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Literacy In and Around Different Forms of Art and Artistry

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The theme for this issue of *Ubiquity* asks one to consider what it means to create art and how one judges art and literature. Although the articles that appear in this issue do not evaluate fine arts *per se*, their subject matter concerns adjudication of artistry of a different kind—the art that involves research, criticality, multi-dimensional forecasting, and problem-solving. This "art" engages the mind, heart, and soul and requires navigating one's emotional, moral, personal, and group complexity and responsibility. It considers different priorities and sensibilities, looks for possibilities that one cannot foresee, questions one's assumptions, and opens the mind to viewpoints beyond one's individual understandings and aspirations (Rothman, 2019).

Specifically, in *We, the Jury: Documenting Diverse Responses to Delia's Culpability in Zora Neale Hurston's "Sweat,"* authors Townsend and Crane had their college students in a composition class turn their critical eye to judge the fictional character's responsibility in an antagonist's death in Hurston's (1926) short story "Sweat." Rather than judging external beauty as through the eye of the beholder, the students were asked to judge the inner beauty of the human heart (or lack of thereof) of the fictional character and whether or not this character's motives and behavior had led to the death of another character. Simply put, they were examining not what their eyes saw in the fictional character's outer life, but what they saw within the character's heart—i.e., what constituted the character's innermost self. This included the unconscious and conscious motives and forces that could have contributed to the character committing murder. One might argue these students were studying what happens when human beings do not live up to the goodness and beauty residing within their hearts, and in doing so, invite inevitable ugliness.

Since jury decision making is a fundamentally social activity (Mauws, 2000), Townsend and Crane's qualitative study explores the collective decision-making process as well as the

linguistic and discursive resources that are used by the students to ascertain whether the protagonist is guilty or innocent. The researchers were also interested in how collaborative writing and reviewing the fiction depicted the case and how non-fiction materials such as the legal and psychological literature on murder charges and literature on Battered Woman Syndrome (BWS) influenced the students' decision-making. Another goal of this nuanced analysis was to interrogate race and race issues awareness among these college students, who, unlike the Black fictional character whose guilt or innocence they were tasked to determine, were from white backgrounds. The findings concerning the latter matter indicate surprising albeit important understandings.

Homan, Shoffner and Spanke's piece, *Intersections of Teacher Reflection and Literacy Instruction in the Secondary ELA Classroom*, is an example of evaluating yet another form of art, the art of reflective practice. Specifically, the piece reflects on engaging English language arts teachers in introspective self-examination that turns the eye to evaluate their explicit instruction –what is on the outside and what is visible as well as what is inside their minds and what is invisible—the ways of observing, thinking, authoring, critiquing and learning. A particular strength of this study is the longitudinal look at these teachers' reflective practices, in the past and in the present, and as they transitioned from classroom teacher positions to administrator and teacher educator roles.

Through this analysis, this work contributes insight to these additional questions: How do we know that reflection in which pre-service teachers engage is "meaningful"? What criteria have been used or should be used to judge the art of reflective practice in teacher education? In doing so, this analysis also responds to Raelin's (2007) call for the educator-reflective practice that "transforms learning from the acquisition of the objective rules of wisdom to one that

appreciates the wisdom of learning in the midst of action itself" (p. 513).

Therefore, when we permit in-depth studies to affect how we perceive things, we are engaging in a kind of art. If the analysis in which we indulge increases reflective practice and is perceived as meaningful, doesn't this give us the right to call it art?

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Author Bio: Ewa McGrail is an Associate Professor of Language and Literacy Education at Georgia State University. In her research, McGrail examines digital writing and new media composition; copyright and copyright awareness, as well as media literacy and social representations of outgroups or individuals who are otherwise not in the mainstream.