

ment was not common practice in cities and that the timing was strategic, given the upcoming vote on mayoral control and the mayoral election. It seemed likely, in other words, that these ads were intended to promote Mayor Michael Bloomberg himself. In any case, when the very Department of Education advertises itself, it sets the tone for schools, teachers, and students. It becomes difficult to escape the spin. Public schools find that they must advertise themselves in order to compete with charter schools for students and stay afloat; principals have to spend time devising brochures, pitches, and recruitment plans.⁶

Of course, presenting oneself well in public is neither novel nor offensive; it is a necessity. The danger is that one can start to live in and for one's public image; one can forget the value of the things one does not show. In his 1947 essay "The Catastrophe of Success," written in response to the wildly enthusiastic reception of *The Glass Menagerie*, Tennessee Williams comments⁷ on the nature of the public image:

You know, then, that the public Somebody you are when you "have a name" is a fiction created with mirrors and that the only somebody worth being is the solitary and unseen you that existed from your first breath and which is the sum of your actions and so is constantly in a state of becoming under your own volition—and knowing these things, you can even survive the catastrophe of Success!

If one takes Williams's words to heart—if one grants that "the only somebody worth being is the solitary and unseen you"—then one is left wondering what remains of that "somebody" today. To the degree that even our private lives have become public (through Facebook, ubiquitous video cameras, and so forth), we have little that is unseen by others and little room to tend to it. There is little room for the thoughts that course this way and that through our minds, the persistent questions, the recurring troubles and delights, the most difficult decisions, the phrases that change in meaning over time, the people who die, the stubborn fact that things often do not go the way we want.

If success consists of image and material acquisition, how does one attain it? It seems to require a combination of self-esteem and metrics: believing in oneself, on the one hand, and, on the other, measuring one's achievements and doing what it takes to raise the numbers. The culture of self-esteem dates back to early 20th-century "New Thought," a cultivated mental state that was supposed to lead to success. Practitioners referred to it as a science of the mind. In 1911, Frank Channing Haddock recommended⁸ reciting a daily affirmation that begins:

I, in my dynamic power, as a thinker, command that phase of myself which rests on and nearest the infinite, as the lotus rests on the surface of the Nile, to draw forth from the depth and vastness of life, new power, new thought, new plans and methods for my business and success.

The historian Richard Weiss notes a "tone of plaintiveness" in the mind-power writings of the time; despite their insistence on the power of the mind, they "lack the ring of full conviction, somewhat in the manner of an individual trying to believe in spite of himself." Such insistence characterizes later success writings as well—for instance, Norman Vincent Peale's formula "(1) prayerize, (2) picturize, (3) actualize."⁹ The very suffix *-IZE* leaves one suspicious, as it seems forced, unwieldy, and funnier than it was meant to be.

Besides the affective route to success, there are formulas, which often carry a tinge of magic. Economists have long worked on calculating the profitability of individuals and organizations, in business, medicine, transportation, and other fields. In education, this has taken the form of value-added assessment: algorithms that calculate teachers' effectiveness, or added "value," on the basis of their students' test scores. Originally developed by the statistician William Sanders at the University of Tennessee, value-added assessments number among the key reforms promoted by think tanks and the federal government. While many scholars caution against the use of value-