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Small World: A Forensic Dialectic

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B: A forensic dialectic

J: with apologies to Plato

K: (Humming “It’s a Small World.”)

J: According to the 2009 Collins English Dictionary Complete and Unabridged 10th edition, “Insular – adjective

1. Of, relating to, or resembling an island...”

K: Welcome to Forensics Island, may the odds be ever in your favor

J: 2. “Remote, detached or aloof...” like Mitt Romney

3. “Illiberal or narrow minded...” “like Rick Santorum

4. “Isolated or separated...” like Ron Paul

B: It’s a small world after all.

J: So today, in order to better understand the pervasive insularity choking the body forensic, we will first of all -

K No we won’t! This is a new potentially creative event. Why don’t we build our organization around the events we’re criticizing – then tack on a solution step because the rules say we need one.

J: But that’s not organized.

K: Yes it is. It’s just not the organizational set up prescribed by ballot-wielding zealots, (to judges) not you of course, forcing their own narrow, unwritten rule of arrangement on the rest of us.

J: But that’s preview prejudice! You’re an anti-forensics style bigot!

K: Who’s the one forcing a narrow latitude of acceptance on the rest of us? And a preview statement – well it usually makes good sense to have one, but what happens when we get to forcing forensics templates on what areas of analysis must be? It’s kills creativity and rewards mediocrity. Jumpin’ hegemony Batman, we hate it when people do that with the Constitution or

the Bible, but when it comes to the unwritten rules of forensics, we delight in forcing our own narrow view of acceptability often with no justification other than “that’s the way it’s always been done.” How else do you explain judges mandating a teaser in interp? It certainly isn’t in the written rules – but try going without one.

J: So, we’re like forensics Pharisees and Jesus said “woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Ye blind guides which strain at gnats and swallow a camel.”

K: Yes, except we’re more likely training for nats and smoking camels.

J: No one smokes camels anymore

K: OK, Prepping for nats and humping like camels.

J: Do camels really hump? I mean I guess they do.

K: I was referring to their unique physiology.

J: Oh.

(Open books.)

K: “Who is the judge?”

J: The judge is God:

K: Why is he God?

J: Because he decides whether I win or lose, not my **opponent**.

K: Who is your opponent?

J: He doesn't exist.

K: Why does he not exist?

J: Because he is just a mere **dissenting voice** to the truth I speak.” *

(Close books.)

* (quoted from 2007 film, “The Great Debaters,” screenplay by Robert Eisele).

K: Take public address for instance. Please take it

J: The following excerpts are cleverly arranged rantings taken from Dr. Randy Richardson’s paper, “Problems in After-Dinner Speaking: Ranting into the New Millennium,” presented at the 1999 National Communication Association Convention.

(Open books.)

K: “Forensics critiques rarely mention word choice or speech writing in general. The evaluation of language choice seems to be a foreign language to judges preoccupied with a plethora of tallies-source counts, stumble counts, gesture counts, forensics reference counts, etc... “

J: “Counting sources may be useful. However, formulating judging criteria from arbitrary source requirements reflects a shallow, checklist mentality in judges who would rather attend to pre-fabricated, easy to assemble, mobile home style, follow the blueprint speeches instead of building a habitat for humanity on the foundation of ideas. The problem is that when Billy Bob shows up in prelims of the real world there are twisters with his trailer park written all over them. The checklist won’t keep him from being blown away. “

K: “We have created a polishpalooza, which we routinely confuse with creativity.”

J: “Our ballots suggest that no one is listening to content anyway.”

K: “Narrow judging paradigms and paint by number cookie cutter approaches reward imitation over imagination.”

J: “I care about as much about your problem-solution obsession as I do about Tinkie-Winky’s sexual preferences. Your hang up should have nothing to do with my practice. Unless of course, I am your therapist. Which I am not, but if I was, I would suggest, ‘ get over it Oedipus, she’s already married to your dad.’”

(Close books.)

K: And what about persuasion?

K: Don’t get me wrong, I’m no fan of Nazi’s. But our blind devotion to a single organizational pattern seems, almost, well Fascist,

J: Problem. Cause. Solution. Heil!

K: And now many are forcing it on ADS as well.

J: Impromptu isn’t impromptu.

K: Extemporaneous isn’t extemporaneous

J: And what about POI?

B: Who cares – not at NFA (Page turn.)

J: Rhet crit - who mandated the circular begging – the question research question?

K: And who mandated that you have to slow down like Mr. Rogers or Al Gore speaking to a group of second graders when you state the damn thing?

J: But if you don't those judges have got you. Because you're not doing something that they teach their students to do. Or, you're not wearing something that they teach their students to wear. Or you're not over enunciating the way they teach their students to over enunciate.

K: Jumpin' hegemony, caped crusader, that sounds ridiculously robotic to real audiences.

J: Of course it does, Phaedrus, but when the insular concerns of an intellectually caged community dominate any reasonable standards of performative or educative acceptability, then Geekspeak will prevail. Consider how students in communication classes react to NFA DVDs. It calls into question all of our hard work.

J: (Humming it's a small world after all)

K: But it doesn't make sense. In so many ways the forensics community is so loving and kind and accepting. I know lots of students who have struggled with teasing and tormenting and even worse forms of oppression, who find a nonjudgmental home in forensics.

J: Ironic isn't it? That a community that is so loving and progressive when it comes to accepting all kinds of people, can be so narrow-minded and judgmental when a student steps to the front of the room wearing the wrong colors, or holding the wrong color book, or God forbid beginning an interp piece without a teaser.

K: Which brings us to interp:

J: Yeah, what about POI

B: Who cares, not at NFA (Page turn.)

(To the tune of the Pussycat Dolls, "Don't Cha," 2005.)

"Don't cha wish your book tech was hot like me
Don't cha wish your pages could pop like me
Don't cha?
Don't cha baby?"

Need more book tech (need more book tech)
You know you do (you know you do)
That's why whenever you turn that page
you need to pop it like me (Pop it like me)
Need more emotion (need more emotion)
That's easy to see (Easy to see)

And when you flip that page
You now it should be clean, so clean

Don't cha wish your book tech was hot like me
Don't cha wish your pages could pop like me
Don't cha? (Jamie walks to judges)
Don't cha baby?"

(Close books.)

K: The point is, we've developed a check-list, template form of coaching and judging which works against many of the original educational goals of forensics – like creativity, critical thinking and argumentative development

K: Like our educational system, we have developed easily identifiable check-list templates which teach to the test, but miss the larger considerations of a fully-contextualized education. And so, we are all left behind, unless our world suddenly needs snappy book tech or canned impromptu examples.

J: (Sitting with judges: comments should be dispersed within Kyliia's monologous) kinda preachy. Very heavy-handed. Do you have a source for this? Avoid offending your judges. Who are you to delineate educational goals or forensics? Work on book tech. Nice shoes.

J: But can't we find solutions on a governmental and personal level? Can't we write letters to judges, or start a website, or sign a petition calling for the end of inane forensics insularity?

K: Great idea Socrates, where did you learn to think so deeply?

J: I'm not sure. Sometimes brilliance just comes to me. So today, we have discussed the problems and solution of forensics insularity. I'd like to leave you with the inspiring words of Miss Teen South Carolina.

K: (In background) Listen. Please listen. Please stop the devolution of forensics education. We've got to reconnect with real world communications education. Listen please listen. Our forensics world is a small world, but it doesn't have to be. We could be leading academics in real, hands on, educational engagement.

J: "I personally believe that US Americans are unable to do so, because some people out there in our nation don't have maps. And I believe that our education like such as in South Africa, and the Iraq and everywhere like such as. And I believe that they should, our education over here in the US should help the US or should South Africa and should help the Iraq and Asian countries so we will be able to build up our future, for us."

B: It's a small, small world.

Performance Key: B=Both

J=Jamie Bingham

K= Kyla Goodner