

Memory Texts and Inherited Notions of Authority: A Speculative Essay

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In this speculative essay,¹ I begin by traveling to my past to locate people and experiences that influenced the ways I construct teacher authority. Using writing as method, I surface dreams and other “memory texts,” to reflect on how experiences and images harbored just within the borders of consciousness become myth-like in affect and influence my taken for granted knowledge about teaching. I theorize how images of authority figures locked in memory form “gestalts” (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999) that influence me to respond automatically to pedagogical moments. Lastly, I speculate that these images fulfill a desire for coherence that often remains resistant to pedagogical change.

Introduction

This writing, a speculative essay (Schubert, 1991), is a form of curriculum inquiry on pedagogical authority. It blends qualities of a personal essay and theoretical writing to show the process of an author *thinking on* a subject. In keeping with conventions of a personal essay, it asks that a reader suspend expectations of propositional writing and chronological presentation. Thus, through this essay, the reader is invited into a subjective realm of experience and reflection.

But a speculative essay encompasses more than the personal or subjective. While reflection is crucial, a speculative stance toward the subject of inquiry is also essential. Since an essay is at once the “inscription of a self and the description of an object” (Good, 1988, p. 23), the process of writing *on* a subject and writing *for* self-understanding creates reciprocity. A task for the author of the speculative essay, then, is to be attentive to this process and theorize how “culture gives us an inner script by which we live our lives” (Conway, p. 6).

In the writing that follows, I uncover some of the inner scripts that influence my pedagogical authority. I write memories and dreams, my “institutional biography” (Britzman, 1991, p. 7), to

find *inherited notions* of authority embedded in those scripts. Using gestalt theory and ideas about myth as a lens, I speculate that unexamined memories may influence teaching in undesirable ways. This is why it is significant for teachers to write memory texts: images that linger in memory may “form the subconscious assumptions on which practice is based” (Johnston, 1992, p. 125).

Memory and Institutional Biography

We each carry an “institutional biography” with us, Britzman (1991, p. 7) claims. “Unlike autobiography which is very idiomatic,” she says, “institutional biographies are made from defined roles and functions (such as teacher or student), have routines that occur regardless of the person, and offer definitional guides or coercions (measures of right and wrong that preclude situation and context) that one must confront or live” (Britzman, 2000, p. 1). Thus, the story of the student is “also the story of an institution. Same with the teacher’s story: the story of the institution” (Britzman, 2000, p. 1).

Our institutional biographies, then, are repositories of memories, texts of our experiences. Consider how we recall with relative ease images of a teacher located behind a desk or in front of a

1. See William Schubert, “Philosophical Inquiry: The Speculative Essay,” in E. C. Short, *Forms of Curriculum Inquiry* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991]. Schubert contends the speculative essay is a portrayal of an author’s way of reflecting. It is a special way of thinking, a method of inquiry that may give an inside look at curriculum. Because of its fluid form, the essay may retain the vitality of lived experience by creating a method of inquiry within its presentation.

chalkboard, a teacher feared or disliked, cherished or admired. Even when the reach of memory must travel backward through decades, remembering teachers and classrooms, picturing the way we clustered for reading as blue birds or red birds or robins—these images remain with us and form texts that comprise our institutional biography.

I explore several of my educational texts here, speculate how experiences and images harbored just within the borders of memory shape a type of thinking and knowledge I call “inherited.” Pursuing these images into language, chasing them from hiding, so to speak, is how I begin. Composing narratives that I call “memory texts” is how I transform images and events into language, how I begin a process of introspection to rediscover the paths I’ve traveled.

In recording memory texts, I begin with an assumption that “We only store in memory things of value” (HAMPL, 1986, p. 701). We remember things, in other words, that hold significance or that are problematic or unfamiliar and in need of review (Haug, 1987). In fact, Bruner (1990) in citing Jean Mandler (1984), says that “what does not get structured narratively suffers loss in memory” (Bruner, p. 56). Once memory and writing shape narrative, I follow Haug’s (1987) theory of memory-work so I can “uncover and lay bare earlier understandings in the light of current understandings, thus elucidating processes of construction involved” (Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault, & Benton, 1992, p. 40).

I use writing memoir to come to know what it is I know, and I write to come to understand what knowledges of authority I have “inherited.” In gathering images into narrative, I wish to discover, as Polanyi (1958) suggests, how images represent tacit knowledge.

Inherited Images

Father Coakley pronounced it “the finest parish in the world” (Getty, 1976/1951, p. 130). Sacred Heart. When I was a beginning teacher, an old time parishioner recalled for me this “priest-builder” who in 1950 saw the “blueprint for the new high school

carried into steel and stone” almost a quarter of a century after he turned the earth over for the construction of the church (Hisrich & Unger, 1976). She told me the story of how Father Coakley would turn from mass, stop abruptly, and tell latecomers to take a seat; told me with the same type of fondness and hand-on-your-arm insistence that my mother used to tell the story about how her father “threw the crate of strawberries over the hill” because he got mad at the huckster. Father Coakley liked to pride himself on the church manners of Sacred Heart people—“the finest in the world” (Getty, 1976/1951, p. 130). My mother liked to recall her father and the day “it rained strawberries.”

The way the women held on to these images and repeated their stories told me that something worth keeping lay behind the telling. I remember their admiration. It seemed that they, like the neighbor in Frost’s (1971) “Mending Wall,” would not “go behind [their] father’s saying” (p. 95). And then each woman gave her story to me. I’m left to wonder, though, if the cushion of years softened the memory for these women, made acceptable the public performance of anger in the pastor and my grandfather that the women recounted. But then, perhaps there was nothing to soften. Acting from the pulpit as pastor or from the person of father entitled these men to their temper. Parishioners, after all, should be on time, and hucksters should not bring Irish policemen to anger. Still, I wonder what impulse or necessity called forth the stories for re-telling.

I do know that their stories will not quit me nor I them. I own these memories now just as surely as each story became a part of the Sacred Heart and Barrett mythology. Years after I had graduated from Sacred Heart, in fact ten years after the diocese closed it to form a merger with another all-girls’ Catholic school, Father Coakley came to mind again in the words of a high school counselor. “I always wanted to be a Sacred Heart girl,” she confided. Her admission threw me back to the image of a man I had never seen, reminding me of the parish and school that he called “the finest ... in the diocese.”

I think now about the images we store, the memories we house, the way we cling to beliefs and

make myths from our stories. Inheriting memories of my grandfather and Father Coakley gave me images of authority that shaped the teacher I became. The image of a priest unseen became fixed in my mind's eye just as if I had seen him on the altar, hearing his words even though I never heard him speak. Too, I rarely heard my mother's father speak and knew him only as a gentle man. But I imagine him hurling that basket of strawberries over the hill. These images remind me that "Every psyche is a private theater filled with scenes and characters" where places and people "still inhabit you" (Keen & Valley-Fox, 1989, p. 2). Even people we've never met.

Excellent Women

Sister Maria Magdalene remains a part of the landscape of my student days at Sacred Heart, an all-girls' school. Even after thirty years, her voice and image stay with me as I recall her oft repeated refrain: "Her voice was ever soft, Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in a woman" (Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Act 5, Scene 3, 275-76). This line came to symbolize Sister and her authority, served too as the ideal I was to follow as a student, the ideal that I later imitated as a teacher.

Even now I picture Sister holding her index finger in the air, precisely articulating each word, her lips drawn thin and tight with a restraint clearly evident. I recall how she stopped girls in the hall, lifting the finger to say "Her voice was ever soft, Gentle and low ..." as if these words expressed all one needed to know about ways to act or to be in the world if one were a female. Sister impressed her will and asserted her authority without ever raising her voice. Always gentle, always soft-spoken, always in control, she modeled a restraint and authority that bespoke femininity, commanded respect not only because of the black habit of her order, but also because of her powerful personal presence. As a student, I clearly remember feeling that failure to model her behavior would bring the type of response that Lear heaped on Cordelia—banishment, a fall from grace, loss of privilege. And *shame*.

The emotional residue that clings to my image of Sister Maria Magdalene shows how images carry affect, which Bartlett (1932) claims is the basis of all perceiving and remembering. Not only are images infused with emotional involvement, they also synthesize perception and experience (Langer, 1962, p. 43). This is why I connect the failure to obey Sister or to speak in a soft, gentle, and low voice with shame.

Patricia Hampl (1986), in explaining her approach to memoir says, "I explored the mysterious relationship between all the images I could round up and even more impacted feelings that caused me to store the images safely away in memory. Stalking the relationship, seeking the congruence between the stored image and hidden emotion—that's the real job of memoir" (p. 701). The hidden emotion is what makes the image powerful, and it is also what leads me to re-enact in the present what I 'see' from my past.

The significance, then, of my memories of Sister Maria Magdalene, Father Coakley, and Grandfather Barrett is that these stored images shape my teacher subjectivity and the way I enact authority. I call these images forth because "Over time, the value (the feeling) and the stored memory (the image) may become estranged" (Hampl, 1986, p. 701). It is through writing images into narrative that I 'ready' the image and make it available for reflection. It is through writing that I seek to re-unite the image with the emotion so that I may come to know how image maintains its pull on me. It is through writing that image as visual representation meets language as symbolic representation. As poet Heather McHugh (1998) says, "I don't write to *say* what I mean, I write to *see* what I mean." In uncovering image and connecting it to language, I see how tacit knowing illuminates cultural knowing. Writing images is a way, then, to "focus on the self in social context" (Ellis, 1997, p. 117), for a "re-evoked" image "contains traces of the initiating perceptions and the influence of culture" (Fleckenstein, 1996, p. 921).

The significance of memory and the images I surface for remembrance reminds me of a question put to Robert Frost. While giving a poetry reading to a group of students, the poet was asked what

determined a good poem. “If it lasts,” he replied. Something similar might be said of memory—significant ones last, show remarkable resistance to forgetfulness. Perhaps Kermode (1995) offers a keener insight: “Memory invents a past to defend us against the appalling timelessness of the unconscious” (p. 39).

Pedagogy and Sneak Attacks

“Good combination of sneak attacks and calling on volunteers,” my principal commented on the evaluation form, pleased with this aspect of my teaching. I read her compliment but recall taking no pleasure in it. Something interrupted my breathing, gave me a moment’s pause. The feeling was palpable; it lingered for awhile as I read her other comments, but I quickly put off thinking about it. Leaving the feeling unnamed somehow kept me safe. Avoidance, after all, is insulating.

In the late 1980s when my principal made this comment, I wasn’t yet ready to name my knowledge, so I avoided the confrontation of naming and continued a pedagogy of “sneak attacks.” I called on the student who *didn’t* raise her hand, whose eyes avoided mine. I knew this tactic kept students off-balance and somewhat tense. Wary, alert, on-guard, they had to continually watch for me, anticipate the swiftness and randomness of my actions.

Even today, after consciously trying to remake myself as a teacher, I sometimes find myself reverting to “sneak attacks.” When an honors student is “not being faithful” to her reading, or if my temper flares because a student lacks attentiveness during a discussion, I take the offensive, launch into a sneak attack. In performing a pedagogy that I now not only question but reject, I’m left to wonder about the recalcitrant nature of my behavior. How is it that I continue to enact a practice even after I have come to reject it? In what ways does the past intrude on the present, calling on “inherited” knowledge, eliciting behaviors I no longer consider appropriate? In what ways do images from the past comprise teaching practices in the present?

Images, Gestalts, Myths, and Authority

I believe, as does Johnston (1992), that images “are more than passive visual recordings of past experiences” (p. 125). For me, they are a sensual remembrance held in the imagination. When summoned for reflection and put into language, images may bring understanding to memory. Father Coakley and Sister Maria Magdalene remain etched in memory because they represent images of *being in authority* that I carry with me, images that have become “internalized in such a way ... [they become] part of the natural order of things” (Bowers, 1987, p. 5). The continuing presence of these images commands my attention and obedience just as Father commanded the obedience of parishioners and Sister commanded obedience of students. In recalling the images of these teachers, I reach “into the past, gathering up experiential threads meaningfully connected to the present” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 60).

Another way to interpret the intractable nature of my sneak attacks is to say they arise from a type of knowledge embedded in what Korthagen and Kessels (1999) call *gestalts*. A *gestalt* is a formation, often “unconsciously or semi-consciously” shaped, that helps us see objects or situations as an entity and causes us to respond to them automatically. Complex cultural, psychological, or social knowledge may be embedded in a particular situation, but a *gestalt* gathers these complexities into *one perceptual identity*. Korthagen and Kessels (1999) say *gestalts* are activated when teachers make “split second” judgements. These authors would say that in repeating sneak attacks I draw on a *gestalt* because it contains a “unity of perception, interpretation, and action” (p. 8). When I draw on sneak attacks, even after I have come to reject the pedagogical practice they represent, I unconsciously draw on images of teachers being *in authority*.

I now see that my sneak attacks are much like the “outcropping granite” of Wharton’s (1987) New England; they landscape pedagogy with practices whose explanations lie just beneath conscious recall. The images of the priest and the sister remain ingrained in that landscape, cause me to accept their

enactment of authority not only because of the role denoted by their religious vestments, but because in assuming the role they moved beyond the individual to portray the universal, the mythic.

Campbell and Moyers (1988) claim that our response to a judge would differ if the judge wore a suit and not the traditional robe. This, no doubt, offers one interpretation of how the authority of the individual in such a role is taken for granted. If we accept Campbell's idea, then the individual comes to represent the collective or the mythic, and one thing we know about myth is its uncritical acceptance. Myths, in other words, are not always examined as are other forms of knowledge (Garman, 1983). Yet, Father Coakley and Sister Maria Magdalene were also teachers and as teachers they represented another collective, a collective whose cultural identity carries with it a notion of authority that shapes perception and has obedience embedded in it in ways not always available for conscious thought. "That we are unconscious of most of our cultural knowledge" Bowers (1987) writes, "... accounts for our being unaware of the authority culture has over us" (p. 5). Britzman (1991) says that the comment, "Funny, you don't look like a teacher" (p. 5) also underscores the power of the image and the power of the mythic showing how "the multiple identities of teachers get lost in a cycle of cultural determinism" (p. 6).

When my students fail to listen or I see that they have "not been faithful to their reading," I slip into sneak attacks because their behavior is a challenge to authority. In other words, a student is *not merely challenging me*—she is challenging the mythic. So, I carry the burden of my position, the responsibility to uphold the values embedded in the cultural role of teacher. The weight of this responsibility, the awareness of being an individual and at the same time a representative of the cultural, is part of the tension and exhaustion teachers feel in the day to day enactment of teaching. Wearing the mantle of teacher is wearing a heavy robe indeed. If I ask, as did Waller (1932), what teaching does to teachers, my response must consider the consequences of enacting authority.

These consequences surface not only in teacher behavior but in the unconscious through dreams. So, I now turn to another memory text—teacher dreams. Dreams and the unconscious may teach us something, as they did Freud, because they contain more than the idiosyncratic. Dreams offer a personal and cultural text for interpretation.

Introduction—Dreams

Virginia Woolf (1957/1929) claims that "it is in our idleness, in our dreams, that the submerged truth comes to the top" (p. 31). Transforming dream into narrative may open other aspects of my institutional biography for interpretation. Dreams, "the shadow side of consciousness" as Doll (1982) frames them, are representations of the same type of image that we cling to in other memories, remembered because they "repeat problems and issues until the dreamer manages to solve them" (Doll, 1990, p. 3). Teacher dreams, then, may offer images of the unconscious teacher self, images that may represent what Felman (1982) calls "unmeant knowledge" (p. 28). If, as Finke (1991) says, the subject [teacher] forms as a discursive process, and it is not always fully conscious or present to itself, "then we need to rethink the very notion that what is significant about teaching is available for conscious and rational analysis" (p. 14). Extending these ideas, then, it becomes important to realize that pedagogy "must be characterized by some form of intervention in the "unconscious" (p. 14).

Dreams, as memory texts, are images in search of completion in the same way that gestalts aim for closure (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). "Dreams can remind us of what we need to put back in our minds," Doll (1990, p. 12) states, and so it becomes the task of the dreamer not to figure images out, but *to figure them in*, "to see, in other words, the figure each image makes" (Doll, 1982, p. 198). An analysis of image patterns in dreams is one way for teachers to face fears that are hidden in another text—the fictional. McMahan (1999) says that the fictional may provide a "form to portray my lived experiences" in a way that encourages one "to respect the complexities and ambiguities with which

I am confronted in my practice” (p. 22). Dream, then, as a type of fictional text or “fictional representation of reality,” will enable me “to gain a different view of myself,” the unconscious self, so that I may reflect on my teaching from a different perspective, so that “I am less likely to take what it is I know ... for granted” (McMahon, 1999, p. 22).

Teacher Dreams

Cindy tells me that the previous night she awoke from a dream “in a cold sweat.” In this dream, our newly appointed president was evaluating Cindy’s English class and Cindy could not quiet her sophomores. She tells me that an intense sense of apprehension and anxiety awakened her. Cindy and I have talked about teacher dreams before, but she remarks that this one was unusual both for its intensity and that she dreamed it right before Christmas vacation. We’ve talked on other occasions about teacher dreams and we’ve noted that they usually occur at the beginning of the school year, in September.

I say that I’ve had similar types of dreams about our new president. In one dream I am in line during an academic procession for graduation and I feel the president watching me. I fail to correct a senior who is talking and feel remiss. I am also keenly aware of the president. I tell my dream to Cindy and jokingly say, “Cindy, we must both be paranoid.” We know the president doesn’t make classroom observations or evaluate teachers. And besides, Cindy is the most loved and respected teacher on our faculty. A few weeks before her dream, the students had named her “Teacher of the Month.” For her to dream about being watched, losing control of the students, or to express some form of anxiety, really seems out of the realm of possibility—even in a dream.

Through this encounter with Cindy and through my own experiences, I am drawn to consider teacher dreams—these “fictional representations of reality.” I seek to retrieve them, to uncover the images and emotions that form them. Like my other memory texts, teacher dreams will not quit me for they have re-occurring themes and plot lines. Wondering what it is that dreams hold for me and why I can’t release

them into forgetfulness, I think of Hamlet who states that he could be “bounded in a nutshell” and count himself a “king of infinite space,” but for “bad dreams” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, 1980/1599, Act 2, Scene 2, 255-57).

Teacher Dreams II

It happens again. School dreams. I have several in one night. In the first dream, I am in the high school where I now teach, but the school is out of place, located in Hazelwood where I grew up instead of East End. The ‘dream’ school is over the railroad tracks, past St. Stephen’s school and church. It begins with me in my classroom.

I stand in a square room, much like City Theater with rows of desks and students surrounding me on three sides. I remember telling students to be quiet and one, Jessie, catches my eye. She is the only student I recognize. I repeatedly tell students to get quiet and they simply won’t. I stand in the center of the desks that surround me and issue ultimatums, “This is what will happen to you if you don’t ...” ultimatums. I remember sort of yelling or at the very least raising my voice. I start to talk about texts and hear myself say, “If you don’t bring your books to class, I will ...” I don’t remember finishing the statement. Then I issue another ultimatum. “If you fail to ...” and I can’t recollect what else I say.

I make each declaration emphatically and feel myself getting quite angry, but no one in the room cares what I have to say. Students look at me blankly, as if my presence and my commands don’t interest them in the least. They treat me the way they treat Marie, a teacher in another school, who students laugh at and disrespect.

During the dream—or in that in-between state when we are not soundly asleep and yet not fully awake—I remember thinking, “This is horrible. I can’t stand this; I don’t want to go down this road again.” I connect this dream with my changing pedagogy. Students now treat me the way they treat Marie.

Then I remember another dream from the night. I was in my present classroom and one student after another comes to me to ask if she can take a make-

up test. I'm grading scene enactments while this is going on. Then another group of students—not those performing—walks into the room, dressed for their scene enactments. They look as if they will enact a wedding. I see a bride and several students are singing. I remember turning to a student sitting next to me. She is quite tall, an adult, not a high school student. "Do you need to take the exam too?" I ask her. She says, "Yes," and I realize that she is Betty Jean, a former classmate of mine from Sacred Heart. I haven't seen her in twenty years.

Then the most tense part of the dream occurs. I reach for my literature text and begin to flip through the pages, searching for the page numbers to give students who need to make up an exam. I keep turning pages and can't locate the place I need in the text and feel myself getting frustrated. The students who are performing the scene enactments continue to play their parts, and the other students wait for me to give them the assignment. I feel rushed and realize that there is not much time left in the class. Suddenly, the scene shifts. I find myself walking up Elizabeth Street, past St. Stephen's school.

I've left my room and I keep walking and walking. I begin to think that I should get back to class before the bell rings so the students won't just leave and dismiss themselves. I turn to walk back to my room and from outside I hear the bell ring. I hurry as fast as I can. I walk faster and faster, hurrying and hurrying. I arrive at the bridge that crosses the tracks and turn up the hill toward St. Stephen's school. Then I awaken.

Teacher Dreams III

In this dream I am in front of students in a long rectangular room with no chalkboards. The room is covered in ceramic tile, like one would find in a locker room or swimming pool. It reminds me of Burgwin where I attended kindergarten. I remember seeing that the students were standing in orderly rows.

I ask the students to "Quiet Down," but they ignore me. No one even looks at me when I speak. Again I say, "Girls, sit down and be quiet." Still I am ignored. I feel myself getting more and more

angry. I finally reach a point of desperation and yell, "If you don't sit down, I will lower everyone's grade one letter grade for this quarter." Still, I get no response from the students. They continue to talk as if I am not there.

Although I can't get them to sit down, I somehow manage to get several students out of the room. I usher them into the hall thinking, I suppose, that if I isolate a few I will be able to get better control. I send these students somewhere and I see them as they pass by me as I hold the door open. Anne passes me; she is the only student I recognize. I then lead one girl to a chair in the hall with a very high wooden back. It is the type of chair with scrolls and deep mahogany wood, the type a bishop would use for a church service. I tell the student to sit in the chair and begin to vent my wrath on her, pointing my finger in her arm, and feeling the flesh give under my index finger. She is tall—5'8"—and large framed; I notice this even when she is seated. "You are really out of line," I say. I remember no response of any sort from her.

We are in a long tunnel-like place and not a school hall. It resembles the tunnel that passed under the building at Sacred Heart that we used when it rained. As I am talking to this student, several other students pass by us. I continue to talk to this girl and inform her about her behavior as other students continue to file past us. I know I should go back because the bell is about to ring. I worry that something may have happened while I was out of the room and I feel pressured to hurry back to make sure nothing went wrong.

The scene shifts again and I find myself walking back toward the room, but I am still quite angry and I don't want to go back. I feel an intense anger and say to myself that I don't like them. I feel caught. Everything I feel says "don't go back" and yet duty or obligation compels me forward. I remember the tunnel I am walking through is moist and damp. The floors are concrete, smooth and painted deep red, just as the tunnel at Sacred Heart, but I am in the high school where I teach. I make it back to the room just as the bell rings and the students are leaving through the door. They do not speak to me and I do not speak to them. The dream ends.

Thinking Through Dreams

I'm struck by the intensity of the emotion I feel when I experience dreams and by the contrasting emotional flatness of the dream narrative. Perhaps when I dream the visual imagery is so powerful to me, so intimately connected to personal feelings, that the image loses its impact when I render the dream into language. Too, in the dream narrative, no reason or explanation for the student behavior is offered, thus preventing a deep understanding of the narrative. But I suspect that as the dreamer I feel an emotional intensity not captured in the dream narrative, because while I am dreaming *I am aware of and feel the depth of my anxiety*. It is an anxiety or fear hidden in the "shadow" and also hidden beneath actual teaching practices that cloak my fear. It is an anxiety and fear hidden behind ways I've come to understand how to be a teacher and how to enact authority. While I dream, my awareness of this unconscious knowledge is what surfaces; it is what I feel when the 'I' who is the dreamer (and teacher) observes the 'I' who is teacher in the dream. I bear witness to the teacher in the dream who is failing at being in authority. My dream, then, becomes a dream of recognition where I confront "fears hidden" in a fictional dream text.

My fears, of course, are rooted in a fear of failure—the failure of authority. This is where the dream content represents fears that remain unnamed in my daily teaching life. Thompkins (1996) talks about teacher dreams and claims that in one form or another the type of dream that I have is "dreamed by thousands of teachers before the beginning of the fall semester" (p. 42). Teacher dreams are remarkably similar in nature she claims. Some teachers dream they can't find their classroom and that they are racing frantically through darkened halls; others dream they are pontificating in nasal tones about subjects they know nothing about. Still others, Thompkins (1996) says, see themselves turning to write on the blackboard and feel the students leaving behind their backs. The dream is so common, she says, that many people "discount it" (p. 42).

But the dreams should not be discounted. Thompkins (1996) believes the dreams represent an "internalized" fear carried in our teacher images from the past. The image of the "stern teacher" who "stands in front, who stands when others sit, the one whom you must obey, who exacts obedience" (p. 43)—this is the teacher that tends to remain in most people's memories. Thompkins relates stories from her past about students who were publicly chastised by teachers: "the quiet innocent, made to stand by his desk in third grade" (p. 43); the "terror boy" in second grade, who "wouldn't be quelled" (p. 43). She talks about "The admirable rough and tumble boy who wouldn't sit, wouldn't cooperate, who constantly caught the metaphorical whip and who made the teacher so angry that it spilled onto every class member who witnesses the frequent loss of temper and public disciplining" (p. 43). These teacher images are what we store in memory and what we duplicate as teachers. These are the images, according to Thompkins, that carry with them notions of authority and the knowledge that "unless I perform for the authorities, unless I do what I am told, I will be publicly shamed" (p. 44). These are the images that we come to mirror and reflect when we perform the role of teacher. And it is the fear or shame of losing one's authority that surfaces in teacher dreams because, as Thompkins (1996) asserts, authority "points to the heart of what it means to be a teacher" (p. 42).

These images of teachers gain power over us even when the image moves out of the realm of the actual and into the realm of the dream. In dreams, the fictional texts of the unconscious, these images lodge as "shadows" of us, and like shadows they may prove illusive and difficult to define. In talking about dreams, Doll (1991) claims that they offer us "archetypal images that have been safely caged too long" (p. 198). She insists that we need to make these images available for educational reflection so that we may come to a fuller understanding of our practice.

Britzman (1986) also talks about the way myths operate in the lives of teachers. She says that "mythic images" of teachers tend to "sustain and cloak the very structure which produces them"

(p. 448). She claims that while the structure of teaching is characterized by isolation, “it is also sustained by the value placed on individual effort” (p. 448). In this valorization of the teacher as the only actor, as autonomous, the teacher takes on “mythic proportions.” Another myth according to Britzman (1986) is that teachers make themselves. This tends to make teachers de-emphasize theory, and “infuses the individual with undue power and undue culpability” (p. 453). Thus, when a teacher is individualized, or when teachers believe that they make themselves, the social context of teaching dissolves and pedagogy “becomes a product of one’s personality” (Britzman, 1986, p. 451). If this is so, then failure, too, becomes individualized and a product of one’s personality.

Speculations on Authority

Through reclaiming images and dreams from the past that comprise my “institutional biography” (Britzman, 1991), I reconstruct portraits of people in authority that I have *internalized* and *idealized*. These portraits, myth-like in affect, form “a conception of how things are supposed to be, to work, or behave” (Bullough & Stokes, 1994, p. 199). But more than this, the images or portraits come to represent what I have known and what is familiar to me, blending an idealized “other” with “self,” past experience with present pedagogy, giving me a *unified* concept of the *kind of person I am supposed to be* and forming notions of how I, as a teacher, am supposed to relate to the world (Bullough & Stokes, 1994, p. 199).

Thus, in a significant way, the images that comprise my institutional biography give an illusion of continuity to my experience and fulfill a *desire for coherence* that I then enact as a teacher who is “in authority.” As the images from memory texts play behind me on a kind of scrim curtain, I perform a pedagogy on the stage of the present that is shaped by those images. The images are unchanging and offer a kind of reassurance within the uncertain and contradictory context of the classroom and the “self.” The teacher “self” I then construct is singular, unified, and non-contradictory, a teacher

who satisfies her desire for coherence through inherited images, who speaks in a voice of acquired authority (Sommers, 1998), who enacts a pedagogy *primarily authored by inherited knowledge and images from the past*.

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