

The gist of Robert Epstein's article "The Empty Brain" is that the computer is an inaccurate metaphor for the brain. I've been using a computer only since 1986, yet the metaphor has crept into my thinking. I "file away" an idea or "retrieve" a memory. Epstein goes too far in his article, claiming that the brain doesn't have anything in it—for example no stored memories to retrieve. I've been wrestling with the problem of where memories are situated, how they pop up and why. I do think that the computer metaphor is inaccurate because it's too mechanistic, not taking into account that elusive attribute we call soul or spirit or persona or self. I've been trying to figure out a more useful metaphor for me to use.

The metaphor of journey and its fellow words, path and career (from the French *carrier*, road), suggests that life is a journey whose destination is death. That can't be. When a loved one dies, we don't think they've just stopped, reached the end of the line, because they do go on, even in this world. The persona they created remains not only with their loved ones, but with friends and acquaintances, with the unknown influences they had. Specific memories bring back that person. For example my attempt to find the owner of a pair of shoes left at my house triggered poet Brian Bartlett's bringing to mind my husband's obsessions. For a life, I want a metaphor of something organic, growing in layers, perhaps a fruit-bearing tree. I've written before that the metaphor of battle for the experience of living with cancer is not a good one.

Messaging on our iPads, my son Ernie writes, "Metaphor is the connection between our sensory world which we all share and abstract thought. Language is not possible without metaphors." Poets keep alive this metaphor-making. Michael Pacey writes, "*Sombre pines: wind in/their branches—the sound/of grieving, bereavement./To pine: to grow thin with/longing, to mourn.*"

More thoughts about language. In a column in the New York Times "How Artists Change the World", David Brooks writes, "...[Frederick] Douglass's favorite rhetorical trope was the chiasmus: the use of two clauses in a sentence in reversed order to create an inverse parallel. For example, Douglass wrote, 'You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man.'"

Here is an appropriate use of the semi-colon. I've read recently of a drive to get rid of this mark of punctuation, a snobbish, elitist mark, people say. But it's so useful to establish that the two main clauses are equal, parallel, one not subordinate to the other. The comma splice or run-on sentence--that is, two main clauses separated by a comma--might someday become accepted grammar because it too is useful if only for the rhythm it allows.

A glitch in funding means that the launch of the St. John River Valley Literary Festival has to be postponed until October of 2017. A committee however is working hard to produce it. The name "Word Feast" was selected in a contest, a logo is being designed by Brandan Helmuth, a board of directors is being recruited, venues are being solicited. The Woodstock contingent has already discussed possible locations with the leaders of various organizations in that area.

Writing about the natural talent of young actor Muriel Falkenstein got me to musing about professions for which talent shows itself early. Athletics is one. Everyone in Fredericton knew that young Matt Stairs would become a professional athlete—either in hockey or baseball. A ballet dancer has to have been born with the right physique—I remember she has to have "extended knees"—as well as acquire a certain grace. Musicians and composers, like mathematicians, often show their talent early. Entrepreneurs do. Before they are six, artists start to draw precisely; the imaginations of writers develop by the time they're seven. Learning another language is easier in childhood. But philosophers begin

their pondering much later. Carpenters also choose their trade later in life, learn it incrementally. Even when they are too old to do heavy work, they're valuable as advisors, contractors.

Although I've long owned Apollon Grigoryev's autobiography "My literary and moral wanderings", I just recently began to read it. I'm glad I waited because it's inspired me to begin a new work. Grigoryev accompanies an imaginary person on a tour of his hometown Zamoskvarechye, a section of Moscow. "Come with me from the Large Stone bridge straight, straight ahead, as the crow flies...Imagine that we are walking together late in the evening." I'm accompanying an imaginary friend (I might make him into a real one) along Stanley Street. On September 2, I will have lived here for 50 years. I was also inspired by reading Wayne Curtis' book, *Of Earthly and River Things: An Angler's Memoir*.