Opening George Hillocks's Territory of Literature

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In this companion to George Hillocks's final article, two of his students explore the "territory of literature" he maps out for teachers. We examine three claims George stakes in his territory: First, teachers and students should understand literature as a source of argument about moral and philosophical concepts; second, a sophisticated understanding of literature demands a set of explicit typologies that students can follow; and third, students need a systematic way of identifying and interpreting the effects of literary devices and rhetoric. Then we look beyond George's article to consider additional sources and critical approaches to teaching through concepts, typologies, and a rhetoric of literature. As members of the next generation of "Hillocksian" English educators, we argue that George's territory can be open land, home to many literary traditions and visions.

Introduction

In his last article, George Hillocks argues forcefully that K–12 schools have not adequately explored the "territory of literature." He describes a comprehensive vision of this literary "territory" that he believed should act as the foundation for English educators' and teachers' design and practice. This territory includes an understanding of literature as an exploration of moral and philosophical concepts, the use of comprehensive archetypal structures to situate and understand literary texts, and an exploration of the relationship between technique and effect, or the "rhetoric of literature."

In this companion piece, we hope to open George's territory. As students of George's—Sarah in her English education program, and Malayna in her doctoral program—we have both been profoundly influenced by his ideas and teaching. As a high school English language arts (ELA) teacher, Sarah designed conceptual units to help her students explore big ideas and

examine the relationship between technique and effect in literary texts. Malayna and Sarah both taught argument with a focus on evidence and warrants, the often neglected "so what" of argument that explains how and why particular data support a claim. Warrants are one of George's foci in "The Territory of Literature" as well as in other work (Hillocks, 1995, 2005, 2010) about the teaching of argument.

As English educators, we have drawn on his theories and practice in our university classrooms. Like many of George's students, Sarah still has the seashells George gave as gifts to his English education classes, used to help young writers develop figurative language through comparative descriptions of similar shells (for detailed descriptions of the "shell game," see Hillocks [1982, 2009]). Malayna drew from George's "Hierarchy of Skills in the Comprehension of Literature" (1980) as an analytical framework for her dissertation research, and uses it now to help teacher candidates develop varied and ambitious discussion questions for students. Then, during classroom observations, Malayna keeps tallies to help candidates see how many students respond to each kind of question. Student teachers are usually surprised that literal level questions solicit far fewer student participants than inferential level questions. This realization helps candidates reframe their ideas for what struggling readers may need—or want—in order to engage with literature.

As learning scientists, we have tried to take up some of the cognitive principles implicit in George's body of work. For example, much of George's work calls for students to engage in the important cognitive process of comparison, as with his seashell exercise, or other activities in which students compare sets of scenarios about courageous action, friendship, or other concepts that compel them to clarify their definitions of those concepts. Such activities are aligned with a body of research in cognition and learning that demonstrates how the process of comparison can help people identify patterns, construct generalizations, and illuminate details that they might overlook when reading only one text (Gentner & Namy, 1999; Tversky, 1977).

Finally, as scholars interested in social and cultural theories of learning, and as people who try to work for social justice, we have been deeply influenced by George's scholarship and teaching. He has informed our understanding (and that of so many others) of the social nature of learning, the power of constructivism (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Collins, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978), and the fundamental importance of understanding students as individuals with everyday knowledge, skills, and practices that support academic learning (Gonzalez & Moll, 2002; Nasir, Rosebery, Warren, & Lee,

2006; Orellana, 2001). For example, George's description of making visible and helping students unpack their everyday practice of sarcasm was part of a larger practice of recruiting students' everyday knowledge to help them recognize and appreciate the mechanisms of satire and irony.

So we, Malayna and Sarah, are comfortable in George's territory; as professionals, we kind of grew up there. But at the same time, we see a need to open this territory and, in some cases, question its claims. We imagine others in English education may wish to do the same. As Peter Smagorinsky pointed out in his introduction, much of the literature and theory invoked in George's territory has "a fairly canonical ring" to it. Reading his last article may leave some readers wondering whether there is room for their own epistemologies and approaches in this territory. In developing our companion piece, we tried to open George's territory by drawing on a wider and more diverse array of literary texts and theoretical perspectives to illustrate George's suggestions. In doing so, we found that many of our sources were George's students or, in Tara's words, part of George's "academic lineage" (Johnson & Miller, 2015, p. 7). So while George's work is fairly canonical in some ways, his ideas have been foundational and generative for scholars who continue to question, shape, or upend the canon.

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In addition, we draw on a diverse set of sources to expand on George's pedagogical recommendations. Unlike much of his writing for teachers, which provided clear examples of how to take up his ideas in practice, this article describes important foundations for pedagogy but stops short of explicitly drawing out how those foundations might inform practice. In this companion piece, we try to explicate and illustrate George's claims about literature with more direct pedagogical implications. Specifically, we examine and expand on three claims George stakes in his territory: first, that teachers and students should understand literature as a source of argument about moral and philosophical concepts; second, that a sophisticated understanding of literature demands a set of explicit typologies that students can follow; and third, that students need a systematic way of identifying and interpreting the effects of literary devices and rhetoric. We attempt, with great respect and affection, to explore that territory and perhaps redefine it as open land, home to many literary traditions and visions.

1. Concepts: Moral and Philosophical Content

George's Territory: Conceptual Units

Rationale

In his methods classes, as well as in his work with doctoral students, George required us to create detailed and well-researched rationales for choices of texts, lesson design, and scholarship. A good rationale asked "the hard questions and obtain[ed] rigorous answers concerning what is important in English" and addressed "the relationships among the multiple aspects of English studies" (Hillocks, 1973, p. 3). These assignments could be frustrating, since they forced us to actually articulate our generally inchoate values and beliefs. However, as with other tasks that compel you to interrogate your own assumptions before inflicting them on others, constructing those rationales was absolutely worthwhile.

In his article, George gives short shrift to his rationale for designing and implementing conceptual units, perhaps because he, among others, has so effectively made the case for them already. In fact, George's assertion that high school curricula "blithely ignore" literature's concern with moral and philosophical issues is belied by the popularity of Peter's *Teaching English by Design* (Smagorinsky, 2008) in English education curricula across the United States, as well as dozens of other widely used and cited works on thematic units, simulations, and policy arguments, many of them by George's students and "grand-students" (Johannessen, 2000; Lee, 2001; Smith, 1992; Stern, 1994; Wilhelm, 2007). It is worth reflecting on George's rationale for the use of conceptual units, however, as it forces an examination of his understanding of what was "important for English." We draw from some of George's other writing to explicate his rationale.

Interestingly, as the field of English education increasingly emphasized ways in which engaging literature and literary interpretation could enrich students' lives outside school, George continued to focus on how such engagement could enrich students' scholarship and independence within the classroom. He felt that the field had not yet achieved even that goal, and did not hesitate to describe curricula as "useless" or teachers as those who "droned on and on" when he felt instruction did not or could not engage students (1993, 2011a). He warned that "as long as researchers turn their attention away from classrooms, it is unlikely that they ever will make the connections that enable teachers to teach more effectively for the improvement of reading and writing" (2011a). For George, conceptual units were valuable both because they demanded that students draw on their out-of-school experiences and beliefs and because they created opportunities for

students to engage in the kind of extended inquiry, discovery, and systematic skill development that would make them more successful readers and writers (1967), and might help even help them experience "flow," the all-absorbing pleasure of immersing oneself in a challenge (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008; Hillocks, 2009, 2010). His emphasis on extended inquiry and skill development is evident in his career-long focus on the writing of personal narratives, fables, satire (Hillocks, 1961, 1975, 2007), and the "extended definition essay" as culminating assignments in instructional units. For example, the extended definition essay works in the style of Aristotle, requiring students to carefully consider and compose definitions and examples of a concept, counterexamples, and warrants to justify their claims (Hillocks, 1981, 1993; Hillocks, Kahn, & Johannessen, 1983).

Sources for Conceptual Units

George recommended that teachers draw from Aristotle's discussion of ethics as they develop foundations for conceptual units. The ethical topics Aristotle explored—courageous action, justice, friendship—are appealing as the bases for conceptual units because they are not necessarily easy to define or enact, and therefore invite authentic inquiry and student-generated discussion and discovery, two elements that were fundamental to George's view of effective teaching and learning (1982, 2011b). One of the reasons George so often alluded to Richard Wright's "The Night I Won the Right to the Streets of Memphis," as he does in this issue's article, is that the story acts as a test of one's conventional criteria for courageous action; it makes room for claim and counterclaim, requires careful attention to detail, and demands warranting, or "so-whatting," as we sometimes call it in our classes. In the context of an overarching exploration of the concept of courageous action, students would certainly be doing what Aristotle did: "Testing and extending . . . generalizations by means of the criteria which evolve" (Hillocks, 1982, p. 664).

Practically speaking, George argues, conceptual unit design demands that teachers think more systematically about the kinds of concepts they hope students will explore and the affordances of the texts they choose. As George cautions in this article, when planning a conceptual or thematic unit on war, it is necessary but not sufficient to gather a group of texts connected to that topic. Teachers must also evaluate those texts in terms of the ideas and judgments they may suggest, and the way they express those ideas and judgments. Texts in such a unit should argue with one another about, for example, when war is just or necessary, and challenge students' assumptions and conventional definitions of concepts. And as part of what George

calls a "matrix of curricular thinking" (this issue, p. 122), teachers need to purposefully sequence these texts into this unit, based perhaps on ease of reading, accessibility of ideas, or familiarity of setting, or even in terms of a particular typology the teacher hopes to employ. Further still, the texts should ideally be connected by their use of a particular rhetorical approach or authorial device that will allow students to explore ideas and feelings, as well as technique and effect, in a systematic way.

Opening the Territory

Expanding the Rationale

In his book on the design of conceptual units (Smagorinsky, 2008), Peter offers a rich set of rationales for conceptual units that build on and expand George's arguments. He frames conceptual units as important not only for the opportunities they provide for enriching the school experience but also as "a domain for developing themes to guide [students'] lives' actions and decisions" (p. 124) as well as their identities as readers and individuals. Peter also situates the idea of importance, asking his teacher candidates to justify how the unit they wish to build is relevant for "this course and these students." In our methods and literacy classes, we find that using conceptual units helps our teacher candidates reconceive the experience of reading literature as a chance to experience, question, reject, or align themselves with worlds, worldviews, and emotions that they might not encounter outside of literary texts. Sarah encourages her candidates to use Aristotle's paradigm of praise and blame (2009) as an immediate and real-world way to consider characters, actions, and outcomes in literature, along with their counterparts outside the text. This focus is especially important as our field continues to move toward an ELA education that is meaningful to students who don't plan to become literature majors or scholars, and especially those who may feel alienated by literature as it is currently taught (Kirkland, 2011; Yagelski & Leonard, 2002). In the words of Carol Lee, our mentor and George's student, the last thing we as educators want is "to teach children to hate the very thing we love" (personal communication, 2013).

Expanding Sources for Conceptual Units

Along with many other scholars (Athanases, 2003; Lee, 2007; Smagorinsky, 2008), we want to extend George's territory by helping teachers expand their notions of authoritative sources for exploring important concepts. For example (again we use our own classes to illustrate), we encourage our teacher candidates to see themselves and their colleagues as authorita-

tive sources, since their concerns and questions may be closely linked to those of their students. We ask them to pay particular attention to their own unanswered questions and unresolved conflicts as a way of disrupting conventional teacher scripts that may rely on "known answer" questions (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003).

The unanswered questions that serve as foundations for conceptual units can be less abstract and definitional than Aristotle's questions (for example, "What is freedom?") and more value-laden (for example, "Whose needs matter more? Individual's or society's?"). Unresolved conflicts can be narrower than Aristotle's; for example, many teachers are of two minds when it comes to school suspensions: Do we keep our kids in class, where they may distract or perhaps endanger others, or send them home, where they may learn nothing? Specific, arguable, and relevant questions like this one can be integrated into larger conceptual units that ask broader questions such as, "Who's on the inside and who's on the outside? Why?" Or "What kind of authority should a school have over a student?"

In our classes, we also ask teacher candidates to look beyond the canonical philosophers to other provocative thinkers in literature, music, film, journalism, activism—wherever such thinkers may be. For example, Sarah is a big fan of rapper and producer Lupe Fiasco and has been listening to "Gotta Eat" (2007) on repeat during the writing of this article. The song uses a complicated narrator to explore tensions between need, greed, and ambition. Again, this specific song and its unresolved tensions can act as a jumping-off point for a larger conceptual unit. If teachers are required to work with other specific texts during the year, then part of their job becomes surfacing the tensions and unanswered questions they feel are raised by those texts. For example, if *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Hurston, 1937) is part of the curriculum for the year, then teachers must examine that text to consider what is left unresolved there; for example, the tension between sexuality and freedom, or what it means to "move" from one socioeconomic class to another.

Most importantly, we ask teacher candidates to consider and draw from their potential students' ideas, questions, dilemmas, and experiences. Sarah recently eavesdropped on some Chicago summer school students who spent their bathroom break arguing about the complex choices of Rachel Dolezal, a white woman who represented herself and publically identified as African American. The students' interest in Dolezal suggests an entire conceptual unit exploring racial identity, appropriation, or other concepts. Units like these fulfill George's goals for student engagement and the opportunity for systematic inquiry, discovery, and argument. They also fulfill our expanded

goals for helping students use literature to explore other worlds and world-views—and their own—in relevant and meaningful ways.

2. Literary Typologies: Generative Organizing Structures

George's Territory: Frye's Modes

Embedded in George's discussion of conceptual units is the assertion that a curriculum should cohere around a larger organizing frame. He warned that when curricula lack cohesion, students may miss the opportunity to recognize or join a conversation between multiple authors, worldviews, and readers, and go without the tools necessary to leverage their interpretation of one text to inform another (in part, an issue of transfer).

Likewise, George argues that beyond conceptual coherence, a curriculum needs a unifying system to help readers understand "types" of literature. His rationale here is clear. In his typical style, he asserts that while teachers often categorize literature through a study of its form—drama, poetry, fiction, etc.—these categorizing features "tell us nothing of the content or structure of literary works or the history of literature from beginnings to the present day" (this issue, p. 111). Lee (2007) has similarly pointed out that the standard chronological or geographical organization of high school literature courses is not "generative"; that is, once this categorization of literature is understood, it does not provide insight into those larger concepts that allow a reader to "do a lot of work in the discipline" (p. 112). For example, how would those common organizing features, embedded in English department coursework and anthologized in textbooks, help a reader make meaning of *Same Sun Here* (House & Vaswani, 2013)—a novel developed through a collection of letters between two young people who live in different countries—or *Running in the Family* by Michael Ondaatje (1984)—a multigenre, occasionally fantastical family memoir that spans three continents? Both are texts that Malayna and her colleagues have used in their methods courses, yet neither adheres to norms of form or geographical place.

In an effort to illustrate a unifying system that could help students realize meaning across a range of diverse texts, George devotes considerable space to describing and promoting Northrop Frye's *modes*. Frye's typology provides two axes for assessing any literary work: the nature of the hero, and the extent to which the text is realistic or fantastical. By crosshatching these axes, Frye developed a series of categories that could be applied to virtually any piece of literature, in any form. Indeed, George presents dozens of texts, from *Native Son* to the Harry Potter novels, that could be captured by Frye's scheme.

George's rationale for using such typologies extends beyond classification in and of itself: First, by using a literary typology to guide curricular development, teachers can avoid being "random" in their unit design. By purposefully structuring curricula based on salient literary elements, teachers can help students see past superficial characteristics of texts—as George teases, "Oh, golly . . . another play" (p. 113). Second, typologies like Frye's can serve "as a framework for analysis in which genres . . . can appear across several modes and in which modes may be intermingled" (p. 116). George reasoned that such analysis could help students develop literary knowledge to be deployed in literary argumentation. Students could argue about how and why a piece was satirical, for example, using Frye's modes as warrants, and discern how different satires operated in relation to one another.

Opening the Territory

Other Typologies

As it stands, a by-the-books application of Frye's typology might allow a student to identify Bigger Thomas as one kind of hero and Willy Loman as another, and to support an argument or comparison about those characters using the criteria of the typology. This application would certainly illuminate the texts and types in some ways, but that light might not extend beyond the classroom. We'd like to push Frye's typologies a bit further. For example, a teacher could leverage Frye's focus on a protagonist's power by helping students critically examine the relationship between a protagonist and the rest of society. Students could examine how heroes and power are portrayed in different settings, by different authors, in different texts. What common features—related to class, gender, race, and ethnicity—do we find in mythic heroes compared to ironic heroes across different spaces and moments in history? What do we think of those commonalities? How do they square with our own sense of morality and personal philosophy? Such interrogations of ways that culture shapes and reflects portrayals of heroism begin to look more like the critical work of many literary scholars today.

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More generally, other typologies, on the model of Frye's, can empower a student reader in a range of ways. First, the nature of a comprehensive, generative typology allows someone to examine the make-up of any text, even that which does not fit into a familiar category, therefore opening the territory of literature to include any text that a student deems interesting

enough to read and critique, however untraditional it may be. Second, such accessible criteria guide students through the sometimes intimidating and alienating process of literary reading and interpretation (Peskin, 1998; Wilhelm, Smith, & Fransen, 2014). Third, the criteria become a shared language that students can use to argue positions about texts and literature more generally. Finally, students can question and revise the criteria themselves, a process that may deepen students' understanding of their own authority as readers and thinkers (Bean & Moni, 2003).

Frye's emphasis on the scientific categorization of literature came toward the end of a structuralist movement concerned with coherence in literature. His work generally predated approaches that sought to deconstruct and disrupt dominant forms, in part to uncover power structures embedded within those systems. Nonetheless, the affordances of Frye's systematic approach to literary analysis are seen in critical frameworks as well. Below, we outline examples of feminist typologies that have been used in literary study and popular culture, as well as one exercise that asks students to develop their own typology.

Feminist narratology

Susan Lanser's feminist narratology[1] (1992) offers a typology with a structure similar to Frye's. Whereas Frye's modes provide a lens to examine heroes against a backdrop of realism, Lanser's frame juxtaposes a female character's voice against a backdrop of authority to discern *authorial*, *personal*, and *communal* voices in women's literature. As with Frye's, her criteria are explicitly articulated and can apply to any text with a female character. Further, as with Frye's, Lanser's frame can serve to provide a reader with the groundwork to build complex literary arguments. By applying these frames to a diverse range of texts, Lanser develops arguments not only about women's literature but also about the nature of women's voices and social authority.

Lanser's realm is literary theory, and though we may not expect teacher candidates or students to have the same extensive knowledge of literature as an English professor, teacher educators could showcase the careful work Lanser does to establish her framework as a way to help teacher candidates consider the essential elements of a generative typology, as well as its purpose. Teacher candidates could construct rationales for their choices: By using this typology in my classroom, what elements of literature am I choosing to emphasize and why? Why might I ask students to consider women's voices as a framework, or heroism or war as a theme to explore? And what is worth learning about such things?

Bechdel/Wallace Test

We also see the utility of such frameworks outside more formal literature study. For example, the Bechdel/Wallace test (Bechdel, 1986) has been used extensively in recent years to assess movies according to simple, well-defined feminist criteria. A movie "passes" if it (1) has at least two women in it, (2) the two women speak to one another, and (3) the women speak to one other about something other than a man[2] ("Bechdel Test Movie List," 2015). As with Frye's and Lanser's, the criteria are generative, coherent, and explicit. Students may choose to use the criteria as a foundation for a discussion of any movie. The conversation would necessarily engage the film beyond individual preferences. If the students were dissatisfied with the outcome of the assessment, they could target the explicit set of criteria to expand or refine. Here again, students have access to the tools of argument—they can control the foundations for their warrants by modifying those criteria—which gives them authority in the classroom.

Often teacher education provides teachers with "toolkits" of strategies and approaches, without making explicit the disciplinary structures or concepts that suggest how or why those strategies are meaningful (Little, 1993). By engaging teacher candidates in work such as Frye's or Lanser's, teacher educators could foreground the theories and epistemologies that may underlie their pedagogical designs.

Student-Created Canons

An English professor at West Virginia University shared with Malayna his typology exercise, a creative approach to developing frames for categorizing literature. Each semester, he began his work with English department teaching assistants by asking them to develop their own literary canons; his only rule was that TAs could not choose a text without establishing the characteristics that deemed it worthy for inclusion in their canon (Allen, personal communication, 2015). This bottom-up approach to typology presents a useful "ill-structured problem" (Spiro, 2013) in literary study and could be applied in ELA methods courses. What would teacher candidates' literary canons include? How might their criteria for inclusion differ? What would be the sources of their warrants for inclusion? Through this exercise, teacher candidates could more deeply reflect on their own literary landscapes, as well as the diversity of literary terrain in their future classrooms. They could develop their argumentative skills while defending texts that they selected and about which, presumably, they cared. Further, such an exercise would emphasize the importance of students' values, philosophies, and autonomy in their own literary exploration.

3. Rhetoric of Literature

George's Territory

As with *Ethics* and *Poetics*, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is another systematic interrogation—this time of the art of persuasion. Its focus is on voice and appeal but also on figurative language, imagery, and diction, among other things. George likely chose the term "rhetoric" over others, such as "literary devices" or "elements," to emphasize his argument for a coherent approach toward the study of language. And although the generally accepted meaning of "rhetoric" is "the art of persuasion" in the context of political speech, we also like to think about literature in part as an art of persuasion, where readers are moved to engage ideas, emotions, and attitudes that they might not ordinarily experience (Cameron & Rutland, 2006; Mar, Oatley, & Peterson, 2009).

In his discussion of rhetoric, George diverges from conventional approaches to the teaching of literary elements. A literature textbook might ask students to learn about or at least touch on scores of literary devices, from "assonance" to "spondee"; in contrast, George focuses on the role that narrative structure may play in a reader's emotional or aesthetic response, or heuristics to measure the distance between an author and narrator (essential to an understanding of irony, satire, and unreliable narration). This kind of attention is consistent with George's argument about the importance of sustained, coherent, and systematic examination of literary texts for an understanding of both technique and effect.

For example, the heuristics George outlines for identifying satire, irony, or unreliable narration ask readers to attend to and distinguish between author and narrator in systematic and accessible ways. George never tired of talking about the difficulty students and teachers had with interpreting satiric texts like "The Golf Links" or "A Modest Proposal." One afternoon, in the year before he passed away, Sarah showed George posts from desperate students on Yahoo Answers, such as "I have an English satirical essay to write, yet, I have no clue what I should write about or how I should write it" ("Yahoo Answers," n.d.). He repeatedly advocated for the teaching of interpretive heuristics, such as the ones presented by Smith (1989, 1992) or Booth (1975), where students learn to draw on their knowledge of both world and text as they compare a narrator's words with actions to determine reliability, or as they compare what a reading audience knows to be true (*we shouldn't eat babies*) and what a narrator says (*yes, we should*) to detect satire. These responsive approaches facilitate the daunting task of interpreting and composing satire.

Opening the Territory

Expanding the Rationale

George's rationale for focusing on systematic cues for irony or satire is a bit understated. He says, perhaps with a wink, that ignorance of such interpretive principles could "lead to great misunderstanding." In other words, as with Swift's "A Modest Proposal," either you are reading a protest against ethnic and class oppression, or an invitation to a baby-eating dinner.

We would like to move beyond the boundaries of text and classroom to expand George's rationale and open the territory of literature related to rhetoric. Part of the fundamental mission of English education is to support students in becoming "critical" readers; namely, readers who understand that texts have power can inspect the construction of messages and worldviews, and therefore can defend themselves from potential manipulation or open themselves to laughter, pleasure, and even beauty (Mar & Oatley, 2008; Ortony, 1975; Scholes, 1985). Students are surrounded by texts that require an understanding of potential tensions between speaker and author, from advertisements to political speeches to BuzzFeed videos to comedy by Key & Peele. Those kinds of satirical texts raise critical arguments about identity, representation, manipulation, race, class—in other words, the whole stew of figuring out one's place in this postmodern world. In a recent Key & Peele sketch, for example, the comedians play two enslaved men who are offended that they are not the first picks on the auction block. The debate about this sketch in the media (see, for example, Kumar, 2013; Richardson, n.d.) simply assumes readers have identified irony or satire, and then moves on to debating its significance: What does this sketch have to say about slavery? Would an enslaved person ever think that way? How are African Americans being represented here? Is slavery funny now? Who gets to say if it's funny, and who gets to laugh? What does this mean for who I am? Ultimately, heuristics such as the one George outlines support students in engaging such questions.

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Expanding the Rhetoric of Literature

In addition to an examination of irony and satire, which we see as a subset of understanding author and narrator, George argued that students should have access to heuristics for understanding plot structure, symbol, and imagery. When it comes to the examination of structure, George introduces another

set of heuristics to identify different kinds of plots through Crane's framing of plot as "the integration of character, action, and thought." Using Steinbeck's *The Pearl* as an example, George asserts, "To better understand the plot, we need to understand how the interplay of character and events give rise to readers' responses and to the construction of suspense" (this issue, p. 119).

To some degree, this focus on plot structure may fit less clearly into the landscape of concepts, types, and rhetoric that George lays out in his literary territory. In large part, the focus involves examining the relationships between the parts and the whole of a text, as one might with a beautifully executed slam dunk or the creation of a delicious meal. A reader could use these heuristics to understand the craft of a text, but how would that understanding enrich an interpretation of the concepts and themes that text might take up? In the language of a rationale, is understanding plot structure "important to English"? For whom, and why? We authors could not agree about this facet of George's argument. On the one hand, Malayna sees the exercise of plot analysis as a way to promote complex cognitive work and aesthetic pleasure that could be an end unto itself. Sarah worries that such a focus in a classroom might further distance students who are already disengaged from literary study (Hynds, 1989; McCarthey, 1997).

George does not spend much space on his discussion of symbol and imagery—just enough to assert that without systematic ways to interpret such elements, "students will fail to grasp the full and rich meanings of many texts" (this issue, p. 120). In this last section of our article, we expand George's territory with some possible heuristic approaches to interpretation of symbol and imagery, among other things. Beyond Crane and Booth, what sources might teacher candidates look to for generative and coherent systems, not just of *identification* of symbol and imagery, but of *interpretation*, without being prescriptive, doctrinaire, or "get[ting] in the way" of a reader's experience with a text (Probst, 1994, p. 37)?

Several instructional interventions have drawn from educational and cognitive psychology to help students become independent interpreters who need not rely on teachers' instructions or final interpretations. For example, one study (Peskin, Allen, & Wells-Jopling, 2010) asked teacher and students to engage in discussion and examination of some dominant tropes and common thematic associations in Western poetry (for example, Frye's cycle wheel, where winter is associated with death, night, old age, and depression; spring is associated with life, renewal, morning, youth, etc.). After this intervention, students were more likely to make symbolic interpretations of a new poem than were a comparison group. It is worth noting that if this study had simply asked students to memorize a list of seasonally related images

and associations, the intervention would not have fulfilled George's criteria for coherence, at the least. But we think that if teacher and students situate the seasons as part of a symbolic cycle related to a broader understanding of poetry, and students construct their own associations along with identifying common Western cultural associations, this heuristic might meet George's criteria for a systematic and generative approach to interpretation of imagery and symbol.

Sarah's research (Levine, 2014; Levine & Horton, 2015) also explores an interpretive heuristic, in this case one that is affect-driven. It draws from students' everyday practices of affective evaluation (making subjective evaluations of the positive or negative impact of words, images, events) to help students move from literal readings of texts to the construction of connotation and thematic interpretation. Students learn to ask a series of questions, such as, "Does this word (or phrase, character, ending, etc.) seem positive, negative, or both? Why?" As does much of George's work, this approach asks readers to draw on their own experience as well as their understanding of context, and results of Sarah's studies indicate it is an accessible and generative approach that supports students in interpreting a range of texts, such as news headlines, ads, novels, and films. Other affect-based heuristics have had success as well (Eva-Wood, 2004, 2008), suggesting that there are systematic ways to use affective responses to help students elaborate on mental models and create abstract interpretations of imagery and symbol.

Such heuristics belong in George's territory because they are, again, systematic and coherent. In addition, these heuristics are concerned with students' development of school-related skills as well as the development of students' everyday meaning-making and identity as readers and thinkers.

Some might be uneasy with these kinds of systematic approaches to identifying and interpreting figurative language or other literary devices, as such approaches may threaten to make clinical what should be personal and unstructured. They may worry that teaching these heuristics and tools could push students toward what Rosenblatt (1994) calls the "efferent stance," where the "reader disengages his attention as much as possible from the personal and qualitative elements in his response to the verbal symbols; he concentrates on what the symbols designate, what they may be contributing to the end result that he seeks" (p. 27). We worry as well, and are aware of our biases as teachers and scholars who "grew up" in George's territory. The last thing we want is for students to see literary reading as a bloodless chore; however, we know that beyond the cognitive challenges of literary interpretation (Hoffstaedter, 1987; Holyoak, 1982; Magliano, Trabasso, & Graesser, 1999), students can feel disaffected by the process because it does

not "belong" to them; they cannot apply it on their own. Instead their job is to "stop thinking and only wait for [the teacher's] conclusion" (Zyngier & Fialho, 2010, p. 27). This disengagement can be especially true for students who are not white, cisgender, or middle class, and who are therefore less likely to see themselves or their ideas represented in texts or classroom discourse (Blackburn & Buckley, 2005; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Tejeda, 1999; Paris, 2012).

Hence (as Aristotle would say), if student alienation derives from a lack of connection with the process of interpretation, why not support students in identifying or building coherent and systematic heuristics that might help them engage literary texts with a sense of independence and authority, and might support them in connecting their everyday knowledge and experience to the work of school-based reading and writing?

Conclusion

In the last few years of his life, George expressed serious concerns about many aspects of the development and implementation of the Common Core English language arts standards; however, he was pleased with the Common Core's focus on learning through disciplinary lenses (personal communication, 2014). His article's emphasis on distinguishing between author and narrator provides a useful example of the particular demands of literary reading. A problem with a focus on disciplinary thinking, however, is that it can obscure the diverse and divergent ways that people think *within* a discipline (Lee, 2014). While the practices and discourses of English language arts classes may be more closely aligned with the norms of its discipline than other subjects (Grossman, Schoenfeld, & Lee, 2005; Lee, 2007), literary study spans a wide range of epistemologies and practices (Culler, 2011; Gates, 1990; Johnson & Henderson, 2005; Said, 1983; Warhol & Lanser, 2015), some versions of which may assert themselves through a teacher's choices of texts, responses to student comments, as well as general discourse in the classroom (Bernstein, 2014; Hines & Appleman, 2000; Probst, 1990).

We believe that George's territory was large, but we also wanted to open its borders to discuss ways that his focus on inquiry, discovery, and coherence could apply across a wider range of epistemologies and practices. In attempting to examine the claims staked in George's territory, we were forced to reexamine, and articulate, our own. This reexamination led to larger questions that we have tried to embed in this companion piece: Why do we study literature? What do we hope for our students? What is the point of English education? Only through a fine-grained literary discussion, based in George's descriptions of the rhetoric of literature, did these questions arise.

In the editorial that begins this volume, Tara Star Johnson and sj Miller (2015) announce their editorial aims, which include "calling in a new generation of scholars while preserving the institutional knowledge and experience of our academic forebears . . . and calling in culturally and linguistically diverse scholars to generate dialogue among people contributing kaleidoscopic perspectives" (p. 4). George is a forebear to many in the field, and as we each do, he claimed a particular literary territory, cultivated across institutions and lived experiences. In this companion article, we sought to add our perspectives—nurtured with George's guidance—along with those of other colleagues and influential scholars, to help expand and open George's territory of literature.

Notes

1. Thanks to Ryan Claycomb for introducing us to Lanser's work.
2. The most recent statistics show that of more than 6,000 movies to which the test was applied, about 40 percent of them did not meet all three criteria.

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