

I thank the Type Directors Club for awarding me their prestigious medal. 1

Some day, I believed, I would become famous. To anticipate disappointment I also believed that the expected fame could only turn up after my death when frustrating paradigms would be dead as well. New ideas of the sort that could justify fame not only require more than a lifetime to be accepted; they also require a new point of view. I could never persuade a living audience to change their point of view, were it only for a while. To put it decently: a new conception demands for a new generation. In this sense something new is not old enough.

But this award of yours changes my prospect with the chance that I might enjoy fame while still in this world.

I must have obstructed fame myself. In my publications I drew myself effectively into the margin. Letterletter must have puzzled those readers who still believed that writing could be studied by simply looking at letters and scripts. The journal neglected this illusion; instead of keeping a learned distance to writing I tried to describe what happens under the hands of the craftsman in making and arranging the elements of writing. My questions were never answered by the other party; of course not; I was talking the esoteric language of a foreign world.

I found my discussion partners in my own classes in the academy. Students are great company. As professional ignorants they are entitled to making the stupid remarks I needed and to interrupt me for expressing their justified doubts. I found them ever simpler tasks. At the summit of my career I only had to ask students to make a single stroke with a pen and to describe its properties, thus approaching Humpty Dumpty's wisdom:

*In autumn when the leaves are brown,
take a pen and write it down.*

Outside the circle of my students I found little understanding until graduated students had begun to impress the world with their skill and their mature approach of writing issues.

The last word is from a poem in the middle of the Bible. Tradition attributes this text to ‘Moses the man of God,’ but the coda better suits a common craftsman than a great ruler. In the King James Version it reads:

*Establish thou the work of our hands upon us,
yeah, the work of our hands establish thou it.*

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Amsterdam, 10 October 2013