The Lure of Learning in Teaching

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Teaching entails the creation of connections among teacher, student, and content so that educational experiences can be had. Powerful teaching engages and recalls a lure of learning. To explore this lure, or love of learning, and its place in teaching, I first evoke a bit of what this attraction feels and looks like. Depicting this lure conveys some of what the seduction of learning is all about. Following this section on the love of learning, I highlight features of what this love of learning looks like in teaching. In teaching with a love of learning, we (as teachers) attempt to lure our students into reaching beyond themselves, to connect with the subject at hand. It is the teacher who invites us beyond the boundaries of ourselves, to another territory. The second major section of this essay focuses on the qualities of this educational invitation. It is an invitation to join and take part in the human inheritance, the human conversation. It is an invitation that arises from the teacher's depths, builds on what the teacher finds alluring in his or her love of learning, and expresses a respect for, faith in, and insistence that the students see what the teacher finds so precious.

INTRODUCTION[1]

At the core of an educational experience are a felt sense of awe and wonder, an encounter marked with struggle and frustration, and understandings that are precious and transforming. At the center of the educational experience is a complex relationship among teacher, student, and content. For those of us who yearn to learn and come to know, to reach into other worlds, we recall and renew those experiences of wonder and struggle. For those of us who have been touched by gifted teachers, we recognize we've been blessed. These are the teachers who helped put us in touch with the grace of great things and showed us the beauty and intrigue of the world around us. When we are in touch with that grace and immersed in the beauty, the struggle and frustration, the awe and wonder, can lead to experiences that are precious and transforming.

At the center of the educational experience are teachers, students, and content; and the content, the curriculum, is key. Take away the teacher, and the student can be engaged with the material. Take away the student,

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and the teacher can be occupied with the subject matter. But take away the subject, and the center, the entire relationship, vanishes. Teaching, at its heart, is the creation of connections among teacher, student, and content so that educational experiences can be had. A love of learning, of inquiry, of coming to know is an essential ingredient in creating this web of interconnections. In this essay I try to uncover a bit of what these connections look like; I explore their texture and feel. I want to glimpse the minds and hearts at work in this love of learning and teaching, see the ways in which thinking and feeling combine to put us next to the grace of great things. My assumption is that if we can picture some of the texture and feel of this landscape, we will see, appreciate, and know better its complexity. Such appreciation should only help.[2]

For some of us, a love of learning may be alive and frequently present; for others, it may be an active but overlooked part of the texture of our lives; and yet, for others, it may be an element that was once present but now seems missing. Over the last twenty years, my love of learning has slipped in and out of my life. When my teaching was most engaging, it seems to me that this love was powerfully present. Potent teaching seems to touch and use this lure of learning. To explore this love of learning, and its place in teaching, I first want to evoke a bit of what this attraction feels and looks like, how it engages our minds. Depicting this lure will hopefully convey some of what the seduction of learning is all about. To accomplish this, I've constructed a "conversation" between Anne Carson and Annie Dillard. In *Eros The Bittersweet*, Carson explores the parallels between falling in love and coming to know, claiming that both experiences make her feel terribly alive.[3] In *An American Childhood*, Dillard offers some rather wonderful passages depicting what it's like to be lured into natural worlds.[4] She illustrates how coming to know has made her feel intensely alive. Much of Carson's and Dillard's power lies in their ability to relate the lure of other worlds, to convey what it feels like to lose ourselves, to go beyond ourselves. They capture important elements of the lure (or love) of learning.

Following this section on the love of learning, I highlight features of what this love of learning looks like in teaching. I can't offer a detailed map, but I can report some initial understandings. In coming to know, we reach beyond the boundaries of ourselves, and we do so to contact and connect with an otherness that exists outside ourselves. In teaching with a love of learning, we (as teachers) attempt to lure students into reaching beyond themselves, to connect with the subject at hand. It is the teacher who invites us beyond the boundaries of ourselves, to another territory. It is an invitation to join and take part in the human inheritance, the human conversation. It is an invitation that arises from the teacher's depths, builds on what the teacher finds alluring in his or her love of learning, and

expresses a respect for, faith in, and insistence that the students see what the teacher finds so precious. The second major section of this essay focuses on the qualities of the educational invitation.

Given the harsh lessons of teaching in today's schools, we can no longer love our subjects and lure our students in a naively exposed fashion. It seems quite likely that despair will visit a teacher who lures students into learning in a naive and vulnerable fashion.[5] As teachers we may need to relearn how to love our subjects, to invite our students to inquire with us in those subjects, to do so without harming ourselves or our students, and to demand that schools no longer constrain these efforts. We need to learn how to protect ourselves and demand that our society honors these loves, or at least create a place where these loves can exist. We cannot disengage from our emotional attachments to our subjects. We have to learn how to love and honor our subjects, ourselves, and our students. We have to learn how to engage in the struggle of teaching and the struggle of schooling in a way that preserves our teaching loves and lives. While it is crucial to elaborate features of that struggle, my focus here is on illuminating the lure. Recapturing and evoking this lure is a necessary element in the struggle.

LOVE OF (AND) LEARNING

> There would seem to be some resemblance between the way Eros acts in the mind of a lover and the way knowing acts in the mind of a thinker. . . . I would like to grasp why it is that those two activities, falling in love and coming to know, make me feel genuinely alive (*EB* 70).

In *Eros The Bittersweet*, Anne Carson examines the dynamics of eros[6] and draws parallels to learning and "coming to know". In learning we reach beyond ourselves to come into contact with the world and to connect with the grace of great things. Carson claims that falling in love and coming to know make her feel genuinely alive. Learning seems to have affected Annie Dillard in the same way. In her *An American Childhood*, she captures learning's attraction and the allure of the world around her. In fact Dillard seems to be responding to Carson's request to understand why loving and learning make her feel so alive. Dillard writes about her childhood love of coming to know when she recalls and conveys her seduction into the worlds of libraries, ponds, and streams; books and beds; and rocks and stones. She conveys how our love of learning connects us to the world, how it engages our minds and emotions, and how it illuminates the sensual and sacred.

LIBRARIES, PONDS, AND STREAMS

Growing up in Pittsburgh in the 1950s, Annie Dillard was one of four lively children in a family that did not appear to want for money or resources. Annie loved to read, and the closest library was the branch in Homewood. This branch was located in one of the Black sections of town. Because it was some distance from her house, Annie's mother would drive her there. Entering the Homewood Library (which had "FREE TO THE PEOPLE" engraved on its facade), a twelve-year-old child with an adult card, Dillard recalls the large vaulted rooms; the high, leaded windows; and the quiet, cool floors. One day, during a visit in the adult room "in the cool darkness of a bottom shelf," she happened upon *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams*. It turned out to be a truly wonderful find, for in chapter three of the book Annie Dillard found what she had not known she was looking for. In this chapter the essential tools of the naturalist's trade were explained, field procedures elaborated, and the multiple worlds of water and insect life unveiled. This marvelous little book opened whole new worlds for young Annie. In this treasure trove, the author explained how to make all sorts of nets (sweep, plankton, and head nets) and how to construct unheard of containers including glass-bottomed buckets and "killing" jars. The author also offered instructions on how to set up freshwater aquariums, mount slides, and label insects on their pins. This book outlined the accoutrements of the naturalist trade and in doing so fitted Annie Dillard for one of her most beloved adventures. She learned that when a naturalist went out into the field she wore "hip boots and perhaps a head net for mosquitoes. One carried in a 'rucksack' half a dozen corked test tubes, a smattering of screw-type baby-food jars, a white enamel tray, assorted pipettes and eye droppers, an artillery of cheesecloth,. . . and [of course] *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams*" (*AC* 81). In ponds and streams, the reader was assured of finding, and distinguishing among, dragonfly nymphs, planaria, daphniae, water pennies, and salamander and stone fly larvae. With the tools of her newly discovered trade, she was assured of not only locating these marvels but also capturing them and entering into their worlds. With these tools she could immerse herself in ponds and streams.

At her young age Dillard was astonished that anyone had actually lived the "fine life described in Chapter 3" and that such life-filled ponds existed. She wanted to write to the author, and describes this desire as follows:

> the title page indicated quite plainly that one Ann Haven Morgan had written *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams*, I nevertheless imagined, perhaps from the authority and freedom of it, that its author was a man. It would be good to write and assure him that someone had found his book, in the dark near the marble floor at the Homewood

> Library. I would, in the same letter or in a subsequent one, ask him a question outside the scope of his book, which was where I personally might find a pond or a stream. But I did not know how to address such a letter . . . or how to learn if he was still alive. . . . I was afraid, too, that my letter would disappoint him by betraying my ignorance . . . What, for example, was this noisome-sounding substance called cheesecloth, and what do scientists do with it? What, when you really got down to it, was enamel? If candy could, notoriously, "eat through enamel," why would anyone make trays out of it? (*AC* 82)

The *Field Book of Ponds and Streams* bowled Annie Dillard over. It was, as she recalls, a "shocker from beginning to end." And, she adds, the "greatest shock came at the end."

On the last page of each library book was the book's card, with the past borrowers' numbers inscribed, and the due-date sheet. Upon checking her beloved book out for a second time, she noticed that the book's card was almost full, with numbers on both sides:

> My hearty author and I were not alone in the world after all. With us, and sharing our enthusiasm for dragonfly larvae and single celled plants, were, apparently many Negro adults . . . Who were these people? Had they, in Pittsburgh's Homewood section, found ponds? Had they found streams? At home I read the book again; I studied the drawings; I reread Chapter 3; then I settled in to study the due-date slip. People read this book in every season. Seven or eight people were reading this book every year, even during the war. . . . Often when I was in the library, I simply visited it. I sat on the marble floor and studied the book's card. There we all were. There was my number. There was the number of someone else who had checked it out more than once. Might I contact this person and cheer him up? For I assumed that, like me, he had found pickings pretty slim in Pittsburgh (*AC* 82–83).

Slowly, however, the reality of Homewood hit home. Many Homewood residents lived in visible poverty, yet it appeared from the number of check-outs, that they too dreamed of ponds and streams. Dillard had thought that perhaps they were saving to buy microscopes while fashioning plankton nets but then she realized the following:

> Their hopes were even more vain than mine, for I was a child, and anything might happen; they were adults, living in Homewood. There was neither pond nor stream on the streetcar routes. The Homewood

> residents whom I knew had little money and little free time. The marble floor was beginning to chill me. It was not fair. (*AC* 83)

For Annie Dillard libraries opened new worlds, free of charge. Unfortunately, entering the natural worlds her field book introduced was not without admission fees. It seems other factors conspired to limit some people's entry.

I've never fallen in love with a field book, but, thankfully, Annie Dillard has. She conveys her beloved book's appeal along with her library's special feel. Having lingered in Midwestern and Northeastern Carnegie neighborhood libraries, those minor monumental edifices built during the early 1900s, Dillard captures much of the experience. One can almost smell the books' mustiness, peer into the dimly lit stacks, and certainly feel the coolness of the marble and stone floors. These sensual features seemed to enhance the library's intellectual and emotional allure. After one or two successful visits, the library's particular promise becomes apparent. Libraries open worlds, worlds otherwise not easily accessible, and in doing so they allow us all sorts of unimaginable pleasures. A library's holdings offer the possibility of immersion into other worlds, immersion into natural, unnatural, and human landscapes. These landscapes take us beyond ourselves into realms that seem to beckon our imagination and beg for further exploration. Dillard's discovery of *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams* did all this. It outfitted her in naturalist's gear and took her into the microscopic world of water insects. To the naked and untrained eye water is water, but with Ann Haven Morgan's field book in hand, hip boots secure, and collection jars ready, we can begin to plumb the depths of a pond. Once we have glimpsed the water pennies, dragonfly nymphs, and salamander larvae, other worlds exist beside(s) ours. The library's field book opened up worlds of water and, in doing so, illuminated connections within that natural world. When we explore these worlds, we create webs of connection with, and within those worlds. And having been introduced to these worlds, Annie Dillard wanted to know more.

Dillard wanted to take her understanding further, fill in the gaps and holes, and, hopefully, correct those troublesome conceptions that didn't fit with her ways of seeing the world. This seems to be a common experience. Coming upon new material we check it against what we already know and understand. We try to fit it into our current ways of understanding the world and ourselves, but all too often it just doesn't fit. If we are going to grow, and if we feel somewhat secure, we explore further these gaps and misconceptions. But if we are insecure and defensive, we may try to hide or ignore the poor fit of the new material. Coming to know seems to inevitably entail, at some point, a sense of insufficiency. As Anne Carson notes the "activities of knowing and desiring . . . have at their core the same delight,

that of reaching, and entail the same pain, that of falling short or being deficient" (*EB* 71). Noisome cheesecloth and enamel trays don't quite fit. Is it a problem with me or the world? Dare I speak up and find out?

Dillard wanted to write to the author, to acknowledge the book's gift, and to connect with the author. Acknowledging these gifts is never a simple or easy task. With books I love, I generally have many purposes in mind, some of which I'm unaware. I want the author to know how special the experience was, that it touched me. Frequently, I want to respond to the author, to connect, commune, and communicate with "him." I have questions to ask. I also want to hear this powerful, creative, or keenly analytic voice; I want to be in the author's presence. I don't regularly acknowledge the gift but usually end up seeking out others who have delighted in the book's treasures. When I find others, I am pleased to know that they too have enjoyed the book's pleasures. I share with my fellow readers some of what I would have shared with the author and they with me. Annie Dillard did not write Ann Haven Morgan. She imagined the questions she might pose, but did not address, to the author. Instead she sought out other readers. Inscribed on the book's card were other patrons' numbers. Card-carrying Homewood residents had glimpsed these dew-filled worlds, still ponds and swirling streams wet with life. Others had imagined building the naturalist's tools and had toyed with the possibility of exploring these wetlands. Her excursions into the field book were not alone; her journeys were shared with others, and sitting alone on the stone floor she felt comforted by their presence.

Dillard's comfort in her company did not last long. She soon realized that while the library was open and free to all, access to these natural water-filled worlds was not. Her delight soured, the world around her became quite dry, and the library's marble floor turned chilly. Not all of us see so readily the connections between our delight and others' (and our own) sorrow. Dillard did. It seems that the natural worlds Dillard explored were filled with threads of connections. She brought those threads to her everyday world. She realized that the joys she had shared with others were constrained by something bigger than her and them. With her heart and mind she grasped, and found distasteful, the injustice.

LIFE IN ROCKS AND GEMS

It seems that soon after Dillard felt the chill of Homewood's marble floor she was bequeathed three rock-filled grocery bags. Mr. Downey, an old man who lived down the street from her grandparents, had passed on the rocks to the paperboy and then, two weeks later, passed away. The paperboy, in turn, gave them to Annie. The boy could not remember the rocks' names, and Dillard was sure they had names. All sorts of rocks were in those bags.

Some were red, others yellow, and one was green. They varied in size, shape, and texture. One rock was made up of small cubes the color of brown shoe polish. Another one looked like a "rusty cluster of petrified roses." Bent on knowing, on identifying these rocks, Annie went to the library and in the adult section got the true dope from various manuals and field guides. With the aide of these books, she performed all sorts of tests, the likes of which could only have originated from a world of people who knew and loved rocks. She performed scratch tests. She determined the rocks' hardness using Mohs' scale. She learned all sorts of ways to poke, prod, and test her treasures, to get the rocks to divulge their identity. People in the books, scientists and "rock hounds"

> dripped acid on them; they shone ultra violet lights on them; they split them, sawed them, and set them on fire (diamond "burns easily"). They smelled and tasted them. Cracked arsenic smells like garlic. Epsomite is bitter, halotrichite tastes like ink, soda niter "tastes cooling." (*AC* 138)

But her rocks did not simply put up with this treatment. They

> behaved with scarcely less vigor than the scientists. Borax "swells into great 'worms' as it melts, and finally shrinks to almost nothing." Other minerals "may send up little horns." Some change color when you heat them, or glow, or melt, burn, dissolve, or turn magnetic. Some fly apart (decrepitate). (*AC* 138)

Rocks, it seems, have character.

What further amazed Dillard was the realization that the dull rock all around her was simply waiting to be cracked open. She had read of people cracking ordinary looking rocks and exposing "bare clusters of red garnets, or topaz crystals, chrysoberyl, spudomene, emerald. They held in their hands crystals that had hung in a hole in the dark for a billion years unseen" (*AC* 139). Dillard could hardly contain herself. She was all for it and she made plans:

> I would lay about me right and left with a hammer, and bash the landscape to bits, I would crack the earth's crust like a pinata and spread to the light the vivid prizes in chunks within. Rock collecting was opening the mountains. It was like diving through my own interior blank blackness to remember the startling pieces of a dream; there was a blue lake, a witch, a lighthouse, a yellow path. It was like poking about in a grimy alley and finding an old, old coin. The earth was like a shut eye. Mother's not dead dear—she's only sleeping. Pry

> open the thin lid and find a crystalline intelligence inside, a rayed and sidereal beauty. Crystals grew inside rock like arithmetical flowers. They lengthened and spread, adding plane to plane in awed and perfect obedience to an absolute geometry that even the stones —maybe only the stones—understood. (*AC* 139)

Rocks, it seems, not only have character but also have a complex life all their own. If we are fortunate enough to peer inside, we discover an intelligence that surprises and amazes. Pry open a rock and behold the precious beauty. Pry open a rock and glimpse elements of this other world. Pry open a rock and see there reflected the dreams of your night before. Dillard hungered for an understanding of the rocks' world, their identity, and in honoring it she was invited in. Once in, she looked around and saw both this other world and herself.

Soon Dillard realized that rocks and ponds were not the only treasures in the world before her.

> I had been chipping at the world idly, and had by accident uncovered vast and labyrinthe further worlds within it. I peered in one day and stepped in the next, and soon wandered in deep over my head. Month after month, year after year, the true and brilliant light, of the actual, historical, waking world invigorated me. Its vastness extended everywhere I looked, and precisely where I looked. . . . Everything in the world, every baby, city, tetanus shot, tennis ball, and pebble was an outcrop of some vast and hitherto concealed vein of knowledge, apparently, that had compelled people's emotions and engaged their minds in the minutest detail without anyone's having done with it. There must be enthusiasts for everything on earth—fanatics who shared a vocabulary, a batch of technical skills and equipment, and perhaps, a vision of some single slice of the beauty and mystery of things, of their complexity, fascination and unexpectedness. (*AC* 157–159)

Attracted by the many worlds around her, Dillard was touched by a singular beauty and mystery they somehow all shared.

COMING TO KNOW OTHER WORLDS

I don't know if Annie Dillard and Anne Carson have ever met, but it seems to me they must talk to each other. It's as if Dillard responds lovingly to Carson's requests and Carson then replies, taking the conversation further. Carson asks what eros and coming to know have in common. Dillard responds: In coming to know we reach into other worlds with fascination, awe, and respect. Both eros and coming to know reach out and in the

process, look back upon themselves and see holes, gaps, insufficiencies. Both eros and coming to know leap into these worlds and ask others to come along to support and sanctify their loves. Carson writes that

> situated at the edge of itself, or of its present knowledge, the thinking mind launches a suit for understanding into the unknown. So too the wooer stands at the edge of his value as a person and asserts a claim across the boundaries of another. Both mind and wooer reach out from what is known and acted to something different, possibly better, desired. Something else. Think about what that feels like. (*EB* 71)

Dillard thinks and writes about what that feels like. Rocks or ponds, streams or gems, tennis balls or tetanus shots, Dillard tells us what it is like to reach out, to crack open a rock or delve into the depths of a pond. It is a movement from ourselves, to an other, and then back to ourselves. It is a movement that is motivated by a desire to know that other and a delight in seeing the other on its own terms. At times we are frustrated in our attempts to understand this otherness, and at times we sense our insufficiency next to it. When we do grasp it, a sense of awe can arise. We frequently look for others to travel with us. In coming to terms with the otherness, we seek companionship. We look to the last page of the book to see who else checked it out more than once.

Carson then takes us a bit further, telling us that

> we think by projecting sameness upon difference, by drawing things together in a relation or idea while at the same time maintaining the distinctions between them. A thinking mind is not swallowed up by what it comes to know. It reaches out to grasp something related to itself and to its present knowledge (and so knowable in some degree) but also separate from itself and from its present knowledge (not identical) with these. In any act of thinking, the mind must reach across this space between known and unknown, linking one to the other but also keeping visible their difference. It is an erotic space. To reach across it is tricky. . . . When the mind reaches out to know, the space of desire opens and a necessary fiction transpires. . . . for desire is a movement that carries yearning hearts from over here to over there, launching the mind on a story. (*EB* 171–173)

In seeming response to Carson, Dillard details her mind thinking and bids us to go with her across that space between the known and unknown. When Dillard takes us there, she launches in on a story. Walking into the library, picking out Ann Haven Morgan's *Field Book of Ponds and Streams*, and then diving into ponds filled with larvae and salamanders, is to reach across the space between the known and the unknown. Receiving three rock-filled

bags, scratching and smashing them to test their mettle, and then combing the hills for more specimens is to act on that desire to reach for the unknown. When Dillard reaches out to understand the wet world of ponds and streams, she yearns to drench but not drown herself. Rocks, once things unnoticed and uninteresting, present themselves on her doorstep as unnamed but knowable. We approach the unknown desirous. We reach out to know, yearning to fill in and reconstruct those parts of ourselves that remain open and alterable.

So what is this love's allure? What is it about coming to know that makes us feel so genuinely alive and wanting to share these pleasures by teaching others? This much I know: Coming to know engages me in a compelling, almost impelling way. I am enticed by learning. This enticement is something that seems to happen to me. I am drawn to topics that interest me. I am excited by the prospect that I will find another way to see into the world, glimpse its beauty, reconstruct it in a way not yet known to me. The rocks appeared at Annie Dillard's front doorstep. She could have deposited them in the back with the trash. She didn't. She seemed impelled to go to the library and join other rock hounds, name the rocks, and capture their mysteries.

There is an excitement that accompanies this engagement. Reaching across from the known to the unknown raises the possibility of discovering something new about the world and possibly ourselves. It's wondrous to look at a sea urchin for the first time uncovered by an unusually low tide. It's exciting to realize that the arrangement of sunflower seeds in the pod, the spiral on a conch shell, and the placement of branches on a twig all follow the same mathematical sequence. It's exhilarating to look into the depths of an obsidian rock and see there reflected darkly our own images. It's thrilling to see in others ourselves and to recognize shared strengths and features. And it is humbling to glimpse our common frailties. (And it's even more humbling to acquiesce under the understanding that we may not understand, that there are limits to our knowing.)

And this love of learning is enticing. In coming to know, there is the possibility of losing ourselves in the endeavor. One of my favorite activities as a modern dancer was the required barre work. Lining up at the barre under the watchful eye of the instructor, performing a plie or an attitude, demanded an engagement that invited temporary immersion. I was enticed. I could easily lose myself, forget about Manhattan's traffic snarled and honking outside the studio's window and think only of the grace, line, and rhythm of that particular movement. Learning to move and coming to know can be exciting and enticing. I can remember Mr. Fleenor, my high school geometry teacher, luring us into his subject. He brought alive the abstract world of points, lines, and planes and showed us how we could take part in its creation. Dancing and geometry were enticing.

Dillard captures not only learning's excitement, but she also evokes a sense of awe, a sense of the sacredness of the world around her. Dillard's rocks touched her with the grace of great things. In those rocks she envisioned an intelligence other than her own. There was something sacred about those rocks, something precious that set them apart, and Dillard felt and knew that. Part of learning's lure seems to be this recognition, this revelation of the special otherness of our world's worlds. For some this sense of reverence for other worlds may seem reserved for natural phenomena. But the grace of great things, while certainly found aplenty in the natural world, is also present in so many other realms. When I was an undergraduate at Earlham College, Gordon Thompson, my humanities professor, treated each novel and story as if they were worlds unto themselves. He taught us to look at a story with a careful, patient, and attentive eye. We didn't set these stories alight with a match or try to dissolve them with chemicals. Instead Gordon tried to give us the tools of literary analysis. I'm afraid I probably frustrated him. My skills always seemed to me, and I believe to him, a bit underdeveloped. But I can recall the reverence and respect he reserved for the text. He could recall a minor character's eye color. I couldn't. He could recite the speech given in a pivotal scene while I struggled to make sense of its importance. He treated the text with an attitude and air that I, at age nineteen years, had only seen reserved for close friends. He didn't succeed in educating me to become a literary analyst, but he did succeed in enabling me to see the otherness of a text.

And, inevitably, our engagement with learning invites frustration and self-doubt. To reach from the known to the unknown requires that we perform tasks for the first time. We are successful some of those times, but frequently we don't hit the initial mark. We have to try again, sometimes again, and ever so often again and again. At times this frustration can result in self-doubt. Is this obstacle a problem with me or the material I'm engaged with? Both? Neither? This self-doubt can build on earlier frustrations or begin anew. When we follow this lure of learning, of reaching across the divide between known and unknown, we frequently make a mark on the world, and by those marks we come to know ourselves. When my youngest son Matthew (at age eight years) practiced his cursive script, he found that he was good at some movements and not so good at others. It wouldn't surprise me if Dillard had discovered that she was a better scavenger of dragonfly larvae than geodes. The lure of learning holds forth success, failure, and other outcomes in between. Failure can be frustrating, and repeated failure can lead to self-doubt. But if the lure of learning always promised achievement, I doubt it would hold much attraction.

It seems to be one of the paradoxes of our love of learning that when reaching into the unknown, searching through the otherness of this world,

we look for companionship and community. Perhaps we don't want to be alone. Or it could simply be that we want to share the pleasures of learning. But impelled as we are to leap into the unknown and explore other worlds, at some point we come back to something familiar. We seek companionship, we yearn for others who have or could share with us the intrigue and inroads of this learning. This seems to arise in a variety of ways. As learners, it is delightful to have other hungry learners around. In graduate school, I gained a great deal from my coursework, but in many ways it was the graduate student camaraderie that fueled and informed much of my graduate education. As I talk to middle and high school teachers, I hear that it is the absence of a community of meaningful discussion that deals a significant blow to their endurance as teachers. To endure as teachers they need to continue to learn. Without companionship in their love of learning, teaching feels quite isolated and can be difficult to sustain for a long period of time. It seems many teachers yearn for some sort of intellectual connection and companionship.

In seeking companionship, in asking others to come along and witness these worlds, Dillard also ran into injustice. The other worlds that were freely portrayed in her public library were not readily available to all in Pittsburgh. In Pittsburgh, if you were poor and Black, you could not easily venture off and explore the life-filled streams and ponds. The incongruity between the library's freedom and the real world's limitations struck Dillard as cold and unfair. When power determines who can and cannot experience these loves, whose worlds are open to beauty and whose are not, issues of justice and fairness loom large.[7] Anger lurks. And this was not the only time power intruded. Dillard's favorite author, Ann Haven Morgan, seemed to write with a register somehow reserved for men. This incongruity stayed with Dillard for some time. Dillard's worlds, while filled with wonder and beauty, also contained injustice and ugliness. It seems that the beauty of other worlds may lure us outside of ourselves, but what follows frequently depends on the additional contours of those worlds. Beauty alone will not prevail. Eventually the shadows appear. And when the shadows appear, it is necessary to name them, and at times, act to transform them. Somehow Dillard could not recognize Ann Haven Morgan as the author of and authority contained within her beloved book, so she constructed a male voice. At times our love of learning is obstructed and constrained by larger structural and internal forces. Naming those obstructions, reconstructing those histories can also be a powerful and passionate endeavor.[8]

Annie Dillard expresses her love of learning, her engagement with subject matter and the world around her, in a compelling manner. In her field explorations, she appears to have been a student engaged in subject matter with no appointed teacher. In fact teachers were present. Ann Haven Morgan opened the worlds of ponds and streams. The avid rock hounds

and mineralogists taught her how to listen to rocks and pry open their beauty. Dillard was not alone nor without instruction. But she wasn't in a classroom. Most of us teach in classrooms. And it would be helpful to explore the dynamics of this love within that setting.

TEACHING WITH A LOVE OF LEARNING

What does teaching with a love of learning look and feel like? I know that, like the lure of learning and falling in love, teaching can make me feel genuinely alive. It can make my heart pound and my head throb, and I want to know why. I think I understand a bit of it. In falling in love and in coming to know, we reach beyond the boundaries of ourselves to something unknown yet promising. In teaching, we are trying to enable others to reach beyond themselves with the promise of achieving some understanding, some different way of seeing and being in the world. As teachers we are attempting to enable students to reach beyond their boundaries to something that has given us intrigue, understanding, or sustenance for our imagination. It is an intellectual, emotional, and at times physical attraction that we want to share, so we invite students to be attracted by some "great thing." It is an invitation to become intellectually and emotionally engaged. It is an invitation to receive part of the human inheritance, to participate in some strand of the human conversation, to become educated. And this invitation is a heartfelt and resonant one. It is an invitation that comes from our depths, from who we are intellectually, emotionally, and, for some, spiritually. When we ask students to consider material, material that lures us, we are exposing parts of ourselves for others to see. This makes us vulnerable. In inviting students to share in our love of learning, we are inviting them to share in who we are. It is also an invitation to be engaged by something alluring, something beautiful, wondrous, and powerful that has caught our, the teacher's, attention. It is not an empty invitation: it is asking others to reach out towards something unknown to them but known (at least to some degree) and attractive to us. And finally it is an invitation that rests on an act of faith in, respect for, and an insistence that students can and will see, can and will appreciate what we, as teachers, have to offer. An invitation based on this love of learning assumes that others can and will walk through the door. It is fueled by a belief that the material is something that can be shared and enjoyed by others. I want to explore further these features of teaching.

THE INVITATION

I receive invitations all the time, but not all are educational. I'm invited to sign up for another credit card, take part in an university committee, or

attend a breakfast as the School's representative. Generally these invitations have little or no educational purpose. They are neither motivated by a love of learning nor bid me to take part in the larger human inheritance. What makes an invitation potentially educational is that it holds out the possibility of participating in the human conversation and that the teacher, lured by her love of learning, is touched deeply by the material, offers this attraction to students, and communicates a respect for and faith in the students' ability to be attracted also. Before I detail these areas, a few preliminary considerations are important.

When I talk about teaching with a love of learning, I sense others envision something akin to a masterful dramatic performance. These teachers, the assumption seems to be, are the gifted, the unusual, the extremely talented ones. These are the ones whose personalities carry the day and, in the process, carry their students along. In these scenarios the educational invitation takes on rather grand dimensions and represents the achievements of only a capable few. But such expectations misconstrue the nature of the power and force of an invitation offered with a love of learning; such expectations place teaching with a love of learning within undue and unreasonable constraints. All sorts of teaching can be guided by this love, and the invitations can take innumerable and quite different forms. In elementary, secondary, and university classrooms, invitations can take the form of a teacher's story about a past experience, a reading of a portion of a text, the posing of a puzzling problem, a personal testimonial, or a brief experiential task. An invitation might occur on one day or persist throughout the year. They can be loud or quiet, showy or plain. What it seems to require is simply a measure of authenticity: the invitation has to be real, conveyed by the teacher, and felt by the students.

Parker Palmer relates how one of his college instructors invited him to "the life of the mind."[9] It was an invitation delivered with little fanfare and never actually personally addressed. In fact, Palmer writes that this memorable mentor was a man who appeared to break many rules of good teaching:

> He lectured at length, and with such enthusiasm, that he left little room for questions and comments. Preoccupied with the world of thought, he listened poorly to students, not because he disdained them but because he was so eager to teach them by the only way he knew—sharing his knowledge and passions. His classes were mostly monologues, and his students rarely played any role other than audience. (*CT* 22)

Yet this spectacle of a teacher immersed in thought had an enduring effect on Palmer. While appearing to be self-absorbed and inattentive to students,

Palmer writes that this individual "generously opened the life of the mind to me, giving full voice to the gift of thought. Something in me knew that this gift was mine as well, though it was years before I could fully trust that knowledge" (*CT* 22). Palmer experienced this man's authentic engagement, felt the allure of his "gift of thought," and eventually accepted the invitation to a life of the mind the gift represented. There isn't a template for these invitations. But there are some shared features.

AN INVITATION TO RECEIVE THE HUMAN INHERITANCE AND JOIN THE DISCUSSION

When my son Matthew practiced his cursive loops and curls, he seemed to believe that he was becoming part of the grown-up world. Moving from print to cursive is a seemingly minor but nevertheless important transition in our efforts to become part of the adult community, to inherit and participate in the human conversation. When invited to learn, it is possible to get glimpses of this rich human inheritance and with that, to feel the excitement of becoming a part of the human conversation this inheritance represents. Matthew's experience is not unique. Both Annie Dillard and Jane Tompkins mention this lure, the attraction knowledge and inquiry held for them. Dillard realized after diving into ponds and smashing open rocks that everything "in the world, every baby, city, tetanus shot, tennis ball, and pebble, was an outcrop of some vast and hitherto concealed vein of knowledge. . . that had compelled people's emotions and engaged their minds" (*AC* 159). Jane Tompkins writes that when her high school geometry teacher, Mr. Bowler, asked students, in his deep-timbered voice, to talk about knowledge and understanding she realized that there were "untold reaches of mind, beyond plane geometry or the meaning of Thanksgiving, that knowledge and understanding would open to me."[10]

Matthew Liston, Annie Dillard, and Jane Tompkins felt the lure of those concealed veins of knowledge. They were lured by the worlds around them and heard the call of others who had been similarly intrigued. Dillard and Tompkins soon realized that many others had carried on conversations not only about the things they loved but all sorts of other "untold reaches." Informed conversations exist about innumerable worlds. These conversations are, frequently, embedded in the intellectual disciplines, the organizing units of what we teach in schools. But our disciplines are neither the only container nor, at times, the most influential factors affecting our conversations. Our organized ways of inquiring into the world are both informed and deformed by the cultural and social forces of which they are a part. Communities of scholars—their inquiries—fuel (in part) our intellectual disciplines' movements, directions, and findings. Scholars inquire and they converse. But all of this occurs within a larger context that is

integrally interwoven throughout these conversations. Understanding the complexities of those conversations is the chore that the sociology of knowledge has set for itself.[11] Learning is, in large part, learning to engage in, be critical of, and become a part of those conversations.

Many of these conversations, these strands of our human inheritance, exist outside of the academy. Popular culture, all sorts of craft-based endeavors (e.g., bee-keeping, mechanical trades, Web site designs, domestic efforts), distinct cultural (e.g., African American and Latino) understandings and practices, child-rearing endeavors and rebel causes—all of these efforts contain a history of past understandings and interactions, and a sense of mastery and achievement. This is part of the inheritance. And these conversations, those within and outside of the academy, do not exist on an even playing field. All sorts of class, gendered, and cultural dynamics exist and are continually reinforced and contested to determine which conversations prevail, which understandings reach what kids, and which strands are obscured for some but not others. This occurs both in and outside of schools. Certainly many kids are more interested in the conversations and inheritances that exist outside of schools. It seems to be the teacher's (i.e., democratic public school teacher's) responsibility to illuminate shared and distinct, common and repressed, mainstream and even outlawed understandings. Selections among these various conversations will inevitably occur and our cultural selections will delineate what we value. It seems difficult to conceive of a defensible education that did not, at some point in an individual's development, encourage a critical inspection of our own shared and distinct beliefs and values.

To open our minds and hearts requires that we bequeath an inheritance that is varied, multifaceted, and multivoiced. Jane Roland Martin relates that the inheritance being offered by the traditionalists for today's schools is one that is much too narrowly focused.[12] It countenances a much too limited rather than enriching view. All too frequently our public educational inheritance is one that offers an already formed impression. It does not question or examine. It is neither multifaceted nor multidimensional. It is an impression that deforms rather than informs. When students are continually spoon-fed facts and told that these facts are true, when they are asked to accept material before them without engaging their minds, these seem to be deforming rather than informing invitations. They neither reach beyond nor invite a love of the grace of great things.

Teaching with a love of learning, inviting others to learn has to amount to more than simply offering a received view or delineating the facts, skills, and concepts to master. Certainly the realm of mastery is important. However if we offer no more, if we don't teach with a love of learning, if we don't examine our culture's shared and distinct understandings then our invitation is bound to be rather flat and dull. It can't promise much beyond

the assigned tasks or purported pragmatic payoffs. It will open neither mind nor heart.

AN INVITATION FROM THE DEPTHS

An invitation's authenticity issues from the source, and, in the case of teaching, a central source is the teacher's love. If this love of learning is real, it is inevitably conveyed. And if it is real, it taps and arises from the depths of the teacher's soul. Falling in love (with a text or another) is always an amazing experience. Its amazement derives from a variety of sources. When we fall in love with another human being, we find ourselves confronted and comforted by another's significance. We find ourselves surprised by what this other person knows of us, by what we see ourselves. What we see, what is brought to the surface, are some of our elemental features. Ortega Y. Gasset commented on this when he wrote the following:

> In their choice of lovers both. . . reveal their essential nature. The type of human being which we prefer reveals the contours of our heart. Love is an impulse which springs from the most profound depths of our beings and upon reaching the visible surface of life carries with it an alluvium of shells and seaweed from the inner abyss. A skilled naturalist, by filing these materials, can reconstruct the oceanic depths from which they have been uprooted.[13]

Gasset's depiction of personal romantic love parallels the lure of coming to know and our love of learning in teaching. As Anne Carson reminds us, falling in love and coming to know have many shared features. Falling in love with the wet world of water insects and the formidable strength and resilience of the earth's rocks, Annie Dillard came to know more deeply the worlds around her and herself. She came to see the beauty and mystery therein. When she writes of these loves, she exposes features about the world and herself. In expressing her love she revealed her depths: fears arose, desires multiplied, and concerns about others deepened. Teaching with a love of learning allows others to glimpse what we cherish, what is elementally us. It brings our depths out for others to see.

Jane Tompkins's geometry teacher, Mr. Bowler, was someone whose love of learning was broad and vigorous. The depths stirred by his love seemed to pave a clear path for others. Tompkins relates that Mr. Bowler was educated and trained as an historian. But the school where he worked needed a geometry, not history, teacher, so he taught himself geometry. It didn't come easily to him. He had to work hard to understand spatial axioms. Having worked extra hard, he knew what it was like to wrestle with the subject and so better understood others' struggles. And this extra effort

didn't seem to obstruct, perhaps even enhanced, his appreciation and love for the beauty that geometry conveyed. He capably conveyed to Jane his love and his ability to see in geometry "beauty bare." And his interests were not parochial. History, geometry, in fact the entire arena of knowledge and understanding seemed to have an allure for Mr. Bowler. He invited his students along to experience this love. He accomplished all of this and in the process created a classroom whose atmosphere was cool, fresh, and mountain clear. As Tompkins writes, in Mr. Bowler's room it was as if "the windows had been open a long time. There was no staleness or tension. . . emanating from him to sully the atmosphere. We walked in with no balance sheet appended to our names; and just as we produced the proof of the day out of nothing, so we ourselves came into being as if for the first time" (*LS* 57). It seems Mr. Bowler had his "stuff" pretty much in order. In Mr. Bowler's case, the depths illuminated by his love of geometry, knowledge, and understanding cleared the way for, rather than obstructed, his students' classroom involvement. Students did not have to stumble over Mr. Bowler to get to geometry, or knowledge, or understanding.

Certainly not all teaching is as clean and clear as Mr. Bowler's. Sometimes depths are illuminated that bespeak a conflicted, even while caring (though not always), self. In high school, there was one teacher for whom I was especially fond. Mr. Barton taught me little about his subject matter but ended up exposing me to a great deal.[14] What he exposed me to were not the basic elements of English composition but rather the phenomena of a human being who was wild about living and learning and struggling to understand his place in our world. Mr. Barton always taught on the go. In class, in generally disheveled attire, he would pace across the front, down the sides, and throughout the back of the room. There was a lot of energy in this man, and as he paced he would talk nonstop. One class period stands out. In this particular class, he began explaining how, in his dreams the night before, he saw himself as a grown man, and then as an infant, suckling on his wife's breasts. He remarked in his wild and tousled manner that this image bespoke a great deal about his life and his loves, and he alluded to and expanded on how Freud might interpret this dream. As an adolescent I was beginning to experience the sensual world of heterosexual romance, and I really didn't want to be invited into Mr. Barton's nocturnal world. I felt uncomfortable, embarrassed for myself and for Mr. Barton (who didn't seem embarrassed at all). But I was also intrigued by and somewhat enamored of this human spectacle. Here was a teacher, a fellow human being, pacing and talking in front of an entire class of high school students, exposing what we all thought he should probably keep to himself. I remember looking over at Ingrid Keener who physically expressed part of my reaction. After hearing the suckling scene, Ingrid sat straight up, a bit red around the back of her neck, and tried to shake off what had just been

dropped in our heads. Mr. Barton seemed both amused and intrigued by our reactions. At times I think he toyed with us, as we did with him. He was, I thought, a dear and ever gentle man.

Unfortunately, Mr. Barton did not last long at Burris High School. Two years later, in the early 1970s, someone reported that he had offered a student a beer in his home. That upset me. This man who, like a beat poet, had ranted, raved, and held rambling (and intriguing) monologues, was taken away from the kids. I was upset with the dolt(s) who reported him and angry with Mr. Barton for not knowing to whom and when to make his offer of beer. I had visited him in his home, with a friend, and we had shared a beer. He was not plying kids with alcohol. Although troubled at times, he was not harmful. Even in his own home I had sensed in Mr. Barton a nervous, timid, and yet brazen soul who was caught up in turmoil. He was certainly atypical. Mr. Barton's depths were there for students to see and experience and they tended to get in the way of the subject he taught. I learned more about Mr. Barton's particular features of life than I did about English composition. Teaching with a love of learning uncovers those depths, and the teacher must grapple with what they mean and how they are to be conveyed. Mr. Barton struggled. Mr. Bowler seemingly did not.

Whereas Mr. Barton's teaching of literature and composition was accompanied by his shadowy depths, and Mr. Bowler's love of geometry seemed to uncover a self that, at least in the classroom, was relatively unencumbered, other postures certainly exist. The interplay between a teacher's soulful depths, her love of learning, and her teaching are as complex and complicated as her kinship to the grace of great things. An interesting case can be found in Kathleen Hill's short story, "The Anointed."[15] In this rich account Miss Hughes, a seventh grade music teacher, teaches music appreciation to the narrator's class on Friday afternoons. The routine for each class session seemed to be established: Miss Hughes would talk about and then play a particular piece of classical music; all would listen and then Miss Hughes might offer some final comments. In this way she introduced her students to the worlds of music, feeling, and thought.

Miss Hughes taught music standing next to the record player, placing the needle down and lifting it up at the appointed place and time. Her students were amazed. She always knew where to put the needle down and when to pick it up. They listened dutifully, sometimes blankly, as she talked about the class of instruments represented in a particular piece, the movements they were supposed to hear, and some other fact of the performance. From the narrator's perspective, Miss Hughes neither cajoled nor wheedled her students. She treated them as her confidants. Once, after listening to Mozart's "Turkish March," she informed her students that they had just listened to a virtuoso performance and then related her Julliard audition

some years past before a teacher of some renown. She talked about how nervous she was, how fearful she had been:

> But as soon as I began to play Chopin's Polonaise in A-flat, a piece that requires much busy fingerwork by the left hand and a strong command of chords, I was so carried away by the fire of the music that I forgot the teacher. I forgot the audition. I forgot everything except the fact that I was now the servant of something larger than myself. When I reached the end and looked up—and I was in a bit of a daze, I may tell you—the great teacher's eyes were closed. He bowed his head once, very simply. That was all. I left the room. Soon afterward I received a letter assuring me that he would be proud to have me for his student. (*TA* 78)

The young narrator then describes Miss Hughes's appearance as she told the story of her audition:

> Miss Hughes's face had registered the sweep of feelings she was recounting to us. Her eyes had narrowed with her great desire to be a pianist; entering the audition room, her jaw had grown rigid with fear; and while the great teacher had sat listening to her play, her face had assumed the look we were familiar with, the mask. Now her dark eyes took on a dreamy expression we had not yet seen. She seemed to be looking for words in a place that absorbed all of her attention, over our heads, out the window, beyond. (*TA* 80)

Miss Hughes continues:

> It was winter boys and girls, that my destiny revealed itself to me. If it were not too dramatic to put it this way, I would say that my fate was sealed. Everything I had hoped for, worked for, practicing seven hours each day after I had finished giving lessons—everything was snatched away in a single instant. I will tell you how it happened. Because someday in your lives you may wake to a new world in which you feel a stranger. And you will know, if by chance you remember our conversation here today, that someone—no, my dear boys and girls, many others, a host of others, have risen to a dark morning. (*TA* 80)

Miss Hughes then relates the story of a skiing accident in which she broke three fingers that never properly healed and thus ended her promising career as potential virtuoso. She woke the next day to a very dark morning. In inviting students to join her confidence, Miss Hughes exposed her depths. On this particular day she conveyed a time of crisis in her life, but

on other days the lessons did not rely on relating her life's personal details. For Miss Hughes, music appreciation was intensely, but not irreducibly, personal. Music was an animating force in her life: it stirred her depths and seemed to be an avenue to and through other's souls. She seemed to connect the music with her students through her own love, sorrow, and joy. In inviting students to partake in the lure of music, she could not overlook the love and sorrows of her past, the fluid that connected her to the world around her. As she once related, "Some people's lives are affected by what happens to their person or their property; but for others fate is what happens to their feelings and their thought—that and nothing more" (*TA* 85). Miss Hughes didn't seem to fit into either category easily. Her injured hand and her musical love placed her in both. It seems she was able to employ her depths to illuminate the contours of classical musical expression and to connect them with features of her students' lives. Mr. Bowler, Mr. Barton, and Miss Hughes, all three, seemed to be issuing invitations from their depths.

AN INVITATION TO EXPERIENCE THE ALLURE

In music, Miss Hughes experienced, among other things, beauty. While auditioning, she found herself consumed by the music's fire and immersed in something larger than herself. It was this relationship, this immersion and what it allowed her, that she tried to convey to her students. In geometry class, Jane Tompkins found herself bathed in a cognitive realm of pure ether and bare beauty, where "only logic reigned." Mr. Bowler's invitation afforded her that place. And Annie Dillard pried open geodes, examined water droplets, and begged us to follow. All experienced beauty, and all wanted others to join them. Teaching with this love of learning, enjoining others to come along, is an invitation to experience something alluring. Now perhaps not all love of learning, and teaching with this love, are motivated by the lure of beauty (since beauty is not the only alluring thing). But it seems many teachers, when teaching with a love of learning, are offering to others something potentially magnificent to behold.

It's not that teaching with a love of learning encounters, with every stone uncovered or every page turned, something beautiful, something exquisite. It's not that we offer during each class session, every fifty-minute period, each and every day something beautiful to behold. We can't promise gems marvelous to look upon or passages wondrous to regard. What we can promise is the distinct possibility that we might place ourselves closer to the grace of great things or create openings to some "truly precious things." As Simone Weil writes, "The truly precious things are those forming ladders reaching toward the beauty of the world, openings onto it."[16] Beauty. Truly precious things. Grace. The grace of great things. When we teach with a

love of learning we invite students to come closer to those great things. To stand next to and to gaze on something beautiful is to be in the presence of grace. To enable others to be in the presence of beauty is to help others touch the grace of great things; it is to view teaching, and education, as capable of creating openings to "truly precious things." It is a wonderful invitation to receive. It promises much delight and wonder (and, at times, pain and anguish). It promises an invitation worth receiving.

Beauty, these days, can seem a fairly shallow chimera. Commodified versions of beauty abound and assault us daily: on the television, in glossy magazines, spread across Web sites and along the road. Commercial versions of beauty attempt to lure us into exchanging our resources for their goods. And their goods always pledge to bring us closer to our heart's desire. But it is a never-ending lure, one that operates as a shil for the next. Satisfaction is rarely gained, and, if attained, it tends to takes us no further. The beauty offered by the achievements of the arts and sciences, by education, is different in a number of ways.

Robert Grudin explains that beauty is a relationship between the beholder and the beheld:

> When a given object is properly understood (exquisite, adjusted), its beauty leaps out to the person who understands it. Beauty is not a wholly independent force; neither, however is it an illusion or social convention or mere "effect" of object upon subject. It is rather the natural and necessary consequence of the proper interaction between subject and object or, if you will, between mind and reality.[17]

Certainly, there are times when we are struck immediately by beauty in an encounter with some other person or experience. However, there are also those times when the beauty of an experience or person unfolds and develops over time; in these instances, the experience is the consequence of seeing the world or others more clearly. It is a process of looking more attentively at what stands before us. Teaching with a love of learning is, it seems, an attempt to achieve that proper interaction between student and subject, student and great thing, student and precious things. And when that interaction is achieved, it offers an experience that, as Elaine Scarry describes, is quite special.

Elaine Scarry, a faculty member in the English Department at Harvard, maintains that beauty allows us experiences that are sacred, unprecedented, and life affirming.[18] As Scarry relates, to encounter beauty is to undergo something akin to the immortal, something larger than oneself, something of enduring value. In classical Greece, an experience of beauty was in line with an experience of, or a gift from, the gods. Today beauty tends to be commercialized or deemphasized and only rarely placed alongside the

sacred.[19] But it need not be that way. Dillard's geodes, an orchid blooming, or a breathtaking theatrical performance, all seem to evoke a sacred, timeless beauty. And an encounter with beauty also, as Scarry notes, has an air of being unprecedented. When we experience beauty, we undergo the world anew; or to paraphrase Scarry, beauty makes the world new. It is as if the world suddenly stops for a few seconds, is reconfigured, remade in light of this encounter or event. The experience of beauty is also life affirming. Paraphrasing Proust, Scarry writes:

> Beauty quickens. It adrenalizes. It makes the heart beat faster. It makes life more vivid, animated, living, worth living. . . . It lifts away from the neutral background as though coming forward to welcome you—as though the object were designed to "fit" your perception. . . . It is as though the welcoming thing has entered into, and consented to, your being in its midst.[20]

An integral connection exists between this experience of beauty and the experiences offered in an education. Education is, in part, the "willingness continually to revise one's own location in order to place oneself in the path of beauty. One submits oneself to other minds (teachers) in order to increase the chance that one will be looking in the right direction when a comet makes its sweep through a certain patch of the sky."[21] We sit hoping the comet will appear, that a gem will be bequeathed. Jane sat in Mr. Bowler's class anticipating what journeys knowledge, understanding, and geometry might bring. Others must have sat in Miss Hughes's class hoping that her musical scores would illuminate their lives with a force and significance akin to what they allowed her. Miss Hughes tried. We sit waiting for the invitation, and once issued, hope that it will make good on its promise.

Beauty is not the only lure in our love of learning. When we teach with a love of learning, there are other lures, other attractions, we offer students. At times, we offer clarity through the fog of cognitive dissonance and confusion and the mastery of skills that might sustain that clarity. At other times, we hold out the possibility of coming to terms with, and maybe combating, present and past inhumanity, cruelty, and injustice. And still other times, it seems simple personal delight and pleasure bring us to the classroom doors. I'm tempted to say that even these lures engage us in something sacred, something unprecedented, and life affirming. But I think that might be stretching it too far. I can reasonably say that teaching with a love of learning promises the distinct possibility that we will enable others to find some openings to those truly precious things, precious understandings, to experiences of significance. And I can also say that an education without beauty, that teaching without the promise of some glimpse of beauty, is not worth having.

AN INVITATION THAT EXPRESSES FAITH, INSISTENCE AND RESPECT

In teaching with a love of learning, we hope, we believe, that our students will be lured by the object of our love. We have to have faith that they too will see our subject's power. It seems inconceivable, in teaching with a love of learning, to expect anything but a similar love. For if the lure of our subject is an allure that is sacred, unprecedented, and life affirming, then this faith seems well founded. It appears well placed. And yet this faith is also, like many other faiths, somewhat tenuous and continually tested. It is tenuous in the way that any human potential may or may not be fulfilled. Some students may, while others may not, catch glimpses of those precious things. It appears to be tested daily. When months go by without glimpses of anything significant, then boredom, apathy, and indifference can result. In these instances, it is the students who then test the teacher. But when the connection is made, a vibrant and quite special energy is present. Teaching with a love of learning, inviting students to come and share our loves, relies on a faith in students' capacity to be attracted by the lure of our loves. Without this faith, it is difficult to imagine how we can invite students to join us.

Faith is necessary in this invitation, but alone it is insufficient. We need to have faith that our students will see the precious things and stand in their grace, but faith alone does not do the trick. A large part of teaching, of inviting students to share in our loves, is spent finding ways to connect student with subject. At times, a kind of insistence is required. An insistent invitation is one that resolutely conveys to students the value of what is being offered and persists in looking for ways to connect students to the grace of these great things. A kind of stereoscopy is entailed in this activity. We must see, know, and understand the lure that the subject has for us, and we must envision, come to know and understand, our students. Looking stereoscopically, we can see the subjects we love and our students, and, if our vision is in focus, we have a better chance of joining the two together.

Depending on the students, on the nature of the great and precious things, on the season of the year or the time of day, we may find ourselves needing to be more or less insistent on its value and more or less persistent in our pursuit of that connection. Innumerable factors enter in to what needs to be emphasized, underscored, or deemphasized. Parker Palmer's talkative professor didn't seem to have to lay much groundwork for Palmer to feel the invitation to the life of the mind. He didn't have to underscore again and again the value of Hegel and Marx in the western intellectual tradition. He was able, at Carleton College (probably due, in part, to the relative affluence and engagement of the students), to simply offer an ongoing dialogue with these powerful thinkers. In contrast, Jane Tompkins conveys that (as a teacher) she eventually grew to believe that she needed to know her students as well as she knew her subject in order to turn the

invitation into a bona fide one. She could no longer step into the classroom and deliver a shiny and bright performance. Over the years she came to see her bright performances as inadequate invitations. Others like Chris Zajac (in Tracy Kidder's *Among Schoolchildren*), teaching elementary students in our poor urban centers, spend a good portion of their academic year simply trying to get students to the point where they can hear the invitation to learn.[22] When reading *Among Schoolchildren* and thinking back to my days of elementary and middle school urban teaching, I am struck again by how much time is spent simply getting kids ready, preparing them to be receptive to those doors onto the precious things. When our material needs are frustrated or our emotional needs not met, when we don't feel secure or comfortable in our surroundings, then it is difficult to see or feel the intrigue of the material at hand. And sometimes the kids are ready but the openings to these precious worlds are closed. When Dillard bemoaned that absence of ponds and streams in the all-Black Homewood section of Pittsburgh, she was pointing out how our societal conditions shut out some, but not all, individuals from the landscape of learning. Personal and societal conditions affect the degree to which our faith is tested or supported and the amount of effort it takes to insist on the value of our precious things. Acting on this faith and persisting in our insistence is a complicated effort and much comes into play. However, if we don't insist on the value of what we teach, have faith in our students, and persist in our attempt to make the educational connections, then our invitation tends to have a shallow and probably false ring.

Our invitation will also have a shallow ring if we don't respect—that is, honor—our students' integrity. Teaching with a love of learning—that is, inviting others to become part of the human conversation and to be lured by the grace of great things—entails a particular kind of respect, one that honors students' integrity and recognizes their complexity. To honor a student's integrity is to see the student as more than a trainable product, more than a walking mind. It is to see the student as someone who yearns for meaning in his or her life, who asks questions and inquires, who thinks and feels. When Mr. Bowler requested that Tompkins's class think about the meaning of Thanksgiving, Mr. Bowler expressed not only faith that they could explore the topic but a respect that they would have something meaningful to contribute. When Miss Hughes sought to connect her love of music to her students' journeys in the world, she recognized her own and her students' complexity. She talked respectfully to her students about virtuoso performances, soulful expressions, great ideas, and heartfelt experiences. And when Mr. Barton talked aloud about his nightly dreams and shared his personal ruminations, he let us know that there was more to a composed life than commas and semicolons. At times I found him strange, but mostly I saw him searching. I knew that he expected the students who

sat before him to react honestly, with thought and feeling. He expected us to have integrity and depth. He believed we could contribute to the ideas he would plop in our laps. Faith in and respect for our students, along with an insistence that what we have to offer is something quite special, is one way to ensure that doors are opened for these invitations. Teaching with a love of learning, attempting to instill in others the lure that we experience in our special domains, requires all three dispositions towards students.

CONCLUSION

Rereading this essay I sometimes fear my focus on the lure of learning is too romantic, inadequately grounded in the reality of schooling, and hopelessly inattentive to the facts of daily teaching. In some ways it is all of these things. But that shouldn't negate or devalue what I've elaborated. Teaching with, and learning from, a love of learning is a precious and fragile experience. For the many excellent teachers I've encountered in my life it is also a defining feature of teaching. To be lured by learning is to ignite a desire that reaches beyond our boundaries. Subtract this lure and it is difficult to locate teaching or learning. To elaborate and call for such experiences, when the world weighs in against them, is to outline a precarious position. But that seems to be the way things are.

Notes

1 I am indebted to Michael Dale, Appalachian State University, North Carolina, for his thoughtful conversations and shared texts. His generosity enabled me to pursue and formulate much that follows. I would also like to thank other colleagues for their comments on earlier versions of this text. They include: Nick Burbules; Mark Conrad, Isabel Duffy, Alex Head, Paul Michalec, Ofelia Miramontes, Mitch Nathan, Michelle Reidel, Michele Seipp, Mary Ann Shea, Lorrie Shepard, Greg Smith, Bill Stanley, Lynn Stanley, and Marcia Westkott. I am also grateful to Gary Natriello and three anonymous *TCR* reviewers.

2 In the educational literature we are beginning to reacknowledge the more general role of emotion in learning and teaching, and, more specifically, the role of love (or eros) in teaching and learning. A growing but still quite small and varied body of literature exists. See, for example, Megan Boler, *Feeling Power* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Kerry Burch, *Eros as the Educational Principle of Democracy* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000); Robert Fried, *The Passionate Teacher* (Boston: Beason Press, 1995); Jim Garrison, *Dewey and Eros* (Teachers College Press, 1997); Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995); Lisa Goldstein, *Teaching with Love* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997); Andy Hargreaves, "The emotional practice of teaching," *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 1998, 14:8, 835-854; Dwayne Huebner, *The Lure of the Transcendent* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1999); Sam Intrator (ed.) *Stories of the Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2002); Ursula Kelly, *Schooling Desire* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Nel Noddings, *Caring* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); and Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Franciso: Jossey Bass, 1998). Boler, Burch, Garrison, Goldstein, and Kelly along with Jane Roland Martin, Michael Dale, Elaine O'Quinn, Rachael

Kessler, and Ann Diller contributed essays to an edited (Liston and Garrison) collection entitled *Teaching, Learning, and Loving* (New York City, Routledge Falmer, 2003).

3 Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). This book will be cited as *EB* in the text for all subsequent references.

4 Annie Dillard, *An American Childhood* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987). This book will be cited as *AC* in the text for all subsequent references.

5 Elsewhere I have commented on these matters. See Daniel P. Liston, "Love and Despair in Teaching" *Educational Theory 50*, (2000): 81–102.

6 It is difficult to capture or succinctly define Carson's use of *eros*. Her work, *Eros the Bittersweet*, is an exploration of, and attempt to gain a clearer understanding of eros. An appropriate but perhaps potentially misleading shorthand definition would be the following: eros is the paradoxical desire that motivates and inhabits romantic yearning. Others, for example Birch, write of eros more broadly as yearning and desire. In Carson's work, however, the context is one of romantic love and yearning.

7 Kerry Burch is helpful here. See Burch, *Eros as the Educational Principle of Democracy.*

8 It is here that I find Megan Boler's and Ursula Kelly's works extremely helpful. See Megan Boler, *Feeling Power* (New York: Routledge, 1999); and Ursula Kelly, *Schooling Desire* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

9 Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1998). This book will be cited as *CT* in the text for all subsequent references.

10 Jane Tompkins, *A Life In School* (Redding, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1996), 56. This book will be cited as *LS* in the text for all subsequent references.

11 The last two decades of the last century was an active time for this effort. See James Ladwig, *Academic Distinctions* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

12 Jane Roland Martin, *Schoolhome*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

13 Ortega Y. Gasset, *On Love* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1959), 88.

14 Mr. Barton is a pseudonym.

15 Kathleen Hill, "The Anointed," *Doubletake*, Fall, 1999, 79–89. This short story will be cited as *TA* in the text for all subsequent references.

16 Simone Weil, *Waiting for God* (New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1951), 180.

17 Robert Grudin, *The Grace of Great Things* (New York; Ticknor and Fields, 1990), 58.

18 Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and being just* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) 23–28.

19 Iris Murdoch writes tellingly about the connections among beauty, the sacred, and the good. See Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (New York: Schocken Books, 1973). Another work attempting to discern connections among beauty, truths, and the good is by Wendy Farley. See Wendy Farley, *Eros for the Other* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

20 Scarry, *On Beauty*, 24–26.

21 Ibid, 8.

22 Tracy Kidder, *Among Schoolchildren* (New York: Avon Books, 1990).

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