As we start a new semester, the doors open for new opportunities to enrich teaching and learning, take risks, and innovate; all with a common mission to engage, motivate, and guide our students through their lifelong learning paths. The Center for Teaching and Learning and Educational Technology teams are eager to support and partner with faculty and staff to accomplish this mission. CTL is working on many professional development opportunities for this semester, and invites everyone to take advantage of them: Mindful Conversations, Hostos Teaching Institute, Hostos Reads, colloquiums, Teaching Day, Bronx EdTech Showcase, and CTL Spa Day. It is a privilege for Cynthia and I to serve as Co-Directors of the Center, and we look forward to working with you to build a very successful Spring 2018 semester.

Love in the Classroom—for my students

Afternoon. Across the garden, in Green Hall, someone begins playing the old piano—a spontaneous piece, amateurish and alive, full of a simple, joyful melody. The music floats among us in the classroom.

I stand in front of my students telling them about sentence fragments. I ask them to find the ten fragments in the twenty-one-sentence paragraph on page forty-five. They’ve come from all parts of the world—Iran, Micronesia, Africa, Japan, China, even Los Angeles—and they’re still eager to please me. It’s less than half way through the quarter.

They bend over their books and begin. Hamid’s lips move as he follows the tortuous labyrinth of English syntax. Yoshie sits erect, perfect in her pale make-up, legs crossed, quick pulse minutely jerking her right foot. Tony, from an island in the South Pacific, sprawls limp and relaxed in his desk.

The melody floats around and through us in the room, broken here and there, fragmented, re-started. It feels Mideastern, but it could be jazz, or the blues—it could be anything from anywhere.

I sit down on my desk to wait, and it hits me from nowhere—a sudden, sweet, almost painful love for my students. “Nevermind,” I want to cry out. “It doesn’t matter about fragments. Finding them or not. Everything’s a fragment and everything’s not a fragment. Listen to the music, how fragmented, how whole, how we can’t separate the music from the sun falling on its knees on all the greenness, from this moment, how this moment contains all the fragments of yesterday and everything we’ll ever know of tomorrow”?

Instead, I keep a coward’s silence. The music stops abruptly; they finish their work, and we go through the right answers, which is to say we separate the fragments from the whole.

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