priority on assembling an accurate membership roster to insure equal service to all members. We are producing a membership directory and now have an attractive brochure explaining the benefits of MCTE to prospective members. We have historians working to prepare an anniversary booklet for 1984 - our 25th year. We serve the special interests of our members through the committees of our Advisory Board, adding two new committees this year: Teacher Exchange and Media. We have continuously improved the quality of our publications. The Minnesota English Journal now ranks with the top six NCTE affiliate publications.

For the second time in ten years, MCTE has been asked to host the National Council of Teachers of English Convention in Minneapolis. Therefore, next spring our Conference will be held in conjunction with the NCTE First Midwest Regional Convention, April 15-17. Plans are now on schedule and reports indicate a very successful convention with a significant amount of Minnesota representation on the program.

Where does it all stop? Let's hope it doesn't. It has been said that there are those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what happened. Let's make things happen! Let's share the responsibilities and strive for efficiency and effectiveness. There are able, energetic, dedicated people in MCTE to meet the challenges.

Jim Olson
President

DOWN AND OUT IN SCHOOL: THINKING ABOUT ORWELL*

by Richard Mitchell

*This text is essentially a transcription of the speech that Professor Mitchell gave at the Twenty-second Annual MCTE Conference, May 1, 1981. Professor Mitchell did not read from a prepared text that night. While he stands by the ideas expressed in the speech, readers should keep in mind that some matters might have been differently expressed if this text were originally prepared for publication in this journal.

No more than two weeks ago the telephone rang in our English Department. Ours is a very small department, and anyone who is

near the telephone answers it, and there was a lady on the phone. She was the chair of an English department at a nearby high school. She wanted some information: "What," she said, "in fact, is the difference between 'shall' and 'will' and when do you use one and when do you use the other?" There were three of us in the office at the time, and the man on the phone (not I) turned to the others, "What about 'shall' and "will'?" We got into quite a discussion and a couple of us got on the extension and, "Yes, but on the other hand in the 17th century..." The lady said, "Look, I'm not really interested in that. We are preparing our students for the basic minimum competency tests, and we've got everything else straightened out. They're okay with 'lay' and 'lie,' and some of them can even handle 'like' and 'as.' If we can just get 'shall' and 'will,' then we'll have it. We will have basic minimum competency in Pensaulken, New Jersey." So we told her what we were sure she wanted to hear. She hung up the phone, very grateful, and I'm happy to tell you that in Pensaulken, New Jersey basic minimum competence has broken out. It's a tremendous success.

I want to read a couple of texts. I always carry around a little pocketful of clippings and bits of paper on which I have texts and I want to read at least two to talk about our success. The first of these is from a letter that was sent to all the school teachers in Philadelphia:

> "During the 1980-81 school year the project will provide teachers and administrators with education and support designed to optimize the behaviors and conditions in the school which support student learning to the extent that at least two-thirds of the teachers receiving training and support in Expectations will report on a specifically designed survey changes in at least two school-related operational characteristics that have been identified as critical elements of the network of expectations that support learning."

You knowthere's a nasty, cruel streak in people. I see that you can laugh at that. I wish that you would think for a moment of

your co-workers in the Philadelphia schools who cannot laugh at that because they must now go and do this. I am usually very good at deciphering these things. This one baffles me. I'll tell you something interesting about this passage, though. In this passage there is not one spelling error. Not one. There are no comma faults. There are no errors in capitalization. There are no failures of verb-subject agreement in here. No misplaced modifiers. Use of the semicolon is impeccable, since no semicolons appear. Well, now, wait a minute. A lesser writer might have been inclined to drop one in there somewhere. You see I mean it: I want to talk about our successes as English teachers. This is one of them. If we were to give this writer our basic minimum competence test, he would do very well, indeed. He would be, by all measures that we now expect, not just literate, but superbly literate. And yet it is in me to doubt that this is literacy. I have to ask, when we get all the infinitives unsplit, when we get all the modifiers undangled, when we find the comma-splices properly spliced, when we get "lay" and "lie," and "shall" and "will" straight: will we have literacy? If so, this man is literate, and yet I know he's not. So what are we going to do? What will we have when we have "basic minimum competence"? If this is our success, what must our failure be?

I want to read one more "success." It is a very important success because this man is, at the time of this writing, preparing to receive the degree of doctorate of Education in Educational Psychology so that he can go to a teacher training academy and become a trainer of teachers--a lofty calling. Since the writing of this document, he has received that degree and he is now, indeed, training teachers who will then go out and teach our children. I am going to read you, first, the title of the piece and then a brief excerpt from his piece:

> The Non-redundant Interactive Relationships of Perceived Teacher Directiveness and Student Personal-logical Variables to Grades and Satisfaction.
>
> Recent research has shown that a number of student variables--authoritarianism, dogmatism, intelligence,

> conceptual level, convergent/divergent ability, locus of control, anxiety, composivity, need for achievement, achievement-orientation, independent/dependence and extroversion/introversion--may moderate the relationship between teacher directiveness and grades and satisfaction. There is a fair degree of moderate intercorrelation among the student variables. Such intercorrelation suggests some of the following interactive relationships may be overlapping or redundant.

This is like stumbling over a rock in the path. The author stumbles briefly over the truth but quickly picks himself up and goes on: "The purpose of the present research is to develop multi-variate mathematical models of the interactive relationship using stepwise regression strategies. Such models should facilitate a more parsimonious interpretation of the interactive relationship." This goes on and on for 196 pages.

The small journal which I serve as assistant circulation manager for has a motto. It appears whenever we have room for it in the journal. It is a quotation from Ben Jonson: "Neither can his mind be in tune whose words do jar, nor his reason in frame whose sentence is preposterous." These men from whom you have just heard are probably very decent fellows. They probably have Cub Scout Troops that they care for; they surely pay their taxes. But their words do jar. Their sentences are preposterous. I think that their minds are out of tune and that their reasons are not in frame, and I think that would be enough to make me decide not to let my daughter ride in a car with them. There's nothing wrong with them I'm sure, but I would not feel safe with my daughter riding in their cars. I hope that some of you would share that prudence with me. While we would not perhaps let our daughters ride in cars with these men, you know what we do? We let our daughters and our sons, our nieces and nephews, our grandchildren, and millions of young Americans go to school where policy is made and executed by these people.

Now I want to look at this second passage in that light--the light of authority. The second passage is formidable. It's

wonderful. I love "multi-variate mathematical models." That is a phrase that does point to something in statistics. The same is true of "step-wise regression strategies." Very nice sound. That terribly impressive list of student variables, starting with "authoritarianism and dogmatism," you could be sure that if the writer could have thought of another one, that one would have been there too. His powers flagged at this point. Some of these phrases are very enticing. I would like to think about "locus of control," for instance. I don't even want to know what he means. Just thinking about "locus of control" is really good. What I would like to dwell on is the subtle distinction between "need for achievement" and "achievement orientation." That's got to be fascinating. You know the whole passage sounds scientific. It sounds very scientific, and should you accost a person who writes like this and say "What the hell is this?" he responds, "Well, you laymen are of course not in any position to understand this highly technical language that we professionals use. It is too hard for you. We understand these terms. This is complicated and scientific." Now I don't know any science. But I do know something about language. I know something about scientific language, all of a sudden I get an inkling of what maybe we ought to mean by literacy.

One of the few scientists whom I have heard of is Galileo. You remember Galileo? He was the man who climbed the Tower of Pisa and he dropped cannonballs, a big one and a little one, to see if they would fall at the same rate, and, sure enough, they did. I happen to know something about that event. Galileo did not have to climb that tower. I think the press was there and they said, "Senor Galileo, would you mind climbing the tower and showing us?" Galileo did not need that demonstration for a very simple and very intriguing reason. Galileo was literate. And Galileo solved that problem long before he climbed the tower. He solved it by literacy. That is to say, he solved it by the power of language, by the ability to make statements and make statements about statements in sequence, by the ability to find modifications and reservations through statements about statements. Here's how he did it. He said, in effect, Aristotle says

that one is one and ten is ten, and a one-pound cannonball, therefore, will fall at one-tenth of the speed of a ten-pound cannonball, and that seems logical. Aristotle did say something like that. Aristotle went further. I'm sure if you had gone to Aristotle and said, "Listen, Aristotle, let's drop some rocks from the Acropolis," he would have said (because he said this in other contexts), "That's work for slaves. Are you going to pick up rocks with your hands and drop them? We are not doing labor here. We are using the mind." You remember that Aristotle approved of the study of astronomy but disapproved of looking at the stars. He really did. Of course we study astronomy; we do it in the mind. There are logical relationships, everything is rational, and to look at the stars is already a kind of slave work. Of course, strangely enough, Aristotle was absolutely right. The work could be done entirely in the mind. Galileo picked up where he left off and thought about what Aristotle had said. Suppose that I were to take a ten-pound cannonball and a one-pound cannonball and fasten them together and drop them. What would happen? Obviously the slower speed of the one-pound cannonball would impede the progress of the ten-pound cannonball so that the combination of one and ten would fall somewhat slower than the ten-pound cannonball. Logic is logic. On the other hand, the one-pound cannonball and the ten-pound cannonball fastened together constitute, in effect, an eleven-pound cannonball. And an eleven-pound cannonball by logic must fall faster than a ten-pound cannonball. So the combination that I have made must fall slower than a ten-pound cannonball and it must fall faster than a ten-pound cannonball, and that cannot be so. Galileo asked, "What would have to be true for me to make sense at the end of this essay?" Now notice that's the important point. It is an essay that Galileo has committed. He has made a statement. And a statement about the statement. And a statement about his prior statements. In effect, Galileo has committed literacy. He then climbed the tower, as you know, because the ignorant people from the press had to be convinced. If they couldn't follow his reasoning, they were "basically minimum competent" and they couldn't see that, although they were good at

"shall" and "will." And Galileo said, "Look fellows, I'll show you," and he climbed the Tower of Pisa.

The most famous statement of Galileo's, of course, was about the earth. You remember he looked at the moons of Saturn or something like that, and from his observations extrapolated certain principles. From his principles he said, at the end of another practice in literacy, "The earth moves." He got into a lot of trouble over that. It is, however, the language of science. You look, you consider, you weigh, you measure and then you begin to talk. You say this is so, this is so, therefore, this must be so and if this must be so, then this must be so. This is done in literacy. It is done in language. No problem is solved except in language. We have nothing else but language with which to solve problems. Even if we reduce our language to some specially symbolic and truncated form that we call mathematics or the calculus, it is only by statement and statement and statement that we think, just as it is only by statement that we know. What is our knowledge? It is a group of statements that we can make.

By literacy Galileo reached the language of science, and he said the earth moves. That is how the language of science sounds. He got in a lot of trouble for that. He had to apologize; you will remember there are a couple of places in the Bible that say that the earth stands fast. There's one place that suggests the sun does move around the earth when Joshua stops the sun. If you can stop the sun it must be moving around something so Galileo had to apologize in church. It must have been a sad scene. He got up in church and said, "Well, men, I'm really sorry. I don't know what came over me, it was obviously a silly thing for me to say. I'm awfully sorry, and I take it back. Of course the earth doesn't move." Legend has it, as you know, as he stepped down he muttered into his beard, "Still it moves." That's the language of science.

Now I want to compare Galileo's literate language of science with what we just heard about the multi-variate mathematical models. To see what you remember about that passage, we shall have a true-false test. Did the author say that there is "an

intercorrelation among these variables?" False. He did not. Did he say that there was a "moderate intercorrelation among these variables"? False. He did not stick his neck out that far. Did he say there is "a degree of moderate intercorrelation among those variables?" Too risky. Did he say that "there is a fair degree of moderate intercorrelation among these variables"? Yes, that's what he said. You see now if only Galileo had gone to education school, he could have said "Well there is a fair degree of moderate possibility that the earth may move." No one would have troubled him. He would never have had to apologize for that. This makes a very important point for me. One of the things that we have to say about bad language is that it is cowardly. The man who looks at what he can see and makes statements about what he can know, who makes statements about those statements, about what he can understand, who makes judgments and statements about his statements about his statements says things like, "The earth moves." The man who cannot do those things is reduced to saying, "There may be a fair degree of moderate intercorrelation." He is not only a coward, he's a liar. He speaks to us as one having authority. This was a very authoritative statement: "Recent research has shown," and on it goes from there. After that came all of the model auxiliaries, the "may's." He speaks from on high, with a voice of expertise, and still he says "There may be a fair..." This is cowardly.

I know a lot about the people in the schools of education. I have studied them carefully. (They know a lot about me, I suspect--I often check under the hood of my car.) I will tell you two of the things they hate. They hate rote, rote learning, and worse than that they hate regurgitation. I have had them put it to me: "Look," they say, "we really can't be teaching the multiplication tables because that disenhances creativity. Besides, if you teach the multiplication tables, all you have done is teach by rote. When you test them on the multiplication table they just regurgitate and these things are just no good." They want creativity; they want self-expression. Listen to this phrase now from the first text I read: "Two school-related operational characteristics that have been identified as

critical elements of the network of expectations that support learning". How did the author learn those things? Why does he say those things? Have you heard those things before? Have you heard those things a thousand times before? "The network of expectations that support learning": are those not phrases learned by rote and then regurgitated? You know, if you know enough of these phrases, you can write whole dissertations for ED.D's. All you do is string them together and everyone nods, "Oh yes, that's right, that's the way we talk." And we put that together with "locus of control," and "control/divergent ability" and the "network of expectations" that "support locus of control in cases of..." This leads to another point about this literacy: there is no mind at work here. This is parrotting. This is reciting. But even worse, even more damaging and most sad is this: this fellow who wrote about "the network of expectations that support learning," and the other chap who wrote about the "fair degree of moderate relationship among the student variables," these people are not interested in what they write. It seems an odd thing to say, but if you were interested in education, would you glibly recite cant about "those characteristics which have been identified as the network of expectations that support learning" in the schools?

The title of tonight's talk is "Down and Out in School: Thinking About Orwell." I am mindful of Orwell because of your parent organization, the National Council of Teachers of English. As you know the NCTE annually awards the "Orwell prize for clarity in public language" or something like that. The winner this year was the author of a book that argues that large corporations send brochures, leaflets, film strips, movies and God knows what all into the schools and that these industry-sponsored materials are propagandistic in intent. They do tend to sell more of whatever it is the company sells. The author is really outraged at this, and the NCTE, sharing that outrage, gave her the George Orwell award. The book is horribly written. It contains all of the flaws that Orwell talked about. But you can see that the Council, actually it was its Committee on Doublespeak, liked the book politically and handed out the award without,

obviously, having read Orwell. Orwell would never have done that.

Orwell says another important thing. Here we come to a matter of faith. You may believe or not as you choose. Orwell says that language is not a natural growth. Now the idea that language develops naturally has been at the heart of much English instruction in the last few decades. We have assumed and taught that language is what it is, that it is always changing, and that there is nothing you can do about that. We have held that "everybody has the right to a language of his or her own," even if it be totally incomprehensible to everybody else. Every kind of language is as good as every other kind of language, the modern faith holds, and we mustn't fuss with it because it is natural and to fuss with it is indeed an inhibition of creativity and self-expression. Not so, says Orwell. Language is an artifact. Language is a device created by mankind or, if not created, certainly fashioned by us to our purposes. It is a tool with which we may do certain things by conscious design. Now, as I say, this is a matter of faith. However, it seems to me that English teachers who say in their hearts that language is simply a natural growth about which we can and should do nothing we ought to look for another calling. That language is natural and not to be tampered with is an interesting position. I can see many good reasons for taking it. But is not suitable for an English teacher. We have not, I know, taken any vows. Sometimes I think that is a mistake. We ought to have some vows. You put your hand on something--it doesn't have to be Fowler or Orwell, but something or other--and raise your hand and say, "I promise that I_____." You fill in the blank, but I think that somewhere in that vow you're going to have to say something like this: "that I will treat the English language as an instrument with which we can do things, and I will teach children to do that." We can make language an instrument for our own devices and, indeed, an instrument for the most important things we do or the most human thing that we do, the one thing, really, that separates us from the racoons and kangaroos, that is for thinking.

What do we mean by thinking? I am a college professor, as

you know, and I am paid to work with my mind. No heavy lifting in my job description. When I don't want to see anybody, which is usually, I tell the secretary, Mrs. Scott, "Look I'm very busy, I'm thinking, I cannot see anybody...this semester." I sit in my office and stare out the window, I mull things over, I brood, I hope, I fear, I expect, reminisce. I repeat over and over again in my mind something that I said or something that somebody else said. I tell myself a little story; I change the details a little bit. Cheryl Teigs appears before me. Clearly, if thinking means all those things, it is not a very useful word. Clearly, if we are going to fashion language as an instrument for our devices, we will not permit thinking to mean all of those things. By thinking I mean what Galileo did. I mean making statements, generally a statement of knowledge, a statement of fact, maybe another one or two and then making a tremendous leap, the tremendous leap that separates, not, in this case, human beings from animals, but which separates thinking human beings from other human beings. This leap is magnificent. A statement about fact is of one order. Statements about fact permit a unanimity. I can say of the earth "It moves." You can look, you can measure, you can weigh and say, "Well he's right; it moves," or not. And if you have better facts than I, I will have to agree with you. Unanimity is necessary of our statements of fact. When I start to think, I better start with statements of fact because we have to keep our feet on the ground. But at some point I stop making statements about the world and I start making statements about statements that I have made. In doing this I search for understanding, and I hope to make a <u>judgment</u>. And judgment, unlike fact, does <u>not</u> permit unanimity. Not at all. For the <u>fact</u>, we can all turn back and touch the earth. For <u>judgment</u> we can follow each other's lines; we can listen to each other's statements, but no judgment commands as a statement of fact commands. This is why literacy is dangerous and why I'm convinced we don't want it.

We all, especially the people in this room, will answer any pollster on the streets by saying "yes" we are in favor of literacy. No one will come out against it. I wonder if we

want a world in which everyone is literate.

I will use a brief example here from ancient history. Everybody remembers those many cultures which arose, lasted a long, long time, died, and disappeared in Mesopotamia: ancient, solid, stable cultures that lasted for a long, long time. When they were overturned, they were overturned because other neighboring cultures got bigger and ate them up. They were never overturned from within. We do not hear that in Babylon some citizen had an idea which destroyed his world and which turned over his culture. When we go a little farther in history and cross an ocean and come to the Greeks, who, as far as I can tell, invented true literacy, as distinguished from a "basic minimum competence" which enables us to read "men" and "women" on the doors. The Greeks invented discourse--discourse aimed to take us beyond statements of fact, into orbit, as it were, through understanding in search of judgment. This is a tremendous achievement to make. But I wonder what good it did them. They were a disorderly people, those Greeks. Not only did they war incessantly with one another from city-state to city-state, but <u>within</u> each city-state they even warred incessantly. They were continuously driving one another out, bloodily more often than not. You and I, of course, remember the Greeks from our textbooks in schools, the elegant Greeks. There they stood in gracious Attic poses, their gowns draped very cunningly and prettily. We think of calm. We think of repose. We think of harmony. Not so: they were a bloodthirsty and disorderly crowd, profoundly unruly, and they did, in effect, destroy themselves little by little. And I know why: they were literate. They devised the system of seeking to make judgments through the process of understanding, through discourse, through literacy. And those who can make judgments through understanding will always disagree. Always. If my voice is louder than yours and I can convince you to accept my judgment, it isn't really because my voice is louder than yours. It is because you will not do the work of literacy with which you test my judgment. You will accept it as a slogan, as a part of the "network of expectations that support learning" in the schools. But if you have the power of literacy, however loud

my voice, you will say, "Just a moment. I see that this is your judgment. That is very interesting, let me now make a judgment." A literate culture suffers a fate which an illiterate culture, like the Mesopotamian culture, does not suffer. The literate culture does not have to wait around to be eaten up by the larger neighbor. Indeed, the Greek culture repelled a very large neighbor quite successfully, if I remember. But it was turned over from within. I don't know what a literate America would be like. It wouldn't be like this. It wouldn't be anything like this, and I'm convinced that we all know that and that we do not want literacy. Indeed, we have devised, with the very best of intentions sometimes, an elaborate contraption to prevent literacy.

Let me make this terribly important point about literacy. Literacy is the work of a solitary mind. It is done all alone. This, by the way, is why reading and writing are so difficult for so many of our students. They hate solitude. To read a book is to be alone. To write and pursue understanding is to be alone, so desperately alone that I, who write a lot (I hate writing), can stop at any time, right in the middle of a sentence, and go re-tile the bathroon. Literacy is hateful, and it is hateful because it is lonely. Only in the isolation of the individual mind can you either read or write. We seem to have devised a system intended to prevent isolation.

I invite you now to tour with me the middle school in Pittman, New Jersey, where I live. We are walking down the hall. School is quiet and orderly. It's a good little school. We don't have too many kids slashing up or smashing the urinals with sledgehammers. We here pass a room and in this room we see in progress the eighth-grade rap session on gay rights, the eigth-graders being led by their teachers. They "relate to" each other quite well and they are "expressing themselves" on the matter of gay rights. They are "seeking understanding." They are in favor of the "love of all mankind." They are going to work something out. It is going to come to a conclusion. They will solve the gay rights problem before that class is over.

We go down the hall and into the staircase and upstairs, and here at the turning of the stair is a little child all alone, reading a book. Now I want you to consider these two images. There's the eighth-grade rap session on gay rights and a little child all alone reading a book. Which is normal? Which is standard practice? Which is institutionally approved and fostered? Which is like school? You know that that little kid is a freak and a weirdo! You know that he has very little self-esteem, not much creativity, he doesn't even seem to be expressing himself. He is simply learning by rote something that he might regurgitate someday. A novel perhaps. The other kids, the utterly ignorant and untutored, rapping about a social concern of massive size and fearful consequence, trying to reach, through ignorance, a consensus, which we imagine can be reached by the ignorant if there are just enough of them: that's normal. That's school.

There's a very immediate connection between the collectivism of the gay rights rap session and illiteracy. Literacy is a selfish skill. You can use it only in your own head. Literacy is not a communal activity. Literacy does not lead to collective harmony but in the other direction. Our system is designed to make collective harmony because it is, most important of all, a government-system.

I speak to you here, as you know, as a government agent. Most of you are government agents, too. You take your pay from the pot that gives me my pay. Our system arranges to take a certain amount of money away from the people and distribute it among us. Thank goodness. But we are a government agency just as much as the Marine Corps and the postal system. I'm a government agent. Jefferson, as you will remember, urged literacy on us. He said in effect, "Let us have a literate nation." Let's have people who are capable of the powers of what he called, again and again, thoughtful discretion. By the way, Jefferson did not suggest this as a nifty little benefit which might go along with democracy. This is not frosting. He pointed out that it was absolutely necessary if people were to be free from government. Jefferson did not like the government that he and his friends set

up. It was the best that they could find, but he understood that all government is intrusive. Government will, if it can, seize your person, your property, your liberty, and your mind. That's how government works. There's nothing wrong with that. That's the nature of government, and Jefferson knew that. He said our only protection against it is thoughtful discretion, the ability of everyone to read. He did not mean make out exit signs; he did not mean tell the difference between "shall" and "will" or handle a semi-colon. He meant to be literate. Civilizations of ancient Mesopotamia were as quiet as they were because in them everybody was a slave. Everybody was a slave, knowing only that which was suggested. The city-states of Greece were the turbulent, discordant places that they were because in them there were some free people. Free people are people who can make a string of statements seeking understanding and making judgment. It is that power which protects us against government. That is Jefferson's point.

I am glad he's dead. I am so glad that Jefferson is dead. I liked Thomas Jefferson. I don't want him to come back from the grave and stand by my side and say, "Mitchell, what the hell are you people doing?" "How is it," he would ask me, "that you have chosen that one power which alone can protect us from any and all government and given it into the hands of the governments to teach? What did you expect. Did you, in fact, expect that a government would teach thoughtful discretion, which alone can protect us against government? Are you Crazy?" Jefferson would not be kind. He would not be tolerant. I would be embarrassed. I don't want to hear from him.

At the moment I am in deep depression about you and me and about our whole enterprise. I would really like to look around for an honest job and get out of the teaching business. I have been going around buttonholing all my colleagues saying, "Would you explain to me once again, in words that I can understand, what is it we are doing here and why and what is the meaning of this?" I'm just not happy obviously, and at the moment I don't see any way that it can work. I don't see that we can have literacy; I don't think that we want literacy. I am not

even sure that I want it. I know this, that if it is to come, if we are to have a genuinely literate society, that would mean that all people would be able to do these things in their heads, like Galileo. And they will all have understandings and judgments and they will all be different from mine and I won't like that to begin with. But to have it is going to take really nothing short of revolution. So profoundly entrenched is the system which, I suppose I have to say, enslaves all of us that I cannot see it disappearing. It will not evaporate. If it is to be changed, it must be changed in a revolutionary fashion, and Jefferson also made the rules for revolution in America. You will recall he said, he wrote it and his friends subscribed to it, "We pledge to this cause our lives and our fortunes..." If you are sitting there and you can't finish this quotation you're in a lot of trouble; we're all in a lot of trouble. Of course you can finish the quotation. He pledged "our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." They were obviously good rules for revolution because they sure worked. They made a good revolution. I wonder if we can do that. If you are going to make a revolution in this country, you have to pledge your lives, your fortunes, and your sacred honor. I hesitate to speak for you, except I know you are in my condition--government agents. I am a government agent. I would, in some part of me, like to see this revolution, and yet I know that I must pledge to it my life, my fortune and my sacred honor. Do you realize that I am a member of a union? I am, I'm a union member. Do you expect me to pledge my life? I am not even about to pledge the terms and conditions of my employment. They are right there in the contract. My life, my fortune? You know how grossly underpaid I am, we all are. You know that this culture pays bus drivers more than it pays schoolteachers? How did this culture come to have this value? Where did this culture learn that bus drivers should get more money than school teachers? That's a mystery to me. But they do. So you can't expect me to pledge my fortune because I don't have any fortune. I am not about to pledge my guaranteed annual increment. That's in my contract too. "Sacred honor" is a quaint old-fashioned term. "Sacred honor," I guess that meant

something to them. It did. Yes, of course, all of those things meant something to them. When they pledged their lives, they meant it. They would hang if they lost. They pledged their fortunes: they would lose their estates and their progeny would be cut off. And by their sacred honor they did mean at least something concrete that we can point to. They knew that if they lost they would be remembered, if at all, as foul traitors. But to me, to you, to us government agents, "sacred honor"? I would like to pledge that but it doesn't really mean anything to me. It would be a nice gesture, but you know, I'm afraid it would injure the profession if I were to pledge that. I'm not going to make this revolution. I don't think you are. I think that we are going to have to settle for "basic minimum competence" and what goes with it--a nation of slaves.

There is no path to liberty. Liberty is not a corporate thing. Cultures are not free, nations are not free, groups are not free, classes are not free. One human being is free and another human being is free, and another. Only the solitary individual can have freedom. In our teaching, it is only the solitary individual who gets no freedom, who does not get the mechanical device--to say nothing of other things--by which he can fashion understanding and make judgments and be free of all suggestions, be free of all slogans, be free of all deliberate ideologies. If he's going to get it, if all of those millions of children are going to get it, they are not going to get it from the man who talks about "the network of expectations." They are not going to get it from the man who is worried about their "locus of control" and how that relates to "the relationship between their satisfaction with their grades and their view of their teacher as authoritarian or not." Literacy is not what those people are interested in.

This is a high calling. It really is. We are teachers. We are English teachers. There is nobody teaching anything as important as what we are supposed to teach. Nobody. All the teachers in all the other disciplines teach the raw material that goes to the process that we teach. It is a very high calling indeed. I know of none higher, frankly. We are in fact

the salt of the earth. But we have lost our savor, and wherewith we shall be salted, I do not know.

MEMORY AND IMAGINATION

by Patricia Hampl

A lecture delivered at MCTE, May 1981.

Dedication: For the members of the Memoir Class, Spring 1981, at the Loft (sponsored by the Loft and Metro State University)

When I was 7 years old, my father, who was handsome as a virtuoso and who played the violin on Sundays with a nicely tortured flair which we considered artistic, led me by the hand down a long, unlit corridor in the basement of St. Luke's School, a sort of tunnel that ended in a room full of pianos, where many little girls and a single sad little boy were playing truly tortured scales and arpeggios in a mash of troubled sound. Here my father gave over my small, still stupid hands to Sister Olive Marie, who really did look remarkably like an olive.

Her oily face gleamed as if it had just been rolled out of a can and laid on the white plate of her broad, spotless coif. Her skin was sallow, faintly greenish, olive drab, reminiscent of those especially assertive olives whose centers are drilled and then filled with a slash of pimento. She was a small, plump woman, so that the body and small window of face seemed to interpret the entire alphabet of olive: her face was a pale green olive placed upon the jumbo ripe olive of her black habit. I trusted her instantly and smiled, glad to have my hand placed in the hand of a woman who made sense, who provided the satisfaction of being what she was: an Olive who <u>looked</u> like an olive.

I was left by my father to discover the piano with Sister Olive the olive so that one day I would be able to join him on Sundays in mutually tortured piano-violin duets for the edification of my mother and brother who sat at the table spooning in the last of their pineapple sherbet meditatively until their part was called for: and they put down their spoons and clapped while we bowed, while the pale sweet ice in their bowls melted, while the music melted, and we all melted a little into each