ACADEMIC FORUM

In this Issue

Connecting the Dots

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Connecting the Dots

Steve Haber, Editor, The Academic Forum
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Dr. Steven Haber

Many creative entrepreneurs, especially those in high tech fields, tend to engender personal biographies which involve dropping out of college before graduating. Bill Gates of Microsoft and Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, were both Harvard drop outs. Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak withdrew from Berkeley after one year. Sean Parker who founded Napster and later served as a president of Facebook skipped college altogether. There was also Steve Jobs who withdrew from Reed College after just one semester. One might draw the conclusion from all these super achieving and highly creative entrepreneurs that college education might not only be unnecessary, but might even serve as an impediment to creativity. Jobs, in particular, refused to, in his words, spend "all the money his parents had saved their entire life" on required courses that held no interest for him.

Most people know about Jobs dropping out of college. What most people do not know is that after officially withdrawing from classes, Jobs remained on the Reed campus for 18 months, sleeping on friends' floors and dropping in on those classes that interested him. One of those classes was a calligraphy course. Speaking at a commencement address at Stanford University in 2005, Jobs said that it was the appreciation he developed in that course for different fonts and typography that ten years later would influence his decision to build elegant and multifarious typefaces into the first Mac computer. This would lead to the inclusion of similar fonts not only in all Apple products, but eventually in all computer technology as the Apple system was widely imitated by Windows and other operating systems. This is an example of what Jobs called, "connecting the dots." That is, by being open to exploring new experiences and following one's passion, it may be possible to find hidden connections between seemingly disparate and disconnected pursuits. In many ways, it is this ability to apply knowledge, materials, and passion from one area of life to other, very different and seemingly disconnected applications, that is at the essence of creativity.

Whether part of a conventional college curriculum or not, it is this process of discovering hidden connections that is at the heart of all education and of all creativity. When I look back upon the really great teachers I have had in my life, the one thing they all had in common was a passion, not only for the subject they were teaching, but for many other subjects as well. When I was working on my doctorate in Teaching English as a Second Language at Teachers College, my advisor John Fanselow had the sort of eclecticism that grew out of following his interests wherever they would lead.

Although a linguist by training, he was especially interested in cross cultural anthropology and the way that individuals living in a culture develop highly ritualized and predictable ways of behaving which are so deeply ingrained that they occur automatically and largely unconsciously. For example, the way Americans greet each other—make eye contact, shake hands, kiss hello, or maintain personal space—are quite different from the ways of greeting that occur in Japan. Yet neither Japanese nor Americans would ever think twice about these behaviors unless they happened to come in contact with someone from a different culture who did not share the same conventions. By close observation from the vantage point of one culture looking at another, these rituals begin to stand out in high relief.

By applying this method of close anthropological observation to classrooms, Fanselow was able to identify similar patterns of ritualized and predictable behavior that occur among students and teachers. For example, the typical pattern of student teacher interaction is for the teacher to make a statement, then ask a question about the statement to which one or more students respond. The teacher then evaluates the response positively or negatively. This turns out to be one of the most common and universal patterns of classroom behavior in the United States, and for a certain percentage of students, especially those who already know the material before the lesson begins, it seems to work well or well enough. Students get to display their knowledge in a public forum in which they are rewarded and encouraged to keep learning.

However, for students who do not know the material beforehand, or who have difficulty understanding the teacher's initial statement or question, or who experience significant anx-

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iety when called upon to speak before the class, the typical pattern of statement-question-response-evaluation, can be embarrassing and painful. To avoid displays of public humiliation, teachers tend to call most upon those students who can reliably answer questions correctly and call least upon those who cannot successfully negotiate the pattern. As a result, the so called "good" students get increasingly more time on task and positive reinforcement to keep learning; whereas, the "weaker" students tend to be ignored and, if they are unable to pick up the material themselves, fall farther and farther behind.

Fanselow's observation of classrooms led to a teacher training method in which teachers would videotape their own lessons and study their own patterns of interaction with students. Once the teachers identified their own behavioral patterns, they would make a conscious effort to vary one or more elements of the pattern. For example, rather than having teachers rely on oral presentations or lectures exclusively during lessons, they could change the medium by incorporating visual imagery, reading, or film. Instead of the teacher asking all the questions, the pattern could be varied to require the students to develop their own questions about the material, and these could be directed toward the teacher or to others in the class, perhaps with time allowed to rehearse the questions with partners or in small groups before presenting them in front of the class. By varying the typical classroom pattern, students who had previously not been able to participate might now be able to do so. Students who had been marginalized and alienated might now feel that they were part of the classroom community.

These small changes in classroom behavior introduced over time could actually make a big difference in the experience that teachers and students share in classrooms and could ultimately make a difference not only in terms of increasing student knowledge, but more importantly, widening the circle of students who feel that they are part of a community that cares about them, respects them, and wants them to succeed.

So whether we are developing a new computer application or trying to improve student outcomes in education, the basic principles of creativity are the same—drawing and applying inspiration, ideas and materials from one realm of experience to another—connecting the dots. In this issue of *The Academic Forum*, we will explore the creative process and its application to pedagogy from a variety of academic disciplines. Charles Lynch explores the discoveries made during his childhood learning experiences and how the discovery method can be applied to teaching nontraditional students in college classrooms. E. Shaskan Bumas reflects upon the concept of character in fiction and how his early exposure to post-modern literature shaped his own critical faculty and imaginative powers as a writer. In a similar vein, Robert

Thurston discusses the origins of his own creative process as a science fiction author. In taking the creative process outside of the classroom, history professor Tim White shares the experiences of the historical walking tours he has conducted in Jersey City and Manhattan. Ann Wallace discusses the need to create a sense of community in developmental writing classes. Steve LoCascio comments on the importance of developing comprehensive mentoring programs to support newly hired teachers in urban classrooms. Clyde Coreil critiques the current emphasis on high stakes testing as a threat to the creative imagination in the classroom. Mihri Napoliello exposes the increasing use of "scripted" lesson plans and their tendency to stultify the classroom experience.

Finally, it is fitting that in this issue we honor two pillars of the NJCU community who have recently passed away. Julian Robinson served as Dean of Students at NJCU starting in 1969 and then as Vice President for Student Services until his retirement in 1997. A pioneer in many ways, Robinson was the first African American to reach the rank of vice president on any university campus in New Jersey. We also note with sadness the passing of William J. Maxwell who graduated from NJCU (then Jersey City State College) in 1959 and went on to serve with distinction as a faculty member, Dean of Arts and Sciences, and President. On behalf of the editorial board, we extend our deepest condolences to the Robinson and Maxwell families.

For the 2012-13 issue, *The Academic Forum* is seeking articles on the theme of the role of the university in achieving social justice. The "Occupy" movement and upcoming presidential elections have raised public awareness on such issues as income inequality, access to higher education and the job market, the influence of powerful lobbyists, and the role of government in creating a more just and equitable society. We are soliciting articles on this theme that deal with the university's role in addressing these issues. Of particular interest are articles on pedagogy, research, theory, best practices, performance, and assessment related to this theme. Articles that are accessible to non-experts in the field are especially welcome.

As always, we express our deepest appreciation to all of our contributors for their efforts in producing an outstanding collection of articles. Special thanks to Vice President for Academic Affairs Jo Bruno for her continuing support of the publication. Ellen Quinn did an outstanding job of layout and design. Thanks to Laura Wadenpfuhl for her careful and thoughtful proofreading. Thanks also to the editorial board for their comments and helpful suggestions: Joan Bailey, Ron Bogusz, John Collins, Erik Morales, Ellen Quinn, and Laura Wadenpfuhl. On behalf of the editorial board, we wish the NJCU community a restful and productive summer.

THE PERSISTENCE OF METAPHOR
Ruminations, Exercises, An Appeal

Charles H. Lynch, Assistant Professor of English

Unfortunately, I still have no interest in becoming handy—or what my relatives called "mechanical." Since early childhood, words, sounds, and rhythms crammed my ears and imagination. I liked to work my mouth, aloud or silently, to create poems. At sixteen, Ms. Muse began to either ensnare me in ticker tape, pat my back in congratulation, or dawdle near my desk while distractedly knitting. To escape her I liked to doodle, draw, and visit paintings, sculpture, and photographs, activities that gave relief from language's demands. I especially enjoyed scrutinizing and manipulating "the phenomenological ephemera of quotidian existence," a phrase an arch friend used to dignify my small objects that conjure memories and project other worlds.

I'm hearing voices. The word "archangel" has been crouching on my left shoulder, wanting to yoke to "in the moon's wake," lifted from the title of a Lyonel Feininger painting. Also, a 2011busted fortune cookie slipped me this doozie: "An agreeable romance might begin to take on the appearance." Okay. So, how can those lunar and loony lines sneak into working draft #3, potentially a street portrait or celebration of Afro-Cuban music?

> Night skims smoke feathering asphalt corridors
>
> embroidered with palm wreaths' dust.
>
> Chimes scatter shot upon parquet plaid backstage
>
> as sun's mallets tick-tock on bata.

I got to keep on scratchin' and typin'. Perhaps I should have persevered at jewelry making or photography.

In the first grade, for a Mother's Day gift I fashioned a necklace of macaroni noodles painted red, gold, purple and strung on pea green twine. Mama delicately excavated it from layers of folded, turquoise crepe paper. She pledged, "Oh my! Oh my my my!" Swelling with admiration, she hastened to her dressing table mirror and draped the necklace around her neck—of course, the *thought* counted so very much. My first commercial treasure presided in her paisley costume jewelry box; I checked on it every Saturday. Therefore, I was rattled on Sunday mornings preparing for St. James Episcopal Church in Baltimore when my mother explained, "It's raining out. The colors may run." Or demurely insisted, "It doesn't match my outfit." Maybe on Halloween? "No, Bunky. Let's just wait for a very *special* occasion." By Thanksgiving it had vanished, or, as Mama surmised, peering at me sadly, "You know son, it could have been stolen, maybe by a cleaning lady." At age six, theft became a consolation. At least *somebody* was showing my art off. Today when I see pasta's hues lavished on shells, angel hair, strings, pipettes, tubes, bow ties, pouches, rods, elbows, and deformed ears I realize… I was partially prescient.

In the seventh grade Meyer Site, the art teacher, showed slides to honor "the very common that often goes unseen." He lobbed questions at us, then stood silently, swiveling his balding head, a prissy owl with wingy fingers biddling at pursed lips. I had never taken my random thoughts so seriously. In his classroom racial pride and imagination found a sanctuary. I ventured opinions and guesses, unafraid of looking stupid in the newly integrated, accelerated Robert E. Lee Junior High #49. On a mission, his students' cameras snapped our home settings in black-and-white to capture "THE AESTHETIC," a big word that rescued us from quests for likeable pictures. Metal patterns in a trash can top, a manhole cover, and crosshatched gratings on Menassie Boone's grocery store window. My Schwinn bicycle seat, from below.

An Esso oil slick in rain puddled by buckled concrete. I strolled down the alley and spotted five-year-old LaVerne Branch in her bonnet and sunsuit on her backyard swing. "Hey! Look!" She twisted toward me, frowned, then smiled shyly as I steadied the Brownie camera on the gatepost.

Now it seems that only a few weeks later I awakened when Mama hollered plaintively up the stairs to Dad, "Buck! Buck! Muriel just called with terrible news. Van Story Branch's littlest girl was rushed to Provident last night. Just died this morning! They think encephalitis! Please, please get up." I arose as if in a trance, went to the bookshelf, and reached for my hand-made album of pictures glued on poster board. My younger brother slept a few feet away. I stood staring at LaVerne Branch, shaken, trying to make sense of what I had just heard. Dad was running water in the bathroom. I had never known a child who died so young. Around twelve years later, in April 1968, during the disturbances after Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination, a warehouse fire in Baltimore destroyed my boyhood memorabilia and art. For the final revision of this sequential collage, I culled my brother's memories. "Charlie, good thing you phoned. You know, the oldest sister was Shirley. And … LaVerne … is living in Randallstown, not that far from me. If I remember correctly, I think her name was Beverly." Yes. How could I forget? You're certainly right, Beverly, not LaVerne. Exactly.

Making an edible necklace and memorable photographs stoked my interest in how the usual transforms into the unexpected. As a teenager, oddments and distressed settings were accompaniments to make believe. In summer during the 1950s and early 1960s, before the Atlantic Ocean began decaying, people combed the New Jersey peninsula's toe for driftwood, whole clam shells, and Cape May diamonds. I rarely collected, except for battered pieces of rusted iron. In my meanderings I focused on footsteps and the tide's scribbles on wet sand, skeins of tangled and ripped fishing lines, barnacled rocks and jetties, horseshoe crabs' helmets, mussels' castanets, a whelk's dried egg sac. I still check out sidewalks' squares and rectangles, imagining gray or tan canvases decorated with bubbles, graffiti, stains, creases, mottles, nicknames and dates, cracks, bumps, construction workers' spray painted codes and symbols.

When I began teaching at Brooklyn College, one afternoon, leafing through a handicrafts booklet abandoned on a library table, robots and extraterrestrials made of wire, screws, nuts, and bolts stared out. *Hmmm.* How could I use small objects in teaching poetry and creativity workshops? As months grew, I mulled this over and jotted notes and sketches. While planning a descriptive essay assignment, this prompt in Hughes' and Duhamel's *Principles of Rhetoric* inspired me: "Look about you, select any object, reflect on all that might be said about it: its location, color, size, weight, origin, composition, cause, probable effects, history, future, relations with other objects, other people, and so forth" (25). I had never reflected upon anything in such a formal and complex way.

I developed exercises and refined them to teach creativity as an unfolding process of discovery, deliberately layering stages of instruction and intervals of activity. The essential question would be, "How does the metaphorical bloom, persist, and wane? " Surrealist art had fascinated me as an undergrad at Kenyon College, especially the paintings of Rene Magritte. For the workshop I plagiarized thematic and tactile energy from Magritte's examples and Salvador Dali's title *The Persistence of Memory* and its bird-creature, melting pocket watches, and ants crawling on a clock's cover. The arid landscape suggested a large expanse, abutted by a cliff. What a stun when I first witnessed the Dali—only 9.5 by 13 inches! Tinier than its reproduction in a text on modern art!

Enough self-involved prequeling. Let's get to work. Ideally, *The Persistence of Metaphor: Exercises in Creativity* workshop should be about 90 minutes. Choose objects and materials rarely cherished as art, souvenirs, or keepsakes (though the paper clip has been honored as a classic of simple design, endurance, and function). Handle objects and materials so that imagination will expand and extend in a three-stage permutation. Workshoppers bring a pen or pencil and writing pad, ten rice grains, two buttons, two rubber bands, two paper clips, five beans and/or pebbles, three twigs and/or toothpicks, three pieces of string or thread, two strips/ pieces of aluminum foil, and two other small objects.

To begin a session, I ask, "How do we define 'metaphors' identify them, and create them?" Often volunteers limit their definitions to what they remember from classes about poetry. We blow "tenor" and steer "vehicle" for their hackneyed rhetorical relevance and then wade into whatever phenomena, put into surprising combinations and contexts, charge us with unique ways of feeling and perceiving. I point out that we live "in metaphor," depending upon how we symbolically innovate and sustain sensual and abstract disjunctions. For example, "When do you tend to improvise rather than follow a conventional plan—and where does that confidence come from?" "How is some of your favorite stuff a talisman, not just an object?" "Which messages and states of being does what you're wearing announce or mask, right now?"

I riff on my instructive moments of perception, often beginning with a MOMA exhibition of photographer Harry Callahan's black-and-white abstractions of burrs, thistles, and weedy stubble in snow. Prejudiced by the other three seasons' fecundity and gaudiness, I had overlooked winter's intricate, minimalist beauty. In Oaxaca, Mexico, just off the *Zocalo*—so much more companionable than "the town square"—a restaurant worker carved and smeared a mound of butter on a chartreuse, stippled plate into a squatting canary. In the documentary *First Contact* (released in 1983) Australian gold prospectors penetrated New Guinea's interior highlands in 1930 and filmed a tribe that had never seen Europeans. One native, intrigued by exotic trash, sported an empty sardine can in the middle of his forehead. Every day for lunch a friend, painter Vincent Smith, ate sardines ("With the bones in them, for the

calcium."). Due to his nutritional addiction, his studio wall arrayed hundreds of sardine can keys. Punk rockers' pierced ears, lips, chins, and navels revived pinups. Ouch! What, for example, would be the "meaning" of the Muslim young woman in the Mombasa, Kenya bus depot wearing a black head scarf, a black veil with eye slits, a black long skirt, and a silky scarlet bustier?

The workshop begins. I set out a stapler, scissors, three clay lumps, crayons, spools of Scotch tape, and masking tape. Let serendipity reign. We warm up by brainstorming what to make alone. On the board I list all suggestions: an altar? a toy? a gift for the beloved? boat? a garden? car? tree? torture device? a foot phone? house? a manimal? a good luck charm?—what else? When the making is on course, after about ten minutes I reveal the first surprise: two large, plastic bags of cheap, expendable assortments are dumped and spread. *Unh hah!* Sighs of relief and anticipation! Participants come forward to find duplicates of what they already brought and, maybe, pennies, stoppers, nuts, bolts, dials, plugs, acorns, shoe strings, stray earrings, rhinestones, twist ties, cotton wads, tree bark, stones, coils, pieces of sponge, fuses, bones, screws, corks, can tops, buckles, ribbed wall anchors, tubes from rolls of aluminum foil and toilet paper, springs, picture hooks, chalk, spools, clamps, indecipherable found objects—and a lot of other stuff (Stay tuned).

After about 25 minutes of cutting, twisting, stripping, positioning, and assembling, we circulate to briefly tell and show. Steel wool flecked with tinsel was stretched and compacted into a bird's nest, cradling four paper napkin spitballs. A Rube Goldberg mini-contraption interlocking brass fasteners, clothespins, and hairpins juts a bent coat hanger handle that can scoop marbles and beads in its plastic spoon. A mischievously grinning teen jiggles her "car mirror ornament " from a rubber band. Maybe not? It resembles a voudou fetish. A Styrofoam block is profusely and tightly wound with orange thread and white string and sewn with opalescent shirt button eyes. The mouth is three red pushpins. The torso bristles with straight pins. Between its pipe cleaner legs dangles a wooden matchstick lingam with a burnt head. A crossing guard makes jewelry as a hobby. She sported a sky blue pill set in a band of crimped and pinched aluminum foil twisted around her neatly manicured ring finger. Disgruntlement rumbled, even envy flared, when she refused monetary bids and would not let others try it on. As we drifted towards his corner of the room, a sandhog greeted us with, "C'mon ovuh. We all jus' tryin' tuh stay afloat, right?" On his chair sat a raft of wooden dowels and twigs joined by speaker wire and string and stacked with his coins, dollar bills, and credit cards.

After individuals have worked alone, they are required to choose overturned, numbered chits to separate them into trios or quartets. In this second stage of the exercise they share ideas about what to construct, why, and how—but do that in the sensory process of creating together, not as a strategy discussion or plan everyone should agree on. The materials

should direct them. To enhance each group's dynamics and to lessen copycatting, three rules will apply. 1) Remain in your work area until it's time to circulate. 2) Only talk to me or people in your group. 3) Be supportive, and listen carefully. Since 1997, when *The Persistence of Metaphor* exercises began, an assignment has stymied only one person. A boisterous, opinionated elderly man sat bemusedly mute, his elbows braced on the table, as his three female coworkers diligently raised "A Monument to Gender Equality." Kidney beans bordered its rice grain path wending towards a stapled cardboard pavilion. Under its overhanging roof, plastic cowry shells, Q-tips, collar stiffeners, and strands of picture wire formed three iconic patterns for males, females and LGBT folks, each separated by broken toothpick equal signs.

So, as with "A Monument to Gender Equality," the second exercise is collaborative. I pass out titles printed on cardboard slats for each group to create an object, a site, or whatever they decide. Some examples are "Heaven on Earth," "The Birth Site of Global Peace," "A Demonstration of the 14th Commandment," "Mother Africa Meets Father Time," "Ocean in the Sky," "Birds That Dance in the Night, " and "Blanjihthir Fuwdiloppiki Plasoovet" (fairly imitative of a jumblish of Quechua, Fijian, and Boer boor dialect). The most memorable project, "A Martian Kitchen," revved cackles, guffaws, and high fives as God-awful sadists molded clay into humanoids. They dragged some victims into hair roller storage to refrigerate on bubble pack. Detached heads and arms boiled in steel connectors and bottle tops. The largest torsos were sprawled on foil sheets and zapped sporadically by a skeleton key ray gun to render instant barbecue. Ah, *Dr. Philip G. Zimbardo*, mock terrorism can be excruciatingly creative. (Should I have called, texted, or tweeted The Authorities?)

As the metaphorical morphs around and through objects, sites, and crude dioramas, the workshop's third stage debuts the greatest surprise—art makers, who have bonded and become proprietary towards their specific creation, must move to another project site in the room and work with new collaborators. That directive can stir frustration, even resentment. I remind gripers and momentary zombies our goal is to widen imagination's boundaries. Let's persist in discovering how variegated and complex enacted metaphors can become, especially when we don't stop prematurely. Above all, pushing beyond assumptions and conditioned responses, though uncomfortable, may instruct, even astonish.

During this third and last stage participants inherit one another's creations in order to write about them. Each trio or quartet is handed a large sheet of blank paper. Then I pass out cardboard slats with printed instructions for each group, never prejudging the appropriate directive for what has been created so far. Here are some examples. Create a print ad. A letter in a bottle. An office memo. A flyer for pedestrians. A wall (page) of graffiti. A blog entry. Dialogue for a radio spot. A document for a time capsule to be opened in 2057. Each group must respond on the large sheet. Usually, generating words

(and the 15 to 20 minutes allowed) arouses continuous inter-action much more than grappling with what was mainly visu-al and tactile. I caution team members to slow down, to listen to one another's choice of diction and suggestions for format-ting until everyone is comfortable. I remind them that what is literal can become very poetic language, full of evocative hints and symbols. Speaking aloud charges their spirits—and metaphors may suffuse their exchanges.

The Persistence of Metaphor workshop winds down as we circulate to comment on the projects and to read what was written. We share how collaboration can enhance our under-standing of how we complete a task. Some participants admit that being pushed to create led to their own surprises. Or their comments emphasize how drawing upon the imagination's power should become a more conscious ritual. Busy hands and perceiving eyes help them to take an intuitive leap beyond what they initially valued as being rational and logical. If the work goes well, a major reason is because combining and juxtaposing objects, sites, and words gave them a confidence to transform concrete realities into the mysterious, to explore latent tensions between phenomena that *seem* to be unrelated or strongly con-trastive. Some makers take their art home. Cell phone cameras may record what the contributors wrought and wrote. To my regret, so far I have not saved anything that participants made. Objects and sites are dismantled. I brush and dump formerly beloved stuff and ignored/rejected materials back into my two plastic bags, intent upon leaving cleaning ladies and men zilch.

Of course, no one should make exorbitant claims for these exercises in creativity. Nevertheless, as the cost of living and consumer price index rise, do-it-yourself gifts enhance thrift. Last Christmas a homeless gentleman in Manhattan's Union Square Park hunkered on a bench in an ill fitting, but sturdy, woman's russet down coat and starkly contrasting light gray wrist warmers. Great discovery! Sleeves too short? Cut off thick woolen socks' toes. I persist, feeling these exercises must have redeeming social value. Spectator, would you prefer a free, hand-sewn wall hanging of jean patches and strips bleach-spotted, frayed, and ripped or a factory-spun, pastel vista of an ocean strand in a gilded frame? Neither? Well, any-way, down with desks' and mantles' overpriced plush trolls and grinny ceramic toads! Don't let haste make waste. DO sweat the small stuff. And, why not self-actualize as a tacit member of the next global movement? No expenditures. No contracts. No communication. Simply place a receptacle labeled "AESTHETIC ASSETS" above trashcans and waste-baskets. Do your bit to form the vanguard of Earthlings Anonymous Revival Network (EARN).

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THE CONCEPT OF CHARACTER IN FICTION

E. Shaskan Bumas, Associate Professor of English

I couldn't have been fourteen yet when my brother brought home Julio Cortázar's novel *Hopscotch* (Cortazar, 1966). It was a present from Thomas Mirsen, who had recently, before the Dirty War, moved from Argentina. Thomas was right about the wonders of antipodean pizza, after all, served with an extra layer of crust in Jackson Heights, so to the best of my abilities, I read *Hopscotch*, or skimmed it. I was, what, thirteen? Having read few books before, *Hopscotch* became a favorite. Most characters in *Hopscotch* study the work of the apocryphal writer Morelli, who insists on abandoning the 19th century conception of character: "…the true character … that interests me is the reader … what I write ought to contribute to his mutation, displacement, alienation, transportation" (Cortázar, 1966). That was reasonable. I was a reader in need of mutation: a skimmer. *Hopscotch*'s journey into the end of character, Randolph Pope reminded me, is undertaken by Horacio Oliveira, one of the most indelible characters in Latin American fiction. Randolph Pope was the chair of the Committee on Comparative Literature at the University of Virginia. I was probably 27. The book was not only radical, but also traditional. Otherwise I wouldn't have gotten as far in it as I did.

I'll write myself here as a reader, a Morellian character, though I'll avoid the classical religious posture of reading (looking down in shame at a book on a desk, on a lap) or my own (bad) posture (up from bed as though in prayer). I'll rehearse subsequent observation of characters on pages to figure out if I've learned anything about the creation of character. With lessening retention, I read more books and liked ones with characters who were not exactly characters. Some of John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* (1988) was fun sometimes even when I became lost such as when so many characters had quoted each other that a line of dialogue reads ' " ' " ' " ' *Why?* I repeated," I repeated,' I repeated," I repeated,' I repeated," I repeat. […]' " When I came to Willie Masters' *Lonesome Wife* (Gass, 1989), most of which is spoken by a sexy personification of language, I wondered, suspending my suspension of disbelief, *What else was a character made of besides language?* Such a conceit was only compelling if made in a language that, as often in the work of its author, William H. Gass, could be loved.

I kept a watch for stories that tried to reinvent narrative tradition by approaching narrative tradition in an original way. Susan Sontag's *The Way We Live Now* (1991) was published in the pre-AZT-period of the AIDS epidemic, in the context of which humor and multiple perspectives, Sontag's lacunae, were not particularly desirable. The story of a sick, unnamed man is spoken by his concerned friends. The characters, who sound alike anyway, bleed into each other through overlapping sentences—bodily fluids imagined as words—and in the lines of dialogue that through ambivalent attribution may have been spoken by any of a number of characters. I was less impressed that each of the 26 friends has a name starting with a different letter—spoiler alert: X is for Xavier—than I was intrigued to recognize some of the names from books I'd read. Quentin visited from Yoknapatawpha; Ursula was one of the *Women in Love* (Lawrence, 2000); Nora had found another *Doll's House* (Ibsen, 2010). I was moved by the character names I did not recognize, from books I might, or might not ever, get around to reading.

I liked stories that laid down the law and those that broke the laws. Alain Robbe-Grillet made a convincing case against personification that seemed to encourage Italo Calvino to

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make a character of the moon. Bakhtin said that epic had been replaced with novel and never the twain would meet. Yet Carolivia Herron's *Thereafter Johnnie* (Herron, 1991) pictures the life of its 20th century Washingtonian characters as sung in epic form by a post-apocalyptic bardic tribe in Mexico. Making the impossible look easy, Herron's famous children's book *Nappy Hair*'s (Herron, 1997) main character, young Brenda's hair, is temporarily unraveled by a story teller into an epic of the African Diaspora.

Post-Cortázar, I also read books fit for an English major. Nineteenth-century novels were fresh and often delightful. They were full of radical invention: characters as real people! lessons learned! knowable worlds! Oh sure, there were some exceptions, and some 19th century writers seemed to hearken back to my readings of the 20th century. Even in fiction that seemed to be behaving itself, the famous bourgeois ideology of individuality was questioned. In the ego-crushing wake of unrequited desire–rejected by one or more lovers and cast out from a utopian colony–Nathaniel Hawthorne's character Miles Coverdale narrates, "Our souls, after all, are not our own. We convey a property in them to those with whom we associate" (Hawthorne, 2001). Like other concepts with historic dimensions, character does not move forward in some progressive trajectory without including its past. I couldn't expect the 19th century to just forget about the twentieth.

Inventive deployment of character still pleases me, though I read fewer books. Matthew Sharpe (who gave a reading and a talk at NJCU about ten years ago) peoples his futuristic *Jamestown* (Sharpe, 2007) with characters familiar from the 17th century colony and a certain Disney film. Tan Lin's *Insomnia and the Aunt* (Lin, 2011) starts as memoir, but when there is a wedding reported in the Vows pages of the *Sunday Times*, he is a guest at the wedding. Professor Lin's office is three doors down from mine, so I think I'd know if he had gone to the wedding. On a draft in which Lin visits his aunt in the motel she runs in the Pacific Northwest, I noted something to the effect that it might be nice to meet some other characters, perhaps guests of the hotel. In the first published version, the note does not appear, but there is Shaskan Bumas's family, who are staying at the motel, though they have a tent and a wok. The aunt says that they must be real, which makes me think she is not. Lynne Tillman, who has no connection with NJCU that I know of, but who is not less important because of that, has a character called Madame Realism who is no more realistic than her name. The honorific *Madame* might be a reference to the book *Madame Bovary* (Flaubert, 2005), the main exhibit in the trial of French realism. Emma Bovary was, though, something of a reincarnation of Don Quixote, though the reading material she was not

critical of had less to do with errant knights than with steamy nights. This is what I think of as character: a made-up person who reads something like the text a reader is reading.

When I say read, I don't mean that books are characters. Well, some are: *The Protocols* in Danilo Kîs' "The Book of Kings and Fools" (Kîs, 1998) or "The Encyclopedia of Tlön" in Borges's "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis, Tertius" (Borges, 1981). I get the feeling unread books stare at me from my shelves in tight-lipped reproach. They suspect I am discriminating against them because of their girth, their covers, because they only speak foreign languages. They don't want to be flat characters. They want to be round. They want to be open. I prefer books introduced to me by people I've met. I like books that imagine more than one reader, especially a re-reader who the second time around is discovering a different book. I prefer characters who don't wear their avant-garde insignia on their experimental sleeves. Subvert away, my fictional acquaintances, but do something else, too. If characters are not really alive, the prose had better be.

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THE SECOND STEP
A consideration of ideas, creativity, and Stephen King

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"Where do you get your ideas from?"

That question is asked often of writers and presumably others in creative fields. In the film adaptation of Stephen King's novel *Bag of Bones* (1998), a character asks the question of a writer, played by Pierce Brosnan, who replies that it is an annoying question. Some writers who are irritated by the question give sardonic responses like "a little old lady leaves them on my doorstep in a basket." But the questioner is motivated, after all, by that sense of wonder about how anyone can write fiction, paint pictures, compose music—how anyone can be creative. He or she would like to know what sleight of hand lies behind the magic trick. For some, the reason it is being asked is because they want to write, paint, or compose something but can't figure out a way to get started, to get the inspiration, the idea that will enable them to be accepted into what they seem to regard as the creative cabal.

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Of course, ideas come from many sources. In fact, for a professional writer ideas are easy enough, but what to do with them is not. The second step is harder than the first. It is like being a baby about to be a toddler. The first step is a surprise, but one has to think about the subsequent steps. I have been thinking about specific origins of some fiction I have written. For some I have no memories of where they came from, but there are a few for which I can remember the specific catalysts that launched particular stories.

For example, I got a whole book out of a one or two sentence paragraph that was buried in a newspaper at the bottom of an inside-page column, the kind that is called in the trade a filler because it fills in blank space in a column. This item merely reported that with the world's fuel supply diminishing, gas-powered cars could become obsolete. I can't recall the process of creating the story. I read the item decades ago, after all. I suspect that I began to consider certain social implications of what would happen if they did stop producing cars. It seemed to me that old cars, the kind normally scoffed at, would be at a premium. Further, if there were laws controlling who could own a car, there would then be outlaws willing to deal in black market cars. Additionally, privilege dictated that rich people would have licenses to drive. These and other thoughts were the stages of the second step. In this case, the second step was considering the possibilities of the idea. From it all I wrote a short story that took place in a world where you could get a battered car illegally and the only place you could drive it was on broken-up turnpikes where you could join outlaws and indulge in your passion for speed. Characters and storylines followed. The idea grew into an award-winning short story that I later expanded into a novel. It is clear that the operative principle is not the idea but the second step, what the idea became. The second step here is the "what if" process of storytelling.

"What if…?" is often the question at the heart of fantasy fiction, but it really is not confined to genres. It is the essential speculative question that often invades our daydreaming, and we all indulge in it. What if my parents would understand me and let me pursue my dreams? What if I could get a job that satisfied my actual talents and interests? What if that good-looking personage across the room would spot me, see my worth, and come over to talk with me? What if I could

sail the sea in a sleek sailboat? What if I could travel through time and correct that mistake I made? Ooops, I slid into fantasy fiction right there. Anyway, such questions are a recurrent part of our thoughts. Sometimes we take our speculations to some interesting places and even solve problems. Our solutions might not work, but it's helpful and sometimes pleasant to think about them. "What if…?" can be one response to the question, "Where do you get your ideas from?"

Another treasure trove for me has been dreams. In one dream I was walking on a city street and suddenly noticed that a crowd was looking upward. Looking up, I saw what appeared to be a large space ship hovering above the street, without anchoring of any kind. There were walkways to it and helicopters circling it. Somebody nearby told me it was The Mars Ship. That was about all I could recall of the dream, but I did wake up thinking about it. Eventually I built a story around it. The story itself had little to do with the dream except for the appearance of the Mars Ship, which was transformed into a monument for a ship that had exploded on its return from the red planet. The Mars Ship in the sky was a replica constructed by humankind as a memorial to a tragedy. It illustrated an adaptation to the new world the main character was encountering after waking up from a cryogenic sleep. The second step here is using an image as a cue to more images and, eventually, a narrative. Like ideas, images are everywhere.

I had other dreams that became parts of fiction, perhaps because dreams bring on puzzling questions, whether or not they have any other creative inspiration. They, after all, give you oddities you can use whether you use them or not. Or maybe they do come from some part of the individual where creativity lies, where the ideas do come from. The stuff that intrudes on the daytime thoughts gets released at night. Sounds like an idea for a story right there.

For more realistic fiction, one's own life is often the source. One time my father was in a rare nostalgic mood, and he reminisced about his father's life as an entrepreneur, especially as a boxing promoter. The details he brought up lingered in my memory. There was a trolley that went back and forth between our town and Buffalo. He said he used to sweep the arena after a boxing match and find coins and other stuff among the sawdust that covered the floor. Such details made me wonder what it would be like to go back in time and encounter my grandfather, who died when I was young. For the story I also employed some research I did on the period of the 1920s. It ended with a mention of my father, who did not appear in the story although the sawdust mining for coins did. A ride on the trolley was there, too. In this case details become the second step. Details are what we latch onto in our experience or our dream or our imagination. An eye for detail never hurts in devising fiction.

Using the incidents of one's life does not say much about creativity, or does it? Is using the remembered incident the idea, and—as our questioner might say—what is the connection between the idea and the creative work? "Write about what you know" is a popular piece of advice. What you know—is that where you get your ideas from? What could be simpler, or more complicated, than that?

There are of course many ways to get ideas. Themes that compel you to explore them, people who can be interesting characters, stories that spring into your head (especially when you are not ready for them and don't have a pencil to write them down), exploring types or genres of literature that have always interested you (how do you create a locked-room mystery or an Austenlike romance or a genre mash-up like zombies attacking Austen characters). Some of these might not be considered aspects of creativity by purists, but if you narrow down the concept of creativity to specific limitations, aren't you contradicting the very freedom that creativity is supposed to be about?

Creativity may be hard to define. All important words are. However, our questioner may be on to something. A work of art begins with some sort of idea, even if it seems an inconsequential one. Try this some time. Take some object or notion and test it out as inspiration. See that pencil? How many situations can you put it into? That pencil could get up and dance while writing that essay you have to do soon. That pencil could vaporize and change into the most beautiful, albeit quite thin, romantic object that you wish for. That pencil could unleash its mechanical structure and suddenly rule the world. That pencil could remind you of your Aunt Emily who strode around rooms with a pencil in her ear that she sometimes seized with her spidery arthritic fingers to jot down a note on the sheet of graph paper that she always carried in the fringed pocket of her calico apron. That pencil could be an idea.

Beyond the inspiration and the creativity is another difficult to define word. *Genius*. Ideas are plentiful. Artistic creations are plentiful. Genius is not. Why do several creators observe the social mores of the rich, but few can put their observations into a masterpiece like *The Great Gatsby*? Why are there so many observers of the dangers of colonialism, but few books like *Heart of Darkness*? How do artists create great paintings out of sunflowers, mysteriously smiling women, colors splashed on a canvas? Genius cannot really be defined either, even when it is a category in the online App Store.

Maybe the answer to our original question is not that ideas come from everywhere, but they are the magical entities that people who ask the question imagine them to be. Maybe I am lying to you and there is a place where ideas lay in baskets and I know about it and I'm protecting its location so that you can't go to it and get ideas, too. The place is not run on a fair basis, after all. Why does Stephen King go to that place and carry away more ideas than any of the rest of us? What is fair about that? Or does he go to some better place? Where in hell does he get his ideas?

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REFLECTIONS ON THE WALKING TOUR

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It is not a lecture. It is not a performance. It is not entirely tourism, nor is it entirely a discussion. It is the ineffable neighborhood walking tour, a fascinating hybrid of teaching, touring, and discussion. After having led such tours for over a decade, for many different populations of students, this creativity issue of *The Academic Forum* gives me a unique opportunity to write about their place in higher education. Reflecting on my own experiences and the prevailing scholarship on the topic, I find that walking tours are excellent catalysts of critical thinking, provoking students to analyze the unfamiliar neighborhoods and landscapes they encounter. Tours of this nature, when well researched and conducted with an eye to social justice, also have great potential to connect our students positively to the surrounding community. Though walking tours are inherently unpredictable and the art of guiding can be difficult to teach, I believe that they are an indispensable, creative teaching tool that we can and should utilize to fulfill our University mission.

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Critical Thinking

Standing in front of the SMART Boards or behind podiums, college instructors strive daily to connect students to new ideas and information. We do so with the goal of provoking our students to think critically about the subject at hand, occasionally struggling against classroom obstacles such as student apathy, exhaustion, or distraction. Even when we enliven our classroom sessions with discussions, exercises, and interactive exercises, students will be students, and incidences of tuning out, texting, or nodding off are hard to eradicate altogether.

On the sidewalks of a city walking tour, the challenges of teaching are markedly different. In my experience, apathy is easily vanquished when students are inundated with the sensory overload of an unfamiliar neighborhood. No matter how blasé they may try to be about the subject at hand, they cannot tune out completely when they need a guide to know where to go next. As a guide myself, and as a zealot for walking tours when I visit new cities, I find that the sheer mobility of these events creates a fascinating, heightened state of awareness. The ambulatory experience of a tour also takes sleepiness and issues of eyelid heaviness out of play entirely. Tourists may nod off during bus tours, no matter who is speaking over the microphone, but walking tours are different. Even the most sleep-deprived person will keep those eyelids open if he is walking amidst speeding taxis, tree branches, and potholes.

Assuming then, that walking tour attendees are wide awake and listening intently, for fear of getting left behind, one could argue that such tours are the ideal Petri dish for critical thinking. In the words of the great Ira Gershwin, "It ain't necessarily so." One vexing aspect of these tours is that they can drive a tour guide and his or her students to distraction, quite literally. Especially in Manhattan, new sights, sounds, and passersby can be so interesting and relentless that the tour guide finds it difficult to present her or his argument.

Nevertheless, allowing for these distractions, I believe that the walking tour does indeed have a profound power to provoke critical thinking. Though at times the stimuli of a city street can distract from careful thought and sensitive discussion, these stimuli can also jar students into an entirely new way of thinking about a space or place. New ideas and information often come to you during tours, regardless of whether you had planned for them or not. Tours of places such as the New York City's Lower East Side or Machu Picchu's Inca ruins will inundate students with so many new vistas, unfamiliar buildings, and untrodden landscapes that they cannot help but

develop an appreciation for the place. When experiencing a tour with five senses alert, even the most well traveled of our students will see, smell, or hear something unfamiliar. More importantly, they will be forced to wrestle, up close and personal, with ways of living and being that are different from what they know. For history courses, this crucial process of seeing difference may occur between the present day and the past. In other words, students can more easily imagine the lives of people in the past while walking amidst preserved buildings or ruins. For sociology, education, gender, or intercultural relations courses, walking tours promote an equally fascinating tension between the familiarity of daily life and the unfamiliarity fostered by the tour.

Such tension lies at the heart of critical thinking. On countless occasions, I have watched students take special notice of a building, sign, advertisement, or local resident, in ways entirely appropriate to the course in which they are enrolled. On one tour, students who had been studying the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in class noticed a contemporary sign protesting the conditions of unsafe t-shirt factories in Chinatown. The parallels were stark and the discussion we had right there on the sidewalk was quite lively. Other students, enrolled in "Urban America" and walking Harlem's Striver's Row, commented on the district's exquisite architecture, expensive cars, and well-heeled passersby. By paying attention to their surroundings, they had already absorbed one of the tour's most important lessons—that Harlem is neither slum nor ghetto, but a vibrant and diverse *neighborhood*. I was hoping to prod students into challenging any assumptions they may have held regarding Harlem, and the visual stimuli of this particular block did much to begin the process. As effectively as a well-argued article or lively classroom discussion, walking tours have the potential to open students' minds to possibilities they had not yet considered.

Even if a student was born and raised in the site of a tour—in Chinatown, Harlem, or Jersey City—it is unlikely that she would get to the end of an academic walking tour without being exposed to new ideas or concepts. The visual landscapes may be familiar, but the manner in which they are being analyzed is not. None other than Marcel Proust described this particular journey of discovery when he wrote that "the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes."[1] Although Proust's aphorism was not penned in reference to walking tours, it certainly applies. When touring a neighborhood without any guidance, either in written or spoken form, only the most incisive or earnest of visitors would be likely to revolutionize their thinking, or their frame of reference. Students who tour an urban district with an academic guide, however, or those who first read a thought-provoking article, have a strong chance of developing "new eyes" for seeing a place.

Above and beyond seeing new landscapes, or seeing familiar landscapes with new eyes, walking tours also have strong potential in reinforcing lessons already learned, or solidifying

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learning already in progress. For some students, the preserved swaths of buildings in SoHo or in the Powerhouse Arts District of downtown Jersey City will be no great intellectual surprise. If they have done their reading and come to class, these landscapes will not introduce them to the concept of structural economic shift, from the industrial to the information age, because they will already have a keen sense of this from their reading. A tour, however, can reinforce their understanding of this crucial part of American urban history. It can provide a visual frame of reference for the lessons they have already learned. In this sense, a walking tour towards the end of the semester can be the just desserts of a subject well studied. In the same way that an art gallery or museum tour can be especially satisfying if one has already studied the paintings therein, walking tours can likewise show students the buildings or historic sites they already know well in the abstract.

In these cases, urban walking tours are something akin to tourism, but this is nothing to lament. Why shouldn't our students graduate with lasting, memorable, and starkly visual impressions of the subjects they have studied? I believe that students who can think back to a tour of the Tenement Museum, a walk through the Inca ruins at Machu Picchu, or a journey through the cobblestones of Chinatown are more likely to also remember the critical lessons that we faculty labored to impart to them on those trips. Many a student has studied the notorious tenements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, for example, but I believe that those who experience the artful claustrophobia and authentic darkness of the Tenement Museum are more likely to form an impression that lasts for many decades.

Surrounding Community

Another redeeming quality of the walking tour is its potential to contribute to our University mission in the surrounding community. As a guiding principle for our work, we have

publicly pledged to improve the "educational, intellectual, cultural, socio-economic, and physical environment of the surrounding urban region and beyond." Upon first glance, a group of students passing through this region on a sidewalk, led by a professor as their guide, leaves behind no obvious improvements. On closer inspection, however, I am convinced that tours can indeed improve the region in the long run, mostly by infusing within our students a sense of pride and ownership in local neighborhoods.

The cities and neighborhoods that many of our students call home—West New York, Bergen-Lafayette, Jersey City's West Side, etc.—do not strike me as having well-developed public histories, at least compared to media darlings such as Greenwich Village or Hoboken. Unlike neighborhoods with long-established places in the public consciousness through film, television, and documentaries, the neighborhoods where many of our students live do not get much attention. Even worse, when these neighborhoods do get media attention, there is often a disproportionate focus on crime reporting. Neighborhoods such as Greenwich Village earn mention in the media because of crime too, but also because of architecture and history. Bergen-Lafayette gives Greenwich Village a run for its money in terms of architecture and layers of fascinating history, yet its crime problems dominate its media narrative.

The consequences of this go far beyond local senses of pride. Those neighborhoods and their residents miss out on all of the fringe benefits of a well-developed public history narrative. It is a well-established axiom of the real estate industry that homes named as historic, located within historic districts, or featured on architectural tours will fetch higher prices. This axiom has been confirmed in several academic articles published in the *Journal of Real Estate Finance and Economics*, *The Journal of the American Planning Association*, and many other places. Assuming that the original owners of a historically designated house can hold onto it, and that they

can afford tax levies that may increase as a result, it is reasonable to think that increased awareness of local history can also serve the public good.

Walking tours have the potential to illuminate the architectural or historic value of such homes, reaffirming and disseminating ideas that may or may not be codified by historic districting or preservation status. In cases where a student's own neighborhood is featured on a tour, it is entirely possible for this student to cultivate a newfound sense of pride in the place she calls home. It is also possible that non-student attendees on walking tours, those watching them pass by, or those who develop their own tours will contribute to a burgeoning sense of community pride in local history and architecture. As one of the trail blazing scholars of Tourism Studies wrote in 1985, information from tour guides can "evoke collective experience of identification with symbolic heroes, groups and localities"(Katz, 1985).[2]

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Above and beyond home values, and the sense of pride that people have in their neighborhood, walking tours can also play a small role in preventing the demolition of interesting, culturally valuable old buildings. Simply put, communities can only rally around the preservation of historic structures that they know about. I believe that in cases where repeated walking tours bring a charming, interesting old structure into the public spotlight, that structure has a greater chance of escaping the wrecking ball in the future. When I walk my students among the sturdy warehouses and majestic loft buildings of the Powerhouse Arts District, or the stately Victorian houses of Bergen-Lafayette, I like to think that they will leave these tours with a greater appreciation of the value of the old buildings they see. If they join the fight to prevent unnecessary demolitions of these types of buildings, it is my opinion that they will be working to improve, in the words of our mission statement, the "physical environment of the surrounding urban region."

One cannot always assume, of course, that growth in public history awareness is always in the best interests of local residents. As scholars in several fields have acknowledged, there can be a negative relationship between walking tours and communities if the forces of gentrification run rampant. This has been of particular concern in Manhattan's Lower East Side, where history, hipsters, and rising home values transformed the neighborhood with startling rapidity after 1990. In Michael Sorkin's *Variations on a Theme Park* (1992), and in a more recent book, *The Tour Guide: Walking and Talking New York* (Wynn, 2011), academic authors have given voice to long-time residents in places such as the Lower East Side, where they are often frustrated about what walking tours do to their neighborhood. The most common complaint in Sorkin's chapter on this issue and throughout Wynn's book is that long-time residents get priced out through gentrification.

Another risk of growing historical awareness in a neighborhood is that many engage in public history for the sole purpose of making money, foisting a cornucopia of ill-informed guides and stereotypical narratives upon neighborhoods and tour guests alike. In my experience, these negative attributes of public history touring are especially true on bus tours, which strike me as the most likely type of tour to reconfirm or even exacerbate damaging narratives and stereotypes. When non-academic guides joke about the risks of getting off the bus, reduce complex historical trends to pithy sound bites, and otherwise butcher what we walking tour guides try to do as public historians, they give the entire public history enterprise a bad name. Even when tourist-oriented groups visit a neighborhood on foot, all it takes is a few jokes in poor taste about local crime to reinforce the worst of neighborhood stereotypes.

Such stereotypes do not need to apply to the present day to do their damage. If visitors to New York's present-day Chinatown were subjected to a costumed Five Points tour, presenting little more than gruesome details from the "Gangs of New York" era without any analysis, they could easily emerge from this experience with a tarnished view of the city's immigrants. Other thematic, tourist-oriented tours such as the "Sex and the City" tours of Greenwich Village may seem innocuous in comparison. Considering, however, how they reduce the historical, architectural, and political landscape of one of New York's great neighborhoods into a trite fantasy-world of film shoot locations, these too deserve criticism. At their worst, poorly conceived and non-academic walking and bus tours leave visitors with even more egregiously incorrect perceptions of a neighborhood than they held before.

Within the fields of Tourist Studies and Interpretation, walking tours in general are often lumped together with bus tours under the framework of "edutainment" because there are far more unemployed actors working the microphone of a double-decker bus than there are scholars working through a difficult argument on the sidewalks of Chinatown. Despite the rather small footprint of academic walking tours in the NYC/NJ urban region, as compared to the massive tourism

industry, I believe that it is important to preserve and promote this distinction.

These tours should be given a chance to stay separate from their less socially responsible relatives, because despite all of their potential for gentrification or stereotyping, they ultimately have strong potential to promote the public good and foster social justice. When walking tour guides present local histories that are constructive, accurate, and inclusive, they can shine light on buildings, people, or communities that may otherwise have remained in the shadows of a crowded urban landscape.

Walking Tours: Difficult to Teach and Unpredictable

If academic walking tours have such a positive influence on our students and our surrounding community, it would follow that someone should get to work teaching the art or skill of guiding to as many people as possible. As I'm sure the other articles in this "Capturing the Ineffable" issue will address, good walking tours, like good teaching skills in general, are difficult to pass along to a younger generation. In my experience, strong skills as a tour guide are not so much taught as cultivated, mentored, or otherwise developed within learners. The usual starting point for a person interested in learning how to guide is to attend a tour, take some notes, and envision how to lead one's own tour. Despite one's best efforts to prepare for every eventuality, there is a "sink or swim" aspect to guide training that I suspect is similar to the training experiences by student teachers. In all fields relying heavily upon creativity, students must learn by doing, with guidance from instructors. There is of course a rich literature in teaching how to teach, but this is neither my field of expertise nor the subject at hand for this particular article.

This is about guiding a walking tour, from stop to stop and topic to topic on the sidewalks of a crowded neighborhood. It is something rarely studied from an academic perspective, although Jonathan Wynn's excellent *The Tour Guide: Walking and Talking New York* (2011) sheds light on the subject through ethnography. In Wynn's study of New York City's tour guides, he parses out the meanings of tours for different guides, and the means by which they gain authenticity. For some native New Yorker guides, especially those who charge little to nothing for their services, walking tours are sort of informal public service. Authenticity comes from birthright and lived experience. For others, especially those with academic training, walking tours are an extension of the classroom, and authenticity resides in training and research.

Given the wide variety of guides and ways of being a guide, it is not surprising that there are few "best practices" available to measure or assess walking tours. Instinctively, trainees and tour attendees know that the best guides are informed, lively, strongly engaged with the subject or site in

question, and able to adjust their tours to unexpected conditions. Formally, however, there is little guidance in the form of standardized certifications, leading pedagogical practices, or other unifying rubrics. While federal park rangers are required to pass rigorous content examinations, and commercial tour guides are often tested and licensed, legions of other walking tour guides nationwide create their content without any formal guidance. Not surprisingly, some of them develop a delightful wealth of knowledge, while others leave tour groups clamoring for their money back.

This unevenness stems from more than just the diversity of guides. By definition, walking tour groups amble into a staggering diversity of landscapes, from the Grand Canyon to the "Canyon of Heroes" in Lower Manhattan. Some utilize federal park rangers, confined to particular routes and vetted, researched topics, while others feature barely audible septuagenarians on a microphone, pontificating on the past, present, and future of their city from atop a double-decker bus. Others still go inside preserved plantation houses, slave cabins, or even beneath city streets into sewer systems. Although not endless, the possibilities for historical walking tours are nearly as diverse as the nation itself.

Despite this stunning variety, there is some coherent academic work on guiding in general, especially within the field known as Interpretation. Interpretation scholars "have tediously and carefully explored the sociological, educational, and cultural underpinnings of guiding" (Pond as cited in in McGrath, 2003), since the 1970s, noting that "neighborhoods" are inherently ineffable and elusive places. The very same collection of buildings, streets, and sidewalks can mean something entirely different to each guide, visitor, and resident. Subjectivity is nothing new to academics, so in this sense the academic tour guide is particularly well suited to handle a site with several historic narratives, all competing for attention and dominance.

Even if a new guide were to train rigorously in all of the possible ways one could interpret a single site or street, walking tours can also come with contingencies so rare or unexpected that there is simply no way to prepare. In this sense, walking tours are far more volatile than classrooms. When a jackhammer interrupts your sentence, or a favorite street at the heart of your tour is unexpectedly closed, one must simply deal with it and move on. These are the sorts of distractions that are challenging in the purely negative sense.

Yet other neighborhood surprises prove challenging in the best sense of the word. Local residents often converse with my tour groups, challenging us to think about our perspective. During a Harlem tour not too long ago, I took my students to the historic NAACP brownstone at 224 W. 135th Street, hoping to talk about the great work of W.E.B. DuBois. A local resident beat me to the punch. Before I could get a word in edgewise, a fiercely determined passerby began to lecture our group about the achievements of DuBois and the dangers of gentrification. Given that this person was a well-

informed local historian and neighborhood activist, I happily yielded the stage for just a few minutes. As it turned out, the woman's ancestors had worked directly with DuBois in the NAACP. She was also quite pleased to learn that we were not doing a real estate tour, and that the sole purpose of the tour was for the students to learn about history. After a couple of minutes, we politely excused ourselves from this unplanned guest lecture, and moved along.

As I see it, the question of local voices and perspectives on urban tours is one of balance. Had I handed over the remainder of our touring time to this particular champion of the NAACP, my students would never have seen Striver's Row, the legendary Renaissance Ballroom, or the Apollo Theatre. However, had I refused to let her speak to my students at all, I would have risked unnecessary friction with someone who clearly cared deeply about local history. This experience reminded me of just how few walls, literal or psychological, the walking tour has to separate a group from the interruptions of the outside world. In our classrooms, we can close the door, plead with our students to not look at their phones, and provoke them to focus on the pressing questions of our syllabus. Even if a door remains open, we in the academy are not in the habit of popping in to each other's classrooms to share an anecdote after overhearing something interesting in the hallway. Our pedagogical assumptions about the sanctity of each other's classrooms, when combined with the closed-off, physical spaces we occupy as teachers, allow us to block out the chaos of daily life. Unlike the cacophonous urban sidewalk, classrooms are generally quiet, controlled spaces where students can concentrate, listen, think, speak, and learn.

On the streets of Jersey City or New York, interruptions of all kind await, with the potential to discombobulate even the most stalwart of guides. Experience has taught me how to expect and manage these situations, but every once in a while I have faced an interruption of such magnitude that my tour does hit a snag. One of the most memorable of these moments occurred on Hester Street on the Lower East Side, where I was accustomed to introducing students to the rich history of Gertel's Bakery. This historic kosher bakery had been serving up ruggelach and other delicacies to both Jewish and non-Jewish patrons alike since 1905. On this particular tour day, I was well aware that Gertel's was in danger of closing, but it had been a few months since my last visit to the site. I was flummoxed to turn onto Hester Street and realize that the threatened demolition of Gertel's had most certainly come to pass, and that I had to improvise my analysis of local food culture in front of a plywood-shrouded pit. Though I was able to parlay the shock of this moment into a brief discussion of gentrification on Hester Street, my students could tell that that I was disoriented.

There have also been less "teachable" interruptions to my touring over the years. I once had a muttering homeless man wrapped in plastic and carrying a radio playing nothing more than static follow my students and me at a distance of about

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fifteen feet for over thirty minutes on the streets of Lower Manhattan. The fellow was neither interested in what I had to say nor determined to share his own insights. Instead, he just followed us awkwardly and distracted us from the mission at hand. On another occasion, a female high school student, no more than fourteen or fifteen years old, made the rather serious decision to sneak away from the tour on her own, turn off her cell phone, and go shopping at Century 21 near the World Trade Center. There was little I could do to calm the group once they had concluded, without a doubt, that she had been kidnapped by ruffians on Broadway and in broad daylight. The tour came to an abrupt halt, devolving into an absurd jumble of cell phone calls to the student's parents in Israel and impromptu search parties. When she did turn her phone back on to confirm that she had not, in fact, been secreted into the back of a windowless van, we had no time left to finish the tour.

The most egregious tour interruption of my career thus far came not from a student, but from one of New York City's ubiquitous pigeons. During yet another Lower Manhattan tour, I was mid-sentence when I suffered the indignity of having a mischievous, airborne pigeon do what pigeons do, directly into my shoulder with laser precision. I consider myself an imaginative person, but to my knowledge there is no smooth way to turn such an incident into a teachable moment. I suppose I should have been grateful that this wicked pigeon did not besmirch the top of my head, but alas I needed a few minutes to clean my shoulder in a public restroom, regroup, and restart the tour.

To experience any of these setbacks on campus—the building gone missing, the student kidnapped mid-sentence, or the mischievous pigeon—would certainly bring a new level of meaning to the phrase "having a bad day." Save for the once-in-a-lifetime fall of a ceiling tile onto a lecturing professor's head, I can think of no similar dangers awaiting us in our carefully maintained teaching spaces. Computers, projectors, or software may let us down on occasion, and the ring of a cell phone might cause us to lose our train of thought, but all things considered, the classroom is a controlled environment.

Conclusion

For almost all of what we do as professors, the classroom is a wonderful thing. Without our thoughtfully curated and controlled classrooms, we would be hard-pressed to accomplish our teaching goals. However as supplements to classroom work and student readings, the unpredictable walking tour does have an exciting pedagogical role to play, especially at an urban institution such as our own.

On many stops of the Light Rail and the PATH, and at locations sometimes closer to our students' homes than our main campus, there are destinations of undeniable sociological richness, geological interest, historical importance, and significance in the struggle for social, racial, and gender equality. For many of the disciplines at New Jersey City University, these sites have vast potential to help us complement our teaching in the classroom, and to fulfill our mission. They have the power to constructively challenge our students' ideas and assumptions in a way that is memorable, visceral, and up close and personal. They can help students to appreciate all sorts of neighborhoods for what they are, rather than what someone else thinks they should be. Walking tours not only encourage students to place themselves in another's shoes, but also provide a unique opportunity for students to walk a mile in those shoes.

NOTES

1 I was introduced to this Proust quote by Gemma McGrath, who used it as the opening coda to her 2003 study of tour guides in Cusco, Peru, entitled "Myth, Magic, Meaning & Memory".

2 As my field is not Tourist Studies, I was introduced to Katz (1985) by Eldrid Brin and Chaim Noy's 2010 article in *Tourist Studies*.

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NO MORE FAKING IT

On facing fear and creating community in the developmental writing classroom

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You are eighteen years old. It is your first day of college. You are extremely proud to be starting college. In fact, you are the first person in your family to do so. But you are a little worried—actually, you are very worried and a little bit frightened. You do not know if you can do it because you simply do not know what lies ahead of you. For instance, you thought you were a decent writer (your teachers always said so), yet your college says you are not ready for freshman composition. Instead, you have to take a six-hour developmental writing class. Are you really such a bad writer? What else is this college going to determine that you do not know how to do?

You try to quell the persistent dialogue inside your head as you head toward your first class, *Reading and Writing across the Disciplines* (RWAD). Yes, this is that six-hour class that you cannot believe you have to take. Rumor has it that there is a really difficult exam at the end of the semester—and if you do not pass it, you will not pass the course. You wonder if you should even be in college. Your family already thinks you are aiming too high. How long will it be before everyone else realizes that they are right?

These are the kind of thoughts I, as a professor who regularly teaches that intensive RWAD class, know are running through the minds of many of my students on the first day. In fact, though they never voice these anxieties to me in early September, they often do express them later in the semester, after we have developed a level of trust and responsiveness to each other within our classroom. The challenge, then, for me is in figuring out how to invite students to air their doubts about whether they belong—so that together we might determine exactly how and why they do.

We all know how critical the first day of school is for setting the tone of a classroom, but did you realize how important the very first moments of that first day are? Malcolm Gladwell puts forth the question directly in *Blink* (2005), his book length study of intuitive thinking and first impressions:

> How long, for example, did it take you, when you were in college, to decide how good a teacher your professor was? A class? Two classes? A semester? The psychologist Nalini Ambady once gave students three ten-second videotapes of a teacher—with the sound turned off—and found they had no difficulty at all coming up with a rating of the teacher's effectiveness. (p. 13)

In fact, Ambady kept shortening the tape until she determined that students could make an accurate prediction of a professor in just *two seconds*. Now, that might seem irrelevant—a student will be in your class for the whole semester, so why does it matter whether he or she realizes your competence on the first day? You have plenty of time to prove yourself, right?

Wrong. Developmental students are high risk. They enter college unsure of their own abilities and entitlement, so if they do not immediately feel supported and engaged by their professors, they are likely to stop coming to class. Maybe not right away, but eventually. Each semester, we lose many first year students at NJCU who do not feel that they belong. Anecdotal evidence at NJCU shows that those students who find a community for themselves—whether through the Opportunity Scholarship Program, the Writing Center, various student clubs, the Athletic Department, the Office of Specialized Services, or any number of other on-campus programs and

activities—are far more likely to stay in college and succeed.

I believe that the writing classroom can provide that critical first space of community for incoming students at NJCU. And that community can be established on day one. But what happens on that first day of class? Traditionally, professors do a good deal of talking. They take attendance and check their rosters, hand out their syllabi, and present course expectations. Students sit and listen, beginning to fidget as the talk goes on and on, and the butterflies in their stomachs flutter more and more aggressively. By the end of class, they might have an answer to their internal question of whether they belong at all. And that answer might well be a resounding and unsettling, "No."

So let's try another model. On the first day of class, I too begin with the important business of checking the roster, but as soon as we have made sure everyone is in the right place, it is time for real introductions. We rearrange our chairs into a circle so everyone can see everyone else. I ask the students to tell us the basics of who they are, where they come from, what major they are leaning toward, what they are interested in. But at the end, I add one more requirement, stating, "Before your turn is up, I'd like you to tell us one thing that everyone thinks you should be able to do, but that, for whatever reason, you simply cannot do." Students shift in their seats and begin to look uncomfortable. I give them a minute to reflect on what they might reveal about themselves. And then we begin.

Or rather, I begin. I tell the class who I am, what I do, what my background is. And then I pause, and say something like, "Okay, I want us all to reveal something uncomfortable about ourselves, and it's my turn. Hmm." This pause is genuine, as I take the pulse of the room and contemplate what I am willing to admit that I cannot do to this roomful of strangers. Sometimes I tell them about a social and professional shortcoming, and other times I make a more light-hearted confession about a physical or technical inability. The students usually giggle at my lack, understanding how uncomfortable it is—even for me—to say what we do not know how to do, especially to the people that you most want to perceive you as competent. It is counterintuitive, but I want us all to let down our guards. I do not ever want my classroom to be a place where students cover up what they do not know. Indeed, I want it to be a place where we share what we are struggling with and seek help from each other.

As we go around the room, we learn that Monica, despite her outward confidence, is terrified of public speaking. And Jerry, who grew up in the heavily Latino community of Union City, does not know Spanish. And Sam loves working on cars but cannot change a tire. And Michael, who is tall, is terrible at basketball. And Maria, who is Columbian, never learned to salsa. And Alberto, the likable soccer player from Portugal, is expected to be smart.

Wait. Alberto is expected to be smart? The unspoken other half of that sentence is, but he is not. Every semester, at least one student reveals an ingrained perception about his or her intelligence. I leave those comments alone in the moment, but I jot them down and mentally file them away for another class period. I want this first day to be a time for laughing and storytelling, where we create a space where telling things that even our best friends may not know about us feels safe and appropriate. A space where we nod our heads and say—"Oh yeah, I can't do that either!" Rather than bolster ourselves up by thinking how smart and talented we all are (I take it as a given that we all have many skills—and there is plenty of time over the semester for those abilities to emerge and be praised), I want everyone to realize that we all have anxieties. Most of us waste a good deal of time and energy covering up the things we cannot do rather than trying to overcome the deficiency (if it is something that truly matters), or coming to terms with the reality that in the larger scheme of things, it really should not matter if you cannot play basketball, or jump double dutch, or carry a tune. It certainly does not mean that you should not try, or take pleasure in trying.

For homework, I ask the class to read Langston Hughes's "Salvation," which is a classic story of trying to live up to others' expectations and having one's belief system exposed in the process of failing to do so. The adolescent Langston, as the autobiographical protagonist, fails to feel Christ come for him as his congregation awaits the moment of his salvation. He ultimately decides that he must fake it. But in that moment of deciding to feign spiritual transformation, his faith is utterly and irrevocably shattered. If Jesus were real, he would not have allowed Langston to get away with a sham salvation. The Hughes reading spurs a lively discussion of why Hughes pretends to have been saved, what the pressure of his family and community felt like as they were waiting for his big moment, why he eventually pretends to be saved, what that cover up feels like, and what the larger effects on his faith and on his perception of family's religiosity are. You do not need to have ever been at a religious revival service to identify with the difficulty of Hughes's situation and to understand how that seemingly simple and desperate act of feigned salvation shook his faith to its core.

Once again, it is time to turn things back to the students, to share our own "Salvation" moments and shape them into personal narratives of faking it. We begin with a list—because we all have more than one!—of things we have covered up and kept secret. The list might include not believing in God, not being able to play an instrument or read music, not remembering names, not being able to throw a baseball, not being able to do simple arithmetic in your head, and so on. I have each student pick an item randomly from his or her list, and we begin a guided writing exercise. Using techniques learned from composition theorist Sondra Perl, who developed strategies for honing in on what she calls our "felt sense" about our writing, I ask the students to write continuously as I pace them through a series of writing prompts over fifteen or twenty minutes:

   • What is it that you have covered up and kept a secret?
   • Go back to the moment when you first felt uncomfort-

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able about your inability. What was happening? Who was there?

- Did someone ask that you do something or did the expectation come from within you?
- Why were you uncomfortable? How did you feel?
- What did you do to deflect the attention away from your inability? How did others respond?
- Where, again, do you think the expectation came from? What does it feel like *now*, thinking back about that moment?

Our noisy classroom falls silent as students write and think, exploring from a variety of angles the shame, fears, and expectations that lie behind perceived inadequacies. I want them to confront what the expectations *feel* like, both in their original moment and now, however many months or years later. For while it may be the shame of inadequacy that initially inspires us to hide our inabilities, later that shame often deepens and becomes tinged by the cover up itself. Every one of us knows the discomfort of finding ourselves trapped within a fabrication that we wish we had never conjured up in the first place.

The students take the writing they have generated during this informal exercise and shape it into a two to three page reflective narrative over the next few class sessions. As they work through their drafts, we do more informal in-class writing in which students consider how to begin and where to end their narratives. I prompt them in writing exercises to contrast the feeling that inspired the moment of pretense with the insights or perspectives they have now. We hone in further on the felt sense, as each writer identifies a single emotion or physical feeling that the memory of deciding to fake it still summons. I ask each writer what he or she wants readers to experience from the story. What visceral feeling would he or she like a reader to develop upon entering into the narrative, and where would he or she, as the writer, like to leave that same reader at the end of the written journey?

As the students share their drafts in class and discover meaning through the process of writing, they express regret, pain, bitterness, sadness over the instances, whether seemingly large or small, serious or petty, that they have hidden over the years. The memories weigh on them. They remember acutely the shame of being the only person who could not dribble a basketball in junior high or figure out the sixth grade math homework. More poignantly, they reenter the overwhelming sense of failure at being unable to raise a baby alone at seventeen or the betrayal of not remembering treasured family lore passed on by a now deceased grandmother.

As these expressions of doubt and disappointment emerge, as a class we challenge the expectations that have been placed on each one of us over our lifetimes. We question why we allow ourselves to feel so inadequate when we simply cannot do something, *at least not at the moment when it is first expected of us*. As soon as we fake it, we give up on the possibility that we might learn, *over time,* to dribble, to do math, or even to become a mother, or to construct a new family nar-

rative, weaving bits of the old with the new. The more we cover up what we cannot yet do or do not know, the more we begin to accept the lie or act we developed as an unsatisfactory but good enough facsimile for the real thing.

But it is not the real thing. Students know that and are ready to be challenged. They are willing to open themselves up to the self-scrutiny of the shame and its attendant emotions that have ever motivated them to pretend they are something they are not. We read more narratives—"Shame" by Dick Gregory and "On Being 17, Bright, and Unable to Read" by David Raymond—in which characters desperately want to conceal their various lacks. We empathize with Gregory's efforts to hide his poverty and fatherless-family and with Raymond's shame over his dyslexia. Gregory's and Raymond's narratives offer points with which we, as humans, easily identify. We understand Raymond's difficult childhood spent acting out in order to divert attention from his inability to read. But as we read, we feel sad for David Raymond that he felt such shame. And we cringe for Dick Gregory, who as a child tried to impress a girl by pretending he not only had a father, but one who had a job that provided for his family. We wish for this poor boy that his teacher had not humiliated him by exposing his lie to his classmates, among whom was the girl whose affection he so keenly desired—but more than that, we wish he had never felt the need to pretend he was different from what he was in the first place.

We know what these human moments feel like. Thus, when we read them and relate them to our own lives, we question in new ways how we are so quick to think ourselves incompetent or worthless simply because we lack in ability, possessions, or insights that others seem to have. The critical understandings I hope my students take from the "faking it" narrative assignment, including its related readings and class discussions, is that performative cover-ups never make us feel better about ourselves, and they never help us achieve the abilities we think others expect of us. Further, the more we cover up, the less likely we are to see that everyone feels incompetent and incapable at times. In my writing classes, but especially in a developmental class, I do not want any student to feel compelled to pretend that he or she is better than he or she is. Every student in *Reading and Writing across the Disciplines* has placed into pre-college writing fairly, and my job is not to make students feel bad about what they cannot do, but to help them find new ways to do what they possibly never dared to dream they could do.

As the coordinator of the developmental writing sequence at NJCU, I find that it is very tempting for faculty teaching a course like RWAD, which has a high stakes exam at the end, to stick to seemingly tried-and-true yet unimaginative, arguably ineffective teaching methods. In essence, teaching to the test. However, I pointedly resist that impulse and encourage my colleagues to do the same, setting a far higher bar and offering more creative assignments that push students to think about themselves as writers in a whole new light

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throughout the semester, beginning, as I have shown, on day one. My most pressing job as an instructor is to swiftly and completely put to rest any shame my students might have about their writing abilities. And so, we embark on a circuitous, unpredictable journey that allows each one to reclaim, even discover, his or her voice with confidence.

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CREATING COMPREHENSIVE TEACHER MENTORING PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

New teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate, and the rate is higher in urban districts. To circumvent that problem, districts need to create comprehensive teacher mentoring programs, and they need to provide continual support to their new teachers. In addition, new teachers need to be an integral part of their own learning process to help them be successful. Keeping new teachers who have knowledge and experience in urban classrooms can be a catalyst for improved teacher pedagogy and student success.

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To excel, students need to have teachers who are trained appropriately and experienced in urban schools. Approximately one-quarter of new teachers leave the field within the first three years, while about 30% leave within the first five years (Curran & Goldrick, 2002). When describing urban areas, that number rises to about 50% within the first five years. Most states and school districts experience little difficulty attracting new candidates to the teaching profession but find retaining novice teachers challenging (Hammer & Williams, 2005). Furthermore, evidence shows that teachers with fewer than five years of teaching experience are leaving the profession at a much higher rate than new candidates are entering (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003; Gold, 1996).

Ingersoll and Smith (2004), utilizing data from the 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) administered by NCES, conducted a large-scale study with a sample size of 3,235 beginning teachers. The authors reported that there was a 50% increased risk of beginning teachers leaving the profession after the first year of teaching in a school where the percentage of students who received free or reduced price lunches rose from 25% to 75%.

New teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. The NCTAF (2003) reports that as many as 1,000 new teachers leave the profession daily and about 9.3% to 17% of new teachers do not complete their first year of teaching (Breaux & Wong, 2003). Schools that are located in lower socio-economic areas have the highest turnover rate (Easley, 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

Teacher attrition has been identified as a national crisis (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003) and has a negative effect on both student achievement and school budgets (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2007). The Department of Labor reports that high attrition negatively impacts local districts economically and can cost a district approximately 30% of the salaries of the

employees who leave in order to replace them (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003).

Academically, there are even more challenges. An excessively high rate of teacher attrition translates into inadequate student instruction (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003). Beginning teachers face a period of adjustment before they gain the knowledge and skill level to be strong teachers (Hammer & Williams, 2005). A continual cycle of teachers being hired and then leaving before they gain the expertise to become truly effective provides an unstable, unproductive environment for schools and students. Even more dramatic is the crisis in low socio-economic urban schools, which tend to be staffed by teachers who are less experienced and sometimes less qualified. This scenario causes considerable hardship in low income and high poverty schools where it is estimated that one out of two African American students do not earn a high school diploma. In some of the poorest communities, the estimate is even higher (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005).

As a young and inexperienced teacher working for a large urban school district, I discovered many things by trial and error. In my early years of teaching, I retained [held back a year] several students (with the support of my administration). Generally speaking, I retained these students for their inability to receive passing grades in my class, their lack of grasping enough content to be promoted, and/or lack of motivation on their part which caused poor grades.

When I decided to retain these students, I did so without knowing the negative effects that retention can have. As a young teacher, I did not have the knowledge that experience brings with it, and therefore felt if students did not produce, they needed extra time to do so which would be accomplished through retention. Though teacher preparation programs teach the theory of interventions that can be employed in helping struggling students, the experience gleaned from being in the classroom is what aids teachers in making good sound decisions that are not only appropriate at the moment, but for the long term as well, which is consistent with prior research by Hammer & Williams (2005).

Working in an urban environment brings with it the exposure to many different cultures. As an individual who grew up in a suburban area, I was not very familiar with the differences inherent in diverse populations. The memory of one student in my early years of teaching still resonates in my mind and is a stark reminder of the importance of being sensitive to the population that is being served. I remember this student speaking English well, but English was not the native language of the parent who struggled with basic communication.

When I was speaking to this student on any given occasion, she would look down. This would occur whether I was praising the student for a job well done or was speaking to her about an assignment. It would frustrate me to have her not look at me, and on one particular day, I said to her, "Please look at me when I am speaking to you because it is impolite

not to do so." In retrospect, I made a very poor judgment call that day and could have adversely affected that student. I came to learn, through experience, that in some Latin cultures, it is a sign of respect to not look adults in the eye when they are speaking to you. From her perspective, she was doing exactly the opposite of what I was accusing her of.

Again, this was due to a lack of experience, understanding, and pedagogical skill. Over time, through experience and longevity, this type of scenario can be alleviated and can have a positive effect on learning. The issue becomes—how do schools encourage teachers like me, who have learned so much from experience, to keep working in these classrooms, as opposed to using urban education as a stepping stone to suburban classrooms or other professions.

The frustration resulting from my lack of experience and understanding not only occurred to me, but to the majority of other new teachers with whom I worked. Among the new teachers that I started with, many of them left teaching and some of them went on to pursue other fields altogether, which is consistent with current research (Curran & Goldrick, 2002). With such a scenario, the cycle of teacher attrition repeats itself. This might be particularly problematic in large urban districts that have high concentrations of poverty and are difficult to staff (Freedman & Appleman, 2008), such as the type of district that I worked for.

Although I was assigned a "mentor," that individual was a mentor in name only, leaving me to struggle on my own which discouraged me and inadvertently negatively affected my teaching. Though I seriously considered quitting, I had just recently entered the profession from business, and had commitments which dictated that I needed to make it work. Having said that, there are some best practices that can help new teachers adjust to the classroom environment and at the same time enhance student performance. In addition, districts need to be creative to ensure that teachers are having their needs met from both a practical and intellectual perspective.

Mentoring can be a potential solution in retaining good quality teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Curran & Goldrick, 2002). Effective teacher mentoring models can be described as ones that lead to a higher retention rate and greater satisfaction regarding teaching. However, not all mentoring programs are successful and some can even be detrimental (Bullough, 2005; McCann, Johannessen, & Rica, 2005). McCann, Johannessen, and Rica (2005) interviewed educational consultants and novice teachers and found that it may actually be better for a school district to have no mentoring program at all than to have one that is poor in quality. This small qualitative study investigated beginning teachers' perceptions of their mentoring experiences. Teachers who participated in poorly constructed mentoring programs often had negative views and/or opinions of their mentoring experiences as evidenced by the following quote.

> The mentoring program is such a sham. It is the most ridiculous thing I've ever participated in. It would actually drive people out of teaching. There are meetings on Friday nights

from 5 to 8, and we don't get paid for it. For example, they read to us out of the discipline code. My mentor did not want to be a mentor. She hates me; I hate her. I wanted to be with another teacher with whom I have more in common and who is a good teacher. (McCann et al., 2005, p. 32)

Mentoring programs are more likely to be effective if certain elements are in place. Some of the successful elements of a program include the opportunity for teachers to participate in their own learning, the opportunity for communication, the opportunity to receive incentives such as a master's degree and training and support provided to the teacher mentors.

Teachers also indicate that they want an instructional leader who provides consistent and structured visits. Though a strong leader is desired, teachers also want the opportunity to provide feedback with opportunities for shared decision-making. Frequent informal activities that keep teachers informed, and where each school has conditions that serve as catalysts for learning and professional growth are also important.

Unofficial learning communities and schools that establish common high expectations help set the stage for teachers

to be successful. It is helpful that when new teachers enter a school, they feel that they are welcome and that they are an essential part of the school community. Finally, teachers enjoy having input that really matters and collegiality is important. Collectively, these elements help make the first year experience more beneficial to teachers (Brown & Wynn, 2007) and can ultimately affect teachers' decisions to remain in the classroom.

New teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. The NCTAF (2003) report that as many as 1,000 new teachers leave the profession daily and about 9.3% to 17% of new teachers do not complete their first year of teaching (Breaux & Wong, 2003). Schools that are located in low socio-economic areas have the highest turnover rate (Easley, 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). It is in the best interest of policy makers and educators to focus in on the fact that teachers need to be supported in such a way that they will want to remain teaching. By finding innovative ways to keep new teachers in the classroom, such as good mentoring programs, a lot of money can be saved, but more importantly, the success of students can be assured, which is a benefit to everyone.

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IMAGINATION
Fading Like the Grin of the Cheshire Cat

Clyde Coreil, Professor of English as a Second Language

Introduction

When a child enters kindergarten, the methodology he encounters is often thoroughly grounded in the imagination. Teachers at that level and through grades three and possibly four generally do a marvelous job of integrating the imaginative with the academic. The fourth or fifth grade, however—and lately the third and even the second—represent a markedly different attitude. Not only is there far less emphasis on the imagination, but the whole approach has changed. The storytelling, drawing, singing, and countless other imaginative approaches seem to be silently but fairly swiftly shifted to the background and at times virtually abandoned.

In brief, the imagination is replaced by an almost obsessive focus on learning to maneuver through objective, often multiple-choice tests and determine whether the "correct" answer is "A, B, C or D." The destination is a high score which is often incorrectly equated to the mastery of a given body of information. This is quite different from the previous "destination" which was the ongoing broadening of the child's imagination whereby he or she was led to see new and fascinating relationships in the items of information found in and out of the classroom. This seems to have been a far more dynamic and worthwhile goal than the "mastery" of a given body of information which shrinks and shrinks until it is little more than the grin of the Cheshire Cat.

I wish to state clearly that in my opinion, testing itself is an inseparable part of learning and education in general. I find little to object to in the High Stakes Test qua test. The objectionable element is the overemphasis on High Stakes which has accumulated unto itself a reputation dissolving effect for many if not most members of the particular educational system. Linda Sturman, a research manager at the National Foundation for Educational Research in the U.K. tells of a teacher who declined to participate in the equivalent of the High Stakes Test. Instead, he incorporated the imagination in encouraging students to help shape the curriculum and feeling free to vary it from time to time. When the Test came around, his students took it and found that they had covered the material on which the questions were based. Although they did considerably well on the Test, they never knew that they were

preparing. Kudos for this unnamed teacher!

When the context of "High Stakes" enters the picture, the spontaneous and imaginative tend to fly out the window and children acquire the pressurized role that their teachers and generally the whole educational system comes to feel. High Stakes overwhelms the curriculum and terrible decisions are made to center it on the Test itself. Teaching becomes a near obsession with scores, and the magic and wonder of real learning is debased with an emphasis on teasing out the letter that some constructor of tests has deemed to be correct. If this theft of time and energy were not so pathetic and widespread—and it is international—it might be considered faintly amusing.

Developing the Imagination

"X" is the point at which imaginative methodology is rejected and replaced by the compulsive presentation of a hatful of bones in what is usually described as a more reliable, more traditional, analytical fashion. Here, memorization—which I regard as generally very useful—plays a larger and larger part. This shift is crucial because not only is the imagination useful as a methodological tool, but I think that it also has a crucial developmental role that is sorely neglected. In other words, developing the imagination itself seems as important as developing the ability to read, write, and do math. Possibly because it has not held the spotlight in teacher-training classes, we tend to regard it as ancillary if not virtually dispensable. That

is most regretable because it has a central role that is very important to learning. It is my main point to suggest that the imagination should be regarded as a separate and independent psychological function, one that responds to respect and appreciation.

Many of us are aware of what Einstein said about this: "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world and all there ever will be to know and understand." In this article, we will focus on deepening and unifying our understanding of the imagination and thereby placing it in the forefront of identifying characteristics of our species. In other words, we are concerned not only with what the imagination can do, but what the imagination is. That is the slippery, unifying theme. The imagination tends to elude our conceptual grasp, but that tendency in no way justifies neglect.

Time Spent on Task

The imagination is arguably one of the greatest powers of understanding that human beings possess. And since virtually everything else that human beings possess can be developed and enlarged through Time-Spent-On-Task, I see no reason that the imagination itself should be any different. To repeat, the imagination is appropriate not only *because* it makes it easier for children to learn Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic. Rather, the study of Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic are also appropriate in large part *because* they provide the imagination with a stage on which it can strut its stuff, develop and grow in the full and ordered consciousness of our minds. This enables us to expand our notion of the educated person to include those individuals who have had much exposure to different aspects of the imagination. To study, say, playing a certain musical instrument and then to set it aside is not time lost or wasted. A significant part of ourselves did in fact grow and develop during the period of our studying the instrument.

Unfortunately, as the implacable Paul Harvey might have said, you don't know… "the rest of the story." In fact, this delightful reversal—which is a little reminiscent of the humor of Oscar Wilde—reveals a quite serious and most lamentable state of affairs. Not only is the growth of the imagination horribly neglected as the child passes the "X" point, but it is all too often considered a source of shame and embarrassing childishness. Current attitudes toward the High Stakes Task are therefore doubly unfortunate: 1) the Test withholds the imagination in terms of learning, and (2) it tends to block the development of the imagination itself.

Fascinating but Little Developed

This idea—that the imagination itself can develop and grow—is perhaps one of the more fascinating and, at the same time, little studied areas in education today. It would seem that in no curriculum is there an attempt to conceive of the imagination as itself amenable to growth and conceptual development as is, say, music. This is certainly not to overlook the fact that through sheer power and pervasiveness, the imagination has hooked up with technology in a truly wonderful, awesome, unrelenting, and unending progress. This, however, seems to be far more the untutored and undisciplined imagination, rather than a faculty that has been brought to the fore and consciously developed like the reactions of an athlete or an artist or of a keenly trained scientist.

Think of how powerful the imagination would be if we educators respected it, encouraged it, and constructed exercises and activities aimed at giving it its rightful place in the curriculum. The ultimate test would be to create a highly meaningful locus for it among the pantheon of chemistry, physics, mathematics, biology, literature, and social studies. If a child is doing poorly in imagination, let the teacher call in his or her parents. It is possible and even probable that the development of the imagination is synonymous with nothing less than the evolution of the human species toward the next phase of an infinite journey. If this be true, then indeed it is of the essence of Greek tragedy—an almost divine evolution like that offered by Prometheus himself, or a satanic punishment whereby vultures peck away at our entrails. Indeed, our destiny seems to rest on our knowledge of ourselves.

Evidence?

But, you might say, I have no evidence to back up what I say. I would say that you are mistaken. But first, what evidence do you have to back up your naïve assumption that Test Prep is at the heart of a more effective methodology than the imagination? Even in the extremely limited terms of Test Prep itself, you have little or no evidence that Time-Spent-On-Test-Prep is effective in significantly improving that limited ability—not the ability to learn but the ability to take tests. According to the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC): "…no decisive differences were found [after much measurement] between those who received test taking instruction and those who did not" (1990).

That is truly a serious condition. Much if not most of science is based on the demonstrable presence of evidence to support a hypothesis. Evidence is the rock. Yet supporters of High Stakes Testing have little such evidence. Apparently, they have only the hunch that extensive Test Prep is wonderful because it seems that it ought to be so, and because that is what the boss and the boss's boss said, and that anyone who doesn't agree had better get with the program or he or she will find himself selling soap for a living instead of teaching. Is this the scientific method? Is this what led to the marvelous Hubble telescope that makes our most sophisticated scientists catch their breath in awe? No! It is not. It is at the scientific level of pulling rabbits out of hats. It is shameful, pure and simple.

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Malfeasance of Duty

The fourth or fifth grade—and lately even as early as the second—seem to have become indeed the locus of a shameful malfeasance of duty, not only to specific students, but of the international educational system. It is we—the teachers, supervisors, principals, state and national education officials—who might well have to answer for a certain dereliction of duty. This dereliction results in part from a wish to please or at least to obey superiors in an operation that involves an enormous amount of money spent on materials to help students "prepare" for the High Stakes Test. If there is an inappropriate causal relationship between the two—between the Test Prepping and the expenditures for Test Prepping—heaven help us! What would have been mere incompetence would possibly be joined by some charge of even greater seriousness. And next along those possible dark passageways is the dreadful cover-up. I should like to point out here that it is my impression that many persons in the educational system do not personally endorse the context of High Stakes Testing. They do it because it is part of their job, which is indeed a powerful motivation.

The Shameful Crossing of The "X" Point

Before The "X" Point is crossed, the dominant mindset was on the joy of things like storytelling, drawing, painting, acting, dancing, singing and otherwise making music. These were seen as parts of a fundamental methodology that can underlie instruction in all academic subjects. As the "X" Point approaches, the great motivational value of this joy was silently but swiftly shifted to the background and at times virtually abandoned. After the crossing of The "X" Point, not only is there far less emphasis on the imagination, but the whole invaluable attitude of carefree inquiry is turned into a machine that uses much time on extremely profitable—in terms of cold cash—preparations for High-Stakes Testing that will ultimately lead to the fateful test itself. This would seem to be an enormous undertaking based on virtually no evidence—only on vague hunches, intuitions and the wish to remain in the positive estimations of superiors.

The scope of the terror for children can be truly horrendous. The students who have to sit countless hours preparing for these tests are not doctoral candidates of thirty or forty years, but students of seven, eight or nine years. If there is no child abuse involved here, there certainly seems to be "teacher abuse" and more than a few dollops of Greek pathos. I personally am ashamed to be a part of this largely pointless procedure. Pointless because much of what it can ultimately hope to indicate is that we are better than you, our teachers are better than yours, our school is more effective than yours. Our nation is superior to yours. Better than, better than, better than—that is precisely counter to what that dubious Political Correctness claims to hold as true: That one group is at its core, not better and not worse than any other group.

The Adults—Not the Students—Benefit

Furthermore, it seems quite possible that these trials by psychological fire and brimstone are not conducted for the benefit of the students, but for our own benefit. We make the young students suffer because if they fail, our jobs will be put in jeopardy. We make them suffer so that we of a particular educational establishment will be praised and rewarded if scores are high. If we score higher than our neighbors, too bad for them. Bully for us. So what if our students' brains are messed up and they experience the impossible boredom of quasi-military drills, drills, and more drills in the academy-like obsession of Test-Prep and Pre-Test-Prep and Pre-Pre-Test-Prep ad infinitum?

Snatching Victory from the Broken Jaws of Failure

So what if those kids undergo mental stress? We will have snatched victory from the jaws of children attending schools across the city, or across the country, or across the globe. We will have proved that we are better than they are. If the results of the High Stakes Test helped educators better assess the progress of a given group of students, then this would indeed be a benefit that I would gladly acknowledge. But as I said before, what I am objecting to is the use of class time for vastly excessive preparations for a single test. How can we do this to little kids for whom boxing is verboten and football is regarded as primitive and bestial? At least those players are not expected to duel without pads and helmets to stave off blows that might result in lifelong damage. But what do we offer to protect the precious brains of our students? Nothing! What hypocrites we are!

Recently, I became aware of the extent that High Stakes Testing is in use internationally to determine how a given school and possibly school system measures up to other systems in other countries. It is not a question of which pedagogy imparts the most to students, but of which school system or country scores better than the other. Ultimately, it is only the score that really makes any difference. Curiously enough, testing itself seems to have replaced learning. And ultimately—thanks to deconstruction—concern with scores seems to have replaced legitimate testing.

Newspeak: Where the Imagination is Rejected

In 1949, George Orwell published *Nineteen Eighty Four*, a powerful novel of perception, courage, and prophecy. When I started to read Robert Lake's article on metaphor (2008), I saw that his mention of Orwell and Newspeak was an incidental but indeed effective way of drawing the reader to his main concern. I would like to borrow Dr. Lake's podium and focus much more directly on the phenomenon he mentioned in passing. I asked him if this met with his approval, and like the gentleman he is, he agreed. In his novel, Orwell dealt with a theme that is at once imaginative, frightening, and alarming

if not downright terrifying. In depth and darkness, it ranks with John Milton and Faust and resonates with the dark vision of the Old Testament itself.

It is the imagination that enables us to climb on our own shoulders and create a future chock-full of astonishing possibilities. Yet it is also the imagination that allows us to see and realize the evil luster of the sub-human depths to which we can fall. I have even suggested that the imagination can be instrumental to our evolution into a slightly more elevated species. It can, I fear, also manage to block us from the metaphorical sun in a counter-evolution, a devolution to something less than we are at this elusive moment in time. Such weighty topics should be taken up by truly great authors and thinkers such as Melville, Socrates, Wallace Stevens, and William Styron. Obviously, such vision is not mine, neither in this incarnation nor, I fear, at least the next several. Yet these writers have left their footprints among the genes I share, and it is not improper to call to their spirits to witness what I am witnessing.

New-Man Grunting

Actually, what I refer to might well be called "Voices from a Counter-Evolved Species" that is yet to be named. The shadow behind the veil itself is either keenly aware of evil flapping large wings, or indeed an imagined New-Man himself grunting in a stunted Newspeak that denies itself even the unconscious complexities of linguistics. Metaphor is clearly—at least so I think—derived from the referential system of communication where we often call on a different set of semantic features to achieve precision and richness in expressing ourselves on a particular topic. Far from an anomaly, it seems characteristic of all languages and therefore of language itself.

Unfortunately, Newspeak and the rest is not simply the product of a highly active imagination, but is the metaphor for a very real situation that occurred under Stalin during the first half of the last century. Dr. Lake cut to the center when he quoted Orwell's characterization of Newspeak as a system with "all ambiguities and shades of meaning purged from language so that one word conveys one clearly defined thought" (Lake, 2008). Such is impossible since virtually all words can carry multiple senses. The word "run" for example, can hold about 40 or more meanings. In Newspeak, virtually any expression attempted is automatically falsified—which is exactly the wished-for degree of control. All language and by extension thought was under observation and criticism if a speaker had been clever enough to even conceive and articulate it.

It was vaguely reminiscent of various authoritarian governments that are said to have demanded minute, written accounts of all encounters and conversations experienced by individuals. If I know that I am obliged to report any contact and exchange whatsoever under pain of severe punishment or death, then I will simply refuse to see and talk with a great number of individuals. I will probably even try to refrain from making mental evaluations of anything related to politics

because even such intensely personal experiences would have to be reported and very likely made public. With one command, a single person of absolute power trickling down to every alleyway could exercise a virtually total degree of control. After a certain degree, control seems symptomatic of mental imbalance. The more extensive the nature of that control, the nearer we come to being in the seemingly sane clutches of a deceptive and immensely powerful and insidious insanity.

High Stakes and Newspeak

We return now to High Stakes Testing. Many of us have all heard the criticism that extensive preparations for the Test itself "octopizes" one (a novel item for Newspeak), that is, consumes most if not all of a person's energy. The classroom is no longer the wondrous universe of possibilities; it is a place where the techniques of High Stakes Testing are first and foremost. If the students make low scores, the dark shadow of incompetence spreads itself like thick ink over the students, their teachers, administrators, national officials, etc., etc. If the students are "successful," their scores earn the whole pack of them the praise and proof needed for promotions and additional funding. It would seem that those scores can quickly replace legitimate concern with learning. They become the be-all and end-all. Much of education devolves into a "Pedagogical Sausage of A, B, C, and D."

In Newspeak, all ambiguities and shades of meaning are purged. In High Stakes Testing, many if not most ambiguities and shades of meaning are likewise purged— as is much curiosity, intellectual inquiry, true understanding—and the magical question, "Why?" So who gives a hoot anymore for any of that? The answer that is deemed correct is all that is needed for raises and praises. Don't bother us with that nonsense about authentic learning and the sparkling possibilities of the activated imagination. Show us the nefarious methods of choosing A, B, C, or D. Help us learn the tricky techniques of multiple-choice test construction, and we will help you get your new building and salary increases.

Conclusion

"Knowing ourselves"—to paraphrase Socrates—is among the most critical tasks we face as human beings. More precisely, it is keeping ourselves focused on that elusive goal that is indeed one of the most important of occupations we can take up. It isn't only the concentration that is difficult—it is making the choices that are thereby opened up. These choices can involve our reputation, our employment, and our very lives. It becomes excruciatingly painful to know ourselves when that knowledge entails our recognizing that we are, for example, betraying persons for whom we have accepted responsibility. The difference between betraying one person and one thousand persons is very small indeed. The ability to conceive of the evil of betrayal is one of the true marks of the human being.

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The Anguish of Socrates

Knowing ourselves means being willing or unwilling to act on this knowledge, especially when the loss of safety, employment, and even our own lives are at risk. We see that Socrates was not quibbling about largely empty principles, but rather that what was involved was true in spades: that is, in terms of ourselves as undeniably moral persons. In our precious pursuit of Political Correctness, we often neglect to convince children that morality is indeed an important part of the composition of all human beings. If they toss it out of mind as though it were trivial and insubstantial, then they might well indeed pay for that callousness in their lives.

The anguish of Socrates was directly related to the presence of moral consciousness which seems to be a component of the imagination. Plato's narrative of Socrates has proved to be absolutely compelling for 5,000 years because the Greek teacher faced death as a man in possession of all of his faculties and as a choice of acting as a complete human being. Knowing himself meant laying down his life rather than betraying his sense of right and wrong.

All this might well seem extraordinarily and unnecessarily heavy when our basic topic concerns something as simple as testing in the lower grades. There arises, however, the evil of betraying another human being. In entering the classroom, we accepted the charge to open our students' minds in meaningful ways as best we could. At some point in the

Preparation for the High Stakes Test, or the Pre-Preparation or the Pre-Pre-Prep or the Pre-Pre-Pre-Prep—there arises the possibility that we are beginning a very serious betrayal. Then as always, we can go along with the transformation of some part of ourselves into something like Frankenstein, or we can say, "Enough. I will not proceed down this path to the serious psychological injury and deception of my students, no matter what age they are. It is unworthy and shameful of me as a human being."

Author's Note: Many of the dangers of high stakes testing are thoroughly discussed in Collateral Damage: How High Stakes Testing Corrupts America's Schools (Nichols, 2007).

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CONFESSIONS
OF A TEACHER OF TEACHERS

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In September of 2004 I began a three year position as a Professor-in-Residence (PIR) in a P-8 elementary school in a nearby urban school district. This assignment replaced one of my courses each semester with a one full day a week commitment at the school. The PIR program is part of the Professional Development School movement which has brought schools and colleges of education together more than ever before.

As a professor preparing bilingual, ESL, and special education teachers, for over 20 years, I have always maintained close contact with many schools. In fact, I have been a teacher for my entire professional career. My first teaching position was as a special education teacher in Newark, New Jersey, over 30 years ago. It was at this position that my other interest in Bilingual Education and ESL took shape. As the only Spanish speaking teacher in the school, I worked with the many Hispanic students at the school offering them bilingual education and ESL services.

I have been in higher education for more than 20 years. However, in this new role, I was really stepping out of the "Ivory Tower" and I was thrilled to again be a significant member of a school. Each week I served as mentor in a variety of ways to bilingual and special education teachers and their students. My interest in creativity and the imagination in teaching stems back 35 years to my early career as a special education teacher in a large urban district. Teaching students with significant disabilities required creativity and imagination in lesson planning and delivery. Language development was one of the main goals in our curriculum. The basal readers and "scripted" programs, in which the teacher is required to follow a script while teaching the lesson, were not effective with our population of students. Yes, "scripted" programs have been intruding into our teaching for a long time! More on this later. What did work for many of our students was a language experience approach and dictated stories. Students provided their own books to read. So, my goal as a PIR was to work with teachers and students in being creative and using the imagination in their teaching and learning.

My first and second years as a PIR lived up to my expectations. I worked in a variety of classrooms from K-6th grades.

These were primarily bilingual or special education classes. I visited the same classrooms every week. It was wonderful! I worked with teachers and students in many ways. I often modeled lessons with the students. In most cases we worked on many Language Arts activities. We wrote poetry, read books together, and then wrote "book reports." In one class, we planned a thematic unit on Egypt which culminated with a class trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. We grew seeds in the spring and charted their growth and wrote language experience stories about it. We cooked "dirt" and wrote about it.

It was quite an energizing experience for me. I began to notice a change in the ambience of the school in the spring of my second year when I visited a 6th grade class and was asked to assist the teacher with a writing lesson using a "picture prompt." Now I had had lots of experience in my own early teaching career with special education students using posters, some teacher-created, some bought from publishers. In fact, my favorite teaching material has always been the Language Development Posters created by DLM (a publisher at the time). These posters showed real people in real places to which students could relate. For example, one poster showed a young child sitting on a stoop in a decaying neighborhood. Another showed a picture of a group of young people protesting the Vietnam War (okay I'm dating myself), and so on. I created language development posters from old calendars. These materials provided wonderful sources for language development, both oral and written.

By contrast, the picture prompts that were being used in my PIR school were awful examples. They were dark and ominous, as if copied over and over, and looked to me as if they had been taken from an extremely old book. When I inquired about where they had come from, I was told they were from a

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test preparation book. One example showed a forest with a dark, dark, cave and a child peering in. Another example showed the inside of a barn with a child on a ladder climbing up to a hayloft. I suppose the lack of color and relevancy made them appear sinister to a degree. By the beginning of my third year everyone in the school was using these picture prompts, ad nauseum. In fact, it appeared to me that it was the major writing instruction taking place at the time.

The writing sample using similar picture prompts was a major component of the standardized test used in our state. (By the way, picture prompts have now been removed from the state test). What I witnessed as a result of these picture prompts was quite interesting and disturbing. The students' writing that resulted from these prompts were all very similar. They all culminated with the main characters in the hospital, usually wounded or dead. The stories were gory! One can argue that they were creative in their own way, but the majority of the students' stories were as I describe.

By this third year, the state test seemed to be the propeller for all that took place at the school. Students were now undergoing three practice tests before they even took the real version in March. These practice tests simulated the real thing so all of the security measures were in place, offices locked, students and teachers "sequestered" in classrooms and so on. These practice tests, of course, took away from real teaching time. It was my belief, as well as that of many of the administrators and teachers in the school, that by the time the students took the real test, they would be, in essence, burned out. My job as a PIR really took on the role of test coach for many of the classrooms. We had workbooks specifically written for test preparation in our state and I was asked to use these with all of my classes. Of course I did, but I certainly tried to make the material more engaging and meaningful for the students. Although challenging, my years as a PIR were extremely rewarding.

The situation has become even more serious. I recently observed a 4th grade class in a local school district. The lesson was teaching calendar skills. The teacher, the students, and I were somewhat puzzled at the way the book presented the use of the calendar. Out of curiosity I looked at the book cover and saw that the textbook was specifically written as preparation for our state test. In fact, the book names our state and the test in the title. This is the only textbook used to teach math in this district. My thoughts were that this book had to be written very quickly and using the test as a model. How awful! Has our only goal in education become passing the test? It was only a few years ago that schools were espousing Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, and rightly so. It appears that the only intelligence that is valued by many is intelligence that is measured by standardized testing.

What has happened in our schools today as a result of high-stakes standardized testing seems to go against all that we know about child development. This was a discussion that I often engaged in with the administration and teachers in my PIR school. A vice-principal at the school shared with me a

book that affirmed my beliefs. *The Best Schools, How Human Development Research Should Inform Educational Practice*, by Thomas Armstrong, and published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (2006), really hits the nail on the head.

Armstrong describes "scripted programs" as falling short in helping students learn about the world around them. These programs were created to provide teachers with scripts for their teaching—lest they should stray with some creative discussion! There are more and more districts in New Jersey adopting scripted curricula. In some cases every subject is scripted. There is little or no chance for teachers to be creative and to implement imaginative and meaningful lessons. Armstrong describes developmentally appropriate practices as lessons that allow students to explore the real world, utilizing authentic materials and encounters with the real world. There is no room here for "scripted curriculum."

Despite my reservations about scripted lessons, a couple of semesters ago I had the opportunity to observe a student teacher in a district whose Language Arts curriculum is scripted. This was a diverse Kindergarten classroom with approximately 22 students. From my observations it was clear that this was an excellent teacher, just having recently acquired tenure. Since I observed this classroom seven times from January through April, I was able to see the progress that had been made by students in this school year. I was impressed at the reading and writing skills the students had acquired. Using invented spelling in many instances, students were able to write short paragraphs with proper sentence structure. In this particular classroom, the teacher was able to augment the scripted curriculum with other meaningful activities. She had the knowledge and skill to do this. She was able to make room in the curriculum for, as Armstrong suggests, developmentally appropriate practices.

To end this article, I have to quote Armstrong:

> The push for higher test scores and the demand that *all* students exhibit high proficiency in reading, math, and science is sending reverberations throughout all levels of education, creating stressed-out 12th graders, violent 8th graders, attention deficit 3rd graders, and 4 year-olds who have had their childhoods stripped away from them. This situation cannot be allowed to go on as it is. It's time we returned to the great questions of human growth and learning: How can we help each child reach his or her true potential? How can we inspire each child and adolescent to discover his or her inner passion to learn? How can we honor the unique journey of each individual through life? How can we inspire our students to develop into mature adults? If educators lose touch with these questions in their mad dash to boost test scores, then culture as we know it may truly cease to exist some day. (Armstrong, 2006, p.5)

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ACADEMIC AFFAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS
New Faculty & Staff

BILLY BAKER, PhD
*Assistant Professor of Music,
Dance & Theatre*

Dr. Baker earned his Bachelor of Music Education from East Carolina University, Master of Music in Choral Conducting from Michigan State University, and PhD in Music Education from Florida State University. He previously taught high school music and served as department chair for ten years in the Maryland public school system. He is the current conductor of the New Jersey Youth Chorus Young Men's Ensemble and has conducted honor choirs and presented music workshops within the states of Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, and Rhode Island. Dr. Baker has published articles in *Choral Journal, Florida Music Director, Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, and *Research Perspectives in Music Education*. His research interests include student retention in secondary music programs of study, comprehensive musicianship, and music educator teacher training.

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*Special Projects Librarian
Congressman Frank J. Guarini Library*

Jocelyn Castillo received her Bachelor of Arts with honors in Psychology from The College of New Rochelle in 2002, and completed her master's degree in Library and Information Science from Pratt Institute in 2005. Prior to arriving at NJCU, she served the diverse patrons of the New York Public Library as a Senior Librarian. Additionally, she brings experiences from her previous employment as a Records Specialist in Deloitte Services LP, and several years as an adjunct reference librarian with the City University of New York. In 2003, she was awarded the American Library Association (ALA) Spectrum Scholarship. She began her appointment as the Special Projects Librarian in the Congressman Frank J. Guarini Library in the summer of 2010. Her responsibilities focus on providing reference services to the university community, conducting instructional library sessions, and working collaboratively in providing outreach services; virtual reference services (Meebo instant chat and Google Voice text), virtual instructional library sessions, and exploring ways to conduct on the spot reference services outside the library. She is working in partnership with Computer Science faculty as an embedded librarian to include an information literacy component in a specific course curriculum. She looks forward to continue working with the university community at NJCU.

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**TRACEY M. DUNCAN, EdS,
PhD, LPC**
*Assistant Professor
Department of Educational
Leadership and Counseling*

Dr. Duncan earned a PhD in Couple and Family Therapy from Drexel University, an EdS in Marriage and Family Therapy, an MA in Counseling, and a BS in Political Science all from The College of New Jersey. Dr. Duncan has been an addictions counselor for nine years working in various community-based programs in Trenton, NJ and a family counselor for six years also working in various family-based programs in Trenton, NJ. Her job titles have included, Family Specialist Worker, Substance Abuse Counselor, Clinical Director, and Program Director. Dr. Duncan's areas of specialization are addictions counseling, family counseling, community-based counseling programs, and curriculum development. She has published on evidence-based programs and community-based programs.

**NURDAN S.
DUZGOREN-AYDIN, PhD**
Associate Professor of Geoscience/Geology

Nurdan S Duzgoren-Aydin received her PhD degree in Earth Sciences from Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. She then taught at the University of Mersin, Turkey and University of Hong Kong, China. Before coming to NJCU, she was a research scientist at University of Mississippi. Her research interests include: environmental geology, urban geochemistry, and medical geology. She has a distinguished track record in research and is currently serving as a coordinating editor of a peer-reviewed and SCI listed journal, *Environmental Geochemistry and Health* and as an officer of the Geological Association of New Jersey. Her current teaching portfolio includes urban environmental and earth science courses, and she works closely with the local geological and environmental organizations.

COREY FROST, PhD
Assistant Professor of English

Originally from Prince Edward Island, Canada, Corey Frost has lived in Brazil, Japan, and Montreal, where he earned a BA in Creative Writing and an MA in English Studies. In 2002 he moved to New York City to pursue his PhD at the CUNY Graduate Center. Since then he has taught writing and literature and worked as a Writing Across the Curriculum coordinator at Brooklyn College. His research focuses on sound and rhetoric, especially the role of technology in poetry performance. He is the author of three books of fiction and has performed his work internationally.

SUE GERBER, PhD
Coordinator of Academic Assessment
Office of Academic Affairs

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Dr. Gerber has a BA in Statistics and an MA and PhD in Educational Psychology. Prior to joining NJCU as assessment coordinator, she was on the faculty at the State University of New York at Buffalo and at Indiana University Northwest. Her teaching areas include research, statistics, and assessment. Her research interests include social constructivism, assessment theory and practice. Her work has been published in peer-reviewed journals including *Educational Technology Research and Development*, *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, and *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*.

LEAH JACKSON, MA
Academic Advisor
University Advisement Center

Ms. Jackson has been with NJCU since 2006 starting as the Coordinator of the Office of Specialized Services for Students with Disabilities. She is now an Academic Advisor in the University Advisement Center working with undergraduates, particularly students planning to enter the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. She has given presentations and conducted workshops on topics such as healthy relationships, stress management, disability services, and holistic health issues in college. She is a 2011 fellow of Leadership Newark, a two-year program for qualified professionals committed to the Greater Newark community. As a student at Rutgers University, she worked hard to eradicate discriminatory practices in areas such as housing, education and social services. Her book of poetry, entitled *Release*, was published by Sincerity Publishing in 1999. Currently, she is a candidate for the MA in Counseling at NJCU and holds a BS in Human Services and Management from the University of Phoenix.

ALISON L. MAYSILLES, MAT
Transfer Evaluator
Transfer Resource Center
University Advisement Center

Alison Maysilles joined the New Jersey City University community as Transfer Evaluator in 2010. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Humanities, Elementary Education in 2002 and her Master or Arts in Teaching in 2003 from Fairleigh Dickinson University. Her career began in the classroom teaching middle school, and prior to NJCU, she worked in The Graduate School at Montclair State University and as an Enrollment Specialist at Union County College advising new, prospective, transfer, and matriculated students. Alison is an active steering committee member for New Jersey-New York Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (NJ/NY ACRAO) and has presented on Transition & Adjustment and Faculty Engagement at the most recent conferences. She is a student advocate dedicated to advising and evaluating transfer credit fairly, consistently, and accurately ensuring that students are on the right track as they begin their academic journey at NJCU.

MARY McGRIFF, EdD
Assistant Professor
of Literacy Education

Dr. McGriff earned her EdD in literacy education from Rutgers University. She also holds an MEd in educational administration from Rutgers University and a BA in Spanish from Dartmouth College. Dr. McGriff's research focuses on engaging literacy teachers in opportunities to investigate and learn from their practice. She is particularly interested in how inquiry, agency, and collaboration in teacher professional development cultivate teacher leadership and impact instruction. Before joining NJCU, Dr. McGriff served as an elementary school vice principal and principal for seven years. She also coordinated literacy specialist and school administrator professional development sessions for the Rutgers Institute for Improving Student Achievement. At NJCU, Dr. McGriff serves as an assistant professor in the Literacy Education Department. She teaches academic foundations courses and graduate level literacy courses. Dr. McGriff also supports literacy-related professional development efforts at A. Harry Moore School.

BERNARD McSHERRY
Assistant Professor
of Business Administration

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Mr. McSherry is a 33-year Wall Street veteran, and long-time member of the NYSE. He founded McSherry & Company in 1988, eventually growing it into one of the largest independent brokerage firms on the floor of the NYSE. In 2000, his firm was acquired by SunGard Global Execution Services, and Bernie served as CEO of its New York and London-based Broker/Dealers for two years following its acquisition. He then joined Prudential Equity Group in 2002 and held the position of Managing Director-Head of Sales Trading and NYSE Operations. Bernie has served in a number of leadership positions within the industry and has chaired several New York Stock Exchange committees, including the Equity Traders Advisory Committee. He was a member of the Market Performance Committee and served as a New York Stock Exchange Governor for six terms. He is currently a member of the Board of Directors of the National Organization of Investment Professionals (NOIP). He is a past President of the Alliance of Floor Brokers, an industry trade group and is a member of the Security Traders Association of New York (STANY). Mr. McSherry regularly appears as a market commentator on CNBC, FOXBusiness, Bloomberg and CBSand he has offered periodic commentary on ABC, MSNBC, CNN, BBC, NPR, Reuters and AP. His market views are frequently quoted by the *Wall Street Journal, Reuters, Bloomberg* and other media outlets. His writings have appeared in *Barrons, Financial Times, Forbes.com* and other publications. He is currently a doctoral candidate at Pace University where his research interests include financial history, and market microstructure. He is a graduate of Wagner College and holds an MBA from the Stern School of Business at New York University.

JASON
BAHBAK MOHAGHEGH, PhD
Assistant Professor of English

Dr. Mohaghegh earned his PhD in Comparative Literature and Middle Eastern Studies from Columbia University, and has taught at Columbia University, The New School, and Sarah Lawrence College. His work specializes in twentieth-century philosophical and poetic movements of the Middle East and Europe and their forceful implications for post-modern thought and beyond. He is the author of two books, *The Chaotic Imagination: New Literature and Philosophy of the Middle East* (Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2010) and *Inflictions: The Writing of Violence in the Middle East* (Continuum, 2012), and is also the co-editor of a book series with Continuum titled *Suspensions: Contemporary Middle Eastern and Islamicate Thought.*

LOUISE STANTON, PhD
Assistant Professor of Political Science

Dr. Stanton is the new chair of the Department of Political Science where she is also an Assistant Professor and PreLaw Advisor. Her research interests include how globalization impacts security governance. In 2009, her first book, *The Civilian-Military Divide: Obstacles to the Integration of Intelligence in the United States*, was published. Dr. Stanton received her PhD in global affairs from Rutgers University in May 2007. A lawyer, Louise received a B.A. degree in politics from Georgetown University, and a JD from Seton Hall University School of Law. Prior to the academic sector, she practiced law in the private sector, served in various policy-making capacities in NJ state government, and was a lobbyist.

FRECIA S. TAPIA, MA
Assistant to the Dean
Deborah Cannon Partridge Wolfe
College of Education

Ms. Tapia received a Bachelor of Science in Applied Psychological Studies and a Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration from New York University. She previously served for 6 years as the Counselor for the Learning Communities (TLC) Program, Student Support Services at NJCU. She also teaches Orientation to College at the University. Prior to her employment with NJCU, she served as an academic advisor at New York University's College of Arts & Sciences. She has researched and published on first-generation college student retention and higher educational and cultural barriers among Latino college students. Ms. Tapia hopes to pursue a doctorate in education in the near future. Aside from her passion for helping students, she enjoys volunteering for various non-profit organizations, including Kalawawa, For the Smile of a Deprived Child, whose primary mission is to raise funds for toys, shoes, and other goods for children in poverty within the highlands of Bolivia.

DEBORAH GEE WOO, EdD
Assistant Vice President
for Academic Affairs

Dr. Woo earned her EdD in Early Childhood/Elementary Education with a concentration in early literacy from Rutgers University, an EdM with N-8 certification from Rutgers, and a BA in chemistry from Case Western Reserve University. She has an AMS Pre-primary teaching credential and has taught Montessori pre-school. At NJCU she served as chairperson of the Department of Literacy Education and retains her faculty rank. She was also a director of the America Reads Tutoring Program and the Striving Readers Grant Project. Dr. Woo's research interests have included studies of literacy instruction in half-day and whole-day kindergartens, characteristics of effective first-grade teachers, fluency instruction, the Comprehension Windows Strategy, and evaluation of tutoring programs for struggling readers that rely on volunteer tutors. She has presented at the International Reading Association, the National Reading Conference, and the American Educational Research Association convention. She is a past president of the New Jersey Reading Association and has published in *The Reading Teacher, Reading Research and Instruction, Scientific Study of Reading,* and

Separately Budgeted Research Projects Awards
2012–2013

DAVID BLACKMORE	*African American English, Linguistics, and the Education System*
E. S. BUMAS	*Comparative Early American Epics*
TRACEY M. DUNCAN	*Exploring Experiences of Transporting Multisystemic Therapy to Community-Based Programs*
NURDAN S. DUZGOREN-AYDIN	*Mineralogical variations in different size fractions of urban soil, Jersey City, NJ: Undergraduate Research Study*
ELLEN GARVEY	*The Nineteenth Century Newspaper as Virtual Reality*
ANDREW GETZFELD	*Beginning to write "Essentials of Psychopharmacology" for the Essentials of Behavioral Sciences Series*
EDVIGE GIUNTA	*Memoir and Yoga*
YVETTE LOUIS	*Racial Discourse and Moral Panic in the Cuban Massacre of 1912*
JASON D. MARTINEK	*The Pittsburgh Fire of 1845*
CYNTHIA MCCOLLIE-LEWIS	*Subtle Messaging: Michelle Obama in the News*
JASON BAHBAK MOHAGHEGH	*Inscriptions of Silence: Middle Eastern and Western Writings of the Unspoken*
YUMIKO OGAWA	*"Special Playtime" to improve child-parent relationship in an urban community*
CATHERINE RAISSIGUIER	*Troubling Borders: The Case of the Sans Papiers*
JANE WEBBER	*Developing a Disaster Response Tool Kit for Counselors in Jersey City*
TIMOTHY R. WHITE	*The Scholar's Perspective: An Audio Tour of Ellis Island*

Average Award: $3,700

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Call for Papers

ACADEMIC FORUM
Spring 2013 Volume 17 Number 1

THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY IN ACHIEVING SOCIAL JUSTICE
Deadline: September 29, 2012

For the 2012-13 issue *The Academic Forum* is seeking articles on the theme of the role of the university in achieving social justice. The "Occupy" movement and upcoming presidential elections have raised public awareness on such issues as income inequality, access to higher education and the job market, the influence of powerful lobbyists, and the role of government in creating a more just and equitable society. We are soliciting articles on this theme that deal with the university's role in addressing these issues. Of particular interest are articles on pedagogy, research, theory, best practices, performance, and assessment related to this theme. Articles that are accessible to non-experts in the field are especially welcome.

Submissions should be between 1,000 to 5,000 words in length, preferably typed on Microsoft Word or saved as an RTF file, and submitted via E-mail as attachments or on a PC formatted disc with a hard copy. All citations should be in APA style.

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