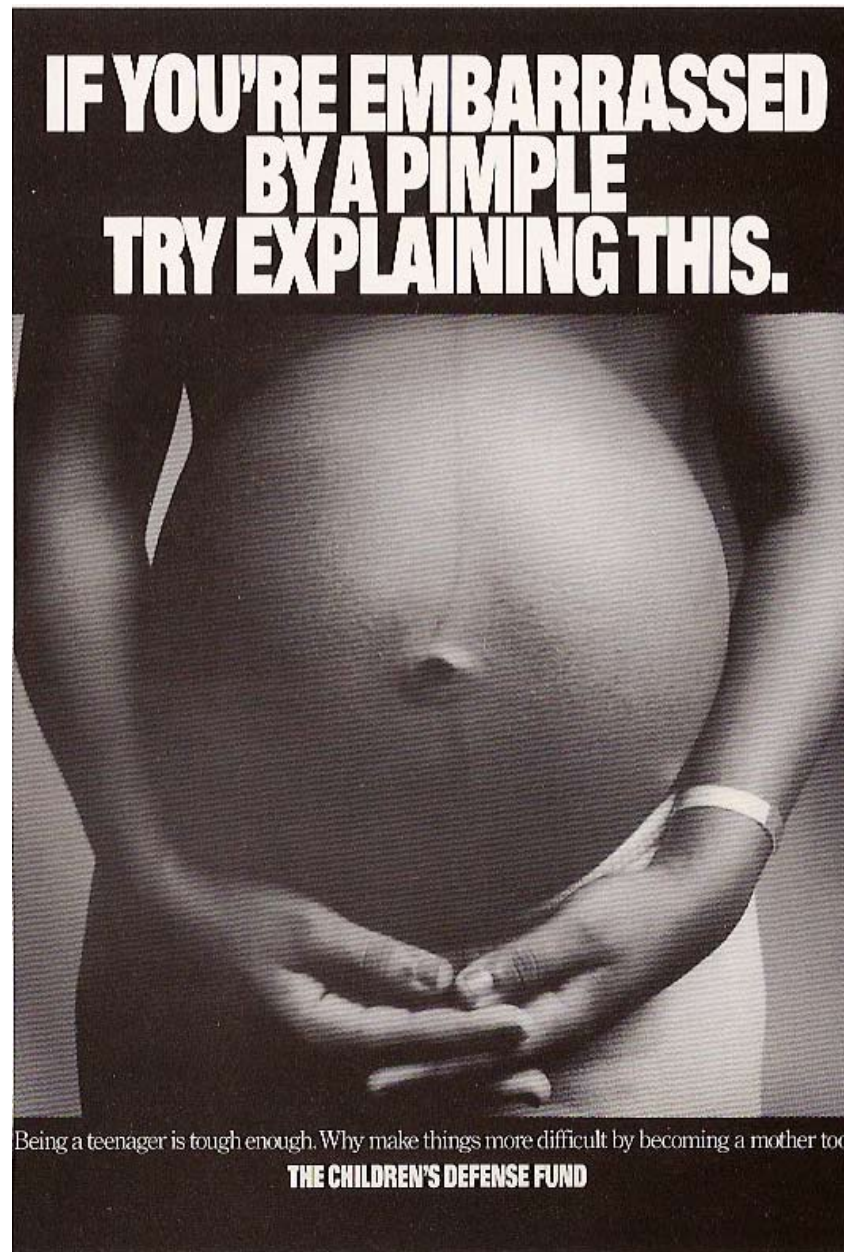
NEW TAM AIRBUS. YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT'S JUST A PLANE. **TAM** AIRLINES

A FINAL WORD

There was a job listing that appeared on this site a while ago. The headline called for A WRITER WHO WRITES. I have no idea who wrote the listing, but I felt keenly aware of his exasperation. Here he was, having to specifically ask for a skill that could have been taken for granted just ten years ago.

One of my students told me that he found headline writing to be a challenge because it was such a departure from the visual thinking he'd been doing for so long. I know exactly what he means. When our industry started gravitating towards visual ideas, many of us found it scary. We had been trained to understand that every ad required a headline. Now we were being asked to create ads that, ideally, would have no words at all. To do this, we had to practise an entirely new way of thinking. But we did it. And you can, too.

And if you do, you will be amazed at the liberation. You will be able to infuse your ads with a sharp, dry edge that would probably not exist in any visual alone (Fallon McElligott, agency):



You will be able to use the language of a shampoo bottle to sell daytime television
(TBWA/Chiat/Day, Los Angeles, agency):

Marry rich.
Kill husband.
Repeat.



You will be able to create thoughts so compelling that any kind of visual would actually be unwelcome
(Abbott Mead Vickers/BBDO, agency):

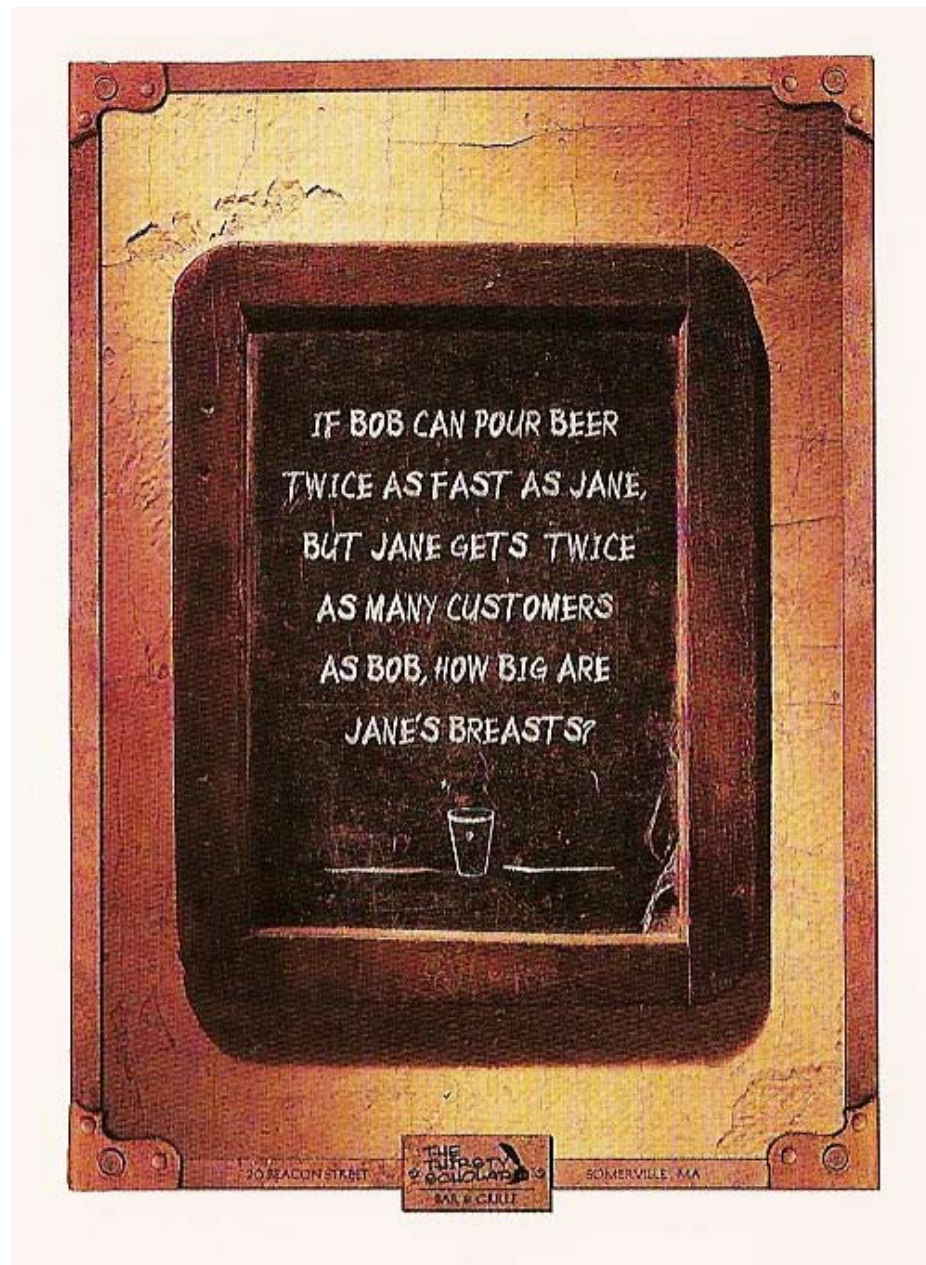
Lose the ability
to slip out of meetings
unnoticed.

The Economist

Having potential is great, if you're 12.

The Economist

And, rather than always communicating in a single glance, you will have the power to delay the laugh till the end, as in this ad for a student pub (agency: Allen & Gerritsen, Watertown, MA):



I've pasted some links below that will lead you to great sites with a lot more information on rhetoric. If you decide to make a study of the subject, you'll find that I've barely scratched the surface of what's available.

But whatever you decide, I hope you will decide to write. Because we as writers have a problem. And for us, the only way out is the way through.

Links to sites about rhetoric:

The Forest of Rhetoric (<http://humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric/silva.htm>)

Rhetoric (http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/resource_rhet.html)

American Rhetoric (www.americanrhetoric.com)