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English Composition I: Achieving Expertise

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Photograph - "Tragedy in Turkey by an explosion in a mine" by AFP and Infobae. 14/5/2014.

Mamihlapinatapei<sup>1</sup>: The Expert's Gaze

Rima XXIII

<i>Por una mirada, un mundo,</i>	<i>For a gaze, a world,</i>
<i>por una sonrisa, un cielo,</i>	<i>for a smile, a sky,</i>
<i>por un beso... yo no sé</i>	<i>for a kiss... I don't know</i>
<i>qué te diera por un beso.</i>	<i>what I'd give you for a kiss.</i>

Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer (1836-1870)



Figure 1. AFP and Infobae. 14/5/2014. Photograph of the tragedy in the coalmine of Soal in Turkey. The snapshot captures the moment when a miner comes out from the mine using equipment to aid him in breathing and while a man kiss him.

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<sup>1</sup> From Yagan, the indigenous language of the Tierra del Fuego region of South America. This word, of difficult meaning, has been translated in several ways in English, always implying a wordless yet meaningful look shared by two.

An explosion occurred last Tuesday 13 May inside the coal mine of Soma, in the State of Manisa in western Turkey, resulting in —while these lines are being written— 302 dead bodies. Infobae (AFP) —an Argentine news agency— published a graphic report of several images and this essay has interest on one photograph from that set [Figure 1]. The snapshot will give support to the idea of expertise, but is compulsory to say that the report honors the victims and families despite the covered subject.

The Figure 1 is a documentary photograph that record an instant of the event in which the background is largely blurred with plenty of people without conformation while two characters, that are frontal and center aligned, fit in the foreground. The first wears a helmet as well as a mask to breathe oxygen and the face, wholly covered with soot, shows a disconcerting glance. We presume he is a mineworker getting out alive from the excavation after the explosion. The second person is affectionately holding and kissing to the miner, perhaps, is a relative or a friend; again, we guess that is a loved one. Both characters spread horizontally into a well-lit scene with reflectors that light up, from back and left, the outdoor working zone and give to the whole scene a sturdy texture, sharp contour from the backlight, strong contrast from lateral glare, full colored and dramatic impression.

Within the snapshot befalls a couple of ideas that are a substantive quota of the image. It could give the impression of a contradiction, but they are an essential part to understand this specific photograph within the context that each personality has had to live. The first is the miner's shocking look submerged so deep at the distance. We understand that though the coalminer is by now released from the inferno inside the mine after the explosion, he still prisoner of such a terrifying experience. The second is the moment when the impetuous loved

one gives a strong hug and a tight kiss once he can reach the mineworker outside the mortal coal face. We embark on the idea of an agonizing wait to see the loved one alive.

These two simultaneous happenings contrast sharply with each other as a counterpoint<sup>2</sup> between the two experiences. The first is the immediate result of the horror experienced inside the mine. While the second is the result of living, day after day, waiting for a loved one returns home from a dangerous job susceptible to take them away at whatever time. The former is a knowledge attained at once by a terrifying experience. The latter was achieved slowly, learning every day from anxious waiting and has experienced, imaginably for years, unpleasant fears. Those shines, those approaches, those felling; they all appearing together inside a tiny piece of frozen time. How is there so much within so little?

An instant that a photographer capture is capable to tell plentiful a whole story and we have, at least once, counted about bits of our lives. Even with current mobiles —cellular phones with photo camera— in our hands, we all become into tellers of tales. With photography is easy to tell stories and yet what is difficult is showing them.

The notion of expert merges two concepts; experience and knowledge (Merriam-Webster; Wordnet) though the argument is that is necessary something more to add to the experience and to the knowledge to understand the complete sense of skillful.

We can all recognize at a glance, that the author of the showed photograph has made an excellent snapshot. Additionally, and without much effort, we could also say that the photographer knows these arts. He verified lots of experience to know where to find the right

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<sup>2</sup> Musical form involving the simultaneous sound of two or more melodies.

place to focus his camera just when the rescued miner gets out and with an extensive knowledge of the lenses and depth of field to capture any vestige of light that contributes to the strength of the image that we have observed.

So far, all this cumulus of expertise and knowledge is no guarantee to make us travel to the prison where the miner was or imagine the anguish experienced by the loved one in his interminable wait to reunite with the mineworker. The author of the photograph, an expert photographer, has had the ability to make us accomplices of his own gaze, showing us the route to the real story beyond what the image tell. This extra is what we needed before to complete the idea of expert. Now we know it is Mamihlapinatapei.

Works cited

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