

Pedagogy of the Heart: Ruminations on Living Poetically

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ABSTRACT: Each year I teach several dozen more student-teachers as they complete their Bachelor of Education degrees and prepare to be teachers. By the end of the second week in the Bachelor of Education program, the student-teachers are always overwhelmed with how much they need to learn in order to be effective teachers. Like a drumming chorus that punctuates their days, they are overwhelmed by the proliferating facts, skills, and strategies that are all equally clamoring for attention, all equally essential. In my work with pre-service teachers I constantly live a dilemma. Student-teachers express a pressing practical agenda: What do I need to know in order to succeed as a teacher? While I do not diminish my professional responsibility to prepare student-teachers with practical strategies and experiences, my main response is to encourage student-teachers to know themselves as poets, to live creatively in the pedagogic world of students and teachers.

RÉSUMÉ: Tous les ans, j'enseigne à plusieurs autres douzaines d'étudiants-professeurs qui terminent leurs Licences d'enseignant et se préparent à être professeurs. A la fin de la deuxième semaine du programme de Licence en enseignement, les étudiants-professeurs se sentent toujours dépassés par l'énorme besoin d'apprendre afin d'être un vrai bon professeur. La prolifération de faits, de spécialités et de stratégies dont tous demandent le même intérêt et la même priorité, les accablent et rythment leurs jours tel le ferait le battement lancinant des baguettes sur le tambour. Pour préparer les professeurs, je vis un dilemme permanent dans mon travail. Les étudiants-professeurs font part d'une sempiternelle inquiétude: "De quoi avons-nous besoin pour réussir dans l'enseignement?" Ma principale réponse est de les encourager à découvrir en eux le poète caché, à être créatif dans un monde pédagogique constitués d'étudiants et de professeurs. Cela ne change rien au fait que je n'oublie pas ma part professionnelle qui est de les préparer avec des stratégies et des expériences pratiques.

*To be a poet in a destitute time means:
to attend, singing, to the trace of the fugitive gods.
This is why the poet in the time of the world's night
utters the holy. (Heidegger, 1971, p. 94)*

*A poet stands before reality that is every day new,
miraculously complex, inexhaustible, and tries to
enclose as much of it as possible in words. (Milosz,
1983, p. 56)*

*Poetry proper is never merely a higher mode (melos)
of everyday language. It is rather the reverse:
everyday language is a forgotten and therefore
used-up poem, from which there hardly resounds a
call any longer. (Heidegger, 1971, p. 208)*

Each year I teach several dozen more student-teachers as they complete their Bachelor of Education degrees and prepare to be teachers. I teach primarily in courses with titles like "English Curriculum and Instruction," "Language Across the Curriculum," "Teaching Written Composition," "Principles of Teaching," and "Communication Skills for Teachers." By the end of the second week in the Bachelor of Education program, the student-teachers are always overwhelmed with how much they need to learn in order to be effective teachers. Like a drumming chorus that punctuates their days, they are overwhelmed by the proliferating facts, skills, and strategies that are all equally clamoring for attention, all equally essential.

In all my work with student-teachers, I remember my own Bachelor of Education studies, and my teaching practicum, and the nine years of secondary school teaching that occupied most of my 20's and a slice of my 30's. I remember the first class I taught in a real school. My school sponsor directed me to teach two poems about snakes by D.H. Lawrence and Emily Dickinson. I prepared with film-strips, colourful pictures of snakes from *National Geographic*, intriguing biological facts about snakes, copious notes on the symbolism, themes, and imagery of the two poems, and questions to stimulate discussion. At the end of the lesson, I felt confident that I had presented the poems in creative ways, and that the students were engaged in a worthwhile learning experience. After the students left the classroom, the sponsor teacher glowered at me with

a clearly distressed and distressing look. He barked, "*I can't believe it. What do they teach you at the university?*" I was shocked. I anticipated that all my planning and convicted effort would be rewarded with at least a word of compliment. Instead, the sponsor teacher breathed menacingly, "*You did not even mention the oxymoron in the first poem.*" At the time, I did not even know what an *oxymoron* was, but I couldn't tell the sponsor teacher. I said nothing. At the beginning of my teaching career, in my early 20's, I learned an important lesson: I will never be able to hold enough facts and information in my head to know everything that might be useful to know as a teacher.

In my work with pre-service teachers I constantly live a dilemma. Student-teachers express a pressing practical agenda: What do I need to know in order to succeed as a teacher? I wonder if they see the teacher in the image of a comic book hero with a utility belt replete with all the tools they will need for every contingency and emergency. While I do not diminish my professional responsibility to prepare student-teachers with practical strategies and experiences, my main response is to encourage student-teachers to know themselves as poets, to live creatively in the pedagogic world of students and teachers.

I am a poet and a teacher, and my poetry informs my teaching, and my teaching informs my poetry. I also claim to be a lonely poet because our contemporary world mostly ignores poets, and I am an evangelical poet who preaches the good news that poetry is fundamental to our well-being. Vanier (1998) in *Becoming Human* writes:

Artists, poets, mystics, prophets, those who do not seem to fit into the world or the ways of society, are frequently lonely. They feel themselves to be different, dissatisfied with the status quo and with mediocrity; dissatisfied with our competitive world where so much energy goes into ephemeral things. (p. 8)

A poem invites me to be still, to remember to breathe, to hear and see and know with the heart. And as a teacher who aspires to teach others to teach still others, I need to be still, I need to remember to breathe, I need to hear and see and know with the heart.

*poetry is the flow of blood
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And, so, I offer six ruminations on living poetically:

1) To Live Poetically is to Live in Language

I emphasize the performative and creative activity of language. Human beings are really human be(com)ings constituted in the play of language. Too often we use language to declare, assert, prove, argue, convince, and proclaim notions of truth. But what happens when we emphasize the use of language to question and play with and savour and ruminate on notions of truth? Language as performance invites collaboration and conversation, and a keen sense of confidence that we are engaging together in creating intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and aesthetic possibilities. We all need to be committed to writing and re-writing our stories together, and we need to be committed to hearing one another's stories, too. By understanding language as performance, I am reminded that language does not empower me to nail down truth or truths. Instead, language is dynamic and energetic, and opens up possibilities for understanding our lives and experiences and relations.

And so, in the following poem I recall an incident from many years ago in order to remind myself that language is no simple tool for the clear expression of understanding. Instead, language is the creative medium by which we construct meaning collaboratively. Student-teachers need to acknowledge that in their teaching, in their interactions with students, they are not dispensing knowledge and facts and skills like a server at a fast food outlet. Instead, they are engaging learners in an endlessly complex process of language use, including conjecturing, questioning, reading, writing, talking, listening, viewing, and representing. So, to live poetically is to live in language.

THE POSTER

my first semester away from home,
still sixteen, living with Tony
in a narrow rectangle in Bowater House,
Memorial University of Newfoundland
now almost the whole universe

I bought a poster at Woolco:
a black and white photo of a stream
running through a copse of conifers
sketching the sky, overlaid with words
I cannot remember, but words

jammed with enough emotional energy
fired in the poster frenzy of 1970 when
religion was both waning and waving,
almost everyone in Bowater House came
to my room like a shrine, sat on my bed

and scribbled the poster words to send
to parents and girlfriends, to pin up
on bulletin boards over their desks
where they could be daily sustained
with a handful of heartfelt words

I wrote my parents, and eagerly
included the poster words, handwritten
in my plain clear style, but I hadn't learned
the MLA style for including citations yet,
still a semester or two away

soon after a note arrived from Carrie:
We read your letter and we couldn't
make any sense out of it, you wrote about
settling in and receiving the parcel I sent
and the next thing we know

you are talking about being one
and serene with the sky and water
and trees, and Skipper and I were sure
you must have been on drugs
when you wrote the letter

I learned how dangerous it is
to write, how often language baffles us
with Hermes playing his confounding
tricks, and so I gave up sending
my parents words, too worrisome,

but now almost three decades later
 in poems I am beginning to say
 again what I always wanted to say,
 but still I send this poster poem
 with a clear message:

I am not on drugs,
 only possessed with poems

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2) *To Live Poetically is to Love*

Teachers need to love the people they aspire to teach. Therefore, they need to know their pupils. They need to enter imaginatively into the lived experiences of others. They need to listen to others. They need to learn from others. They need to listen to the stories of others. It is not enough to know how to manage the dynamics of a classroom or prepare effective report cards or organize a busy timetable. Teachers need to hear the stories of others so that they know the others they are serving. They need to be gentle and hopeful and tender and intimate. The teacher fills people with courage and hope and resolve to live in the now, to live each day with purpose. I am not claiming that all teachers will, or even can, love all their students in the same ways. And I am certainly not proposing a single notion of love, but informed by long spiritual traditions, including Judeo, Christian, and Islamic traditions, that promote love as essential to human well-being, I support the optimistic notion that teachers need to practice love which can be defined broadly to include respect, honour, caring, and attentiveness.

I have lived for half a century, and all my life I have been a teacher or student, and the one consistent theme, the one thread that winds through all my living is hope, the anticipation that we can learn to live together well in the world. Last summer I visited St. John's, Newfoundland, and on Water Street I met Sandra, a former high school

student who I taught in 1980. She is now a pediatric psychologist. She said, "I am where I am now because of you. I was in big trouble in school, but you cared about me, and I turned my life around." I still wonder what I really did. When I recently read Vanier's (1998) *Becoming Human*, I was impressed with his wise and optimistic vision of the world. Vanier asks: "Is this not the life undertaking of us all . . . to become human? It can be a long and sometimes painful process. It involves a growth to freedom, an opening up of our hearts to others, no longer hiding behind masks or behind the walls of fear and prejudice. It means discovering our common humanity" (p. 1). According to Vanier, "We human beings are all fundamentally the same. We all belong to a common, broken humanity. We all have wounded, vulnerable hearts. Each one of us needs to feel appreciated and understood; we all need help" (p. 37). Each of us needs

An accompanier ... someone who can stand beside us on the road to freedom, someone who loves us and understands our life. An accompanier can be a parent, a teacher, or a friend – anyone who can put a name to our inner pain and feelings. (p. 128)

Vanier concludes: "We do not have to be saviours of the world! We are simply human beings, enfolded in weakness and in hope, called together to change our world one heart at a time" (p. 163).

I began my first teaching job in 1976 at a high school in Robert's Arm in the northwest corner of Newfoundland. At 22 years old, I was young and enthusiastic and committed to being the best teacher I could be. My first teaching assignment was as a classroom teacher for grade seven with 48 students. Though the school was located in a small town with a thousand people, the school also served as the high school for several elementary schools in several towns around the bay, and students were bussed to R.C. Parsons Collegiate. Many of them were bussed to grade seven. On the first day of school when the 48 students squeezed into the grade seven classroom, located on the second floor of the school building, separated by a stairwell and the lobby and a hallway from the rest of the high school, I was full of fear. Some of the young men were bigger than I was. Some of the young women had a brazen bravado that belied their 14 years. Designed for about 30 students, the room soon looked like a crowded subway train. I felt claustrophobic. The month of September was four weeks of sore throats and red faces from shouting, a panic-stricken confrontation with chaos, long nights of talking with my wife about the horror. Near the end of September, one of the boys brought me a big stick. He had carved it out of oak from an old bed frame

with a hand hold. He said, "*I think you need this.*" That day I grew so angry and frustrated I banged the stick on the desk with a crack of fury. The violence left a vacuum of silence. I stared at the shard of oak in my hand, looked at the frightened faces of my students, and in that awful, awful moment knew my strategies for classroom management would never work. I spoke quietly to my students. I said, *I'm sorry. From now on, we will have just one rule in this classroom. When a person is speaking, everyone else will be quiet and pay attention to the speaker.* With that one rule of respect everything changed. I spent a mostly joyful year with those 48 students, and I have continued to live the one rule in my classes ever since.

In the first month of my teaching life, I learned what hooks (2000) expresses in her book *All About Love: New Visions*: "It had become hard for me to continue to believe in love's promise when everywhere I turned the enchantment of power or the terror of fear overshadowed the will to love" (p. xvi) What I learned in my first month of teaching, and what I have been learning in more than two decades of teaching is to respect, care for, and love my students.

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3) To Live Poetically is to Know the Backyard

Last January I taught a doctoral seminar. For the first time, I checked the etymology of "seminar," and learned that "seminar" is derived from "seminarium:" a seed plot or nursery or garden. And since then, I have been ruminating on gardens and backyards and even the experience of meadows of wildflowers. I am learning to breathe with the heart's rhythms as I seek to disclose and know again my location situated in local geographical spaces that represent a location for locution in the bigger world.

In *Pedagogy of the Heart*, published posthumously in 1997, Freire acknowledges from the perspective of a long life nearing its end that his childhood backyard was a space connected to many spaces. Freire

encourages me that “the more rooted I am in my location, the more I extend myself to other places so as to become a citizen of the world. No one becomes local from a universal location” (p. 39).

For more than a decade, I have been writing autobiographical poetry about growing up on Lynch’s Lane in Corner Brook, Newfoundland. So far, I have published two books of poems, and I now acknowledge that the stories of my backyard are inexhaustible. I began the first autobiographical poems about growing up when I was 34 years old. I write about people and experiences that I never wrote about in school where I tried to mimic the writing I read in class anthologies. For years and years I heard an insistent voice of warning that it is not sufficient to write about ordinary people with ordinary emotions in ordinary situations. Needed is an extraordinary subject or an extraordinary perspective on the ordinary. Why could I not write about the experiences of my life? I am learning to breathe with the heart’s rhythms as I seek to disclose and know again my location situated in local geographical spaces that represent a location for locution in the bigger world.

Recently I taught a Bachelor of Education course titled “Teaching Written Composition.” I invited the students in the course to write about their memories of homely experiences with bread and backyards. I encouraged them to write the stories of personal objects and photos that held significance for them. And I introduced them to a wide range of poetic forms in order to shake up the narrow conception of poetry that is too often pervasive in school classrooms. I hoped that the students would understand how poetry is close to the rhythms of their bodies, especially rhythms of the heart and the blood’s flow. I hoped students would understand how poetry is inextricably connected to the writer’s voice, the writer’s unique perspective on the world, the writer’s daily and local experiences and emotions. After devoting several classes to a poetry unit in which we considered sound and found and visualist and prose poems, after making poems individually and collaboratively, after exploring the creative possibilities for poetic knowing and living, one student said, *“That’s all very nice, but how do I teach the sonnet to grade nine students? I really need to know how to teach students how to write a sonnet.”* I was temporarily flabbergasted. I said, *“Perhaps you shouldn’t teach the sonnet to grade nine students.”* Then, I delivered a short lecture on the history of the sonnet, how the Italian sonnet in particular is a poetic form that was adopted by English writers from Italian writers, and how the form is not necessarily well-suited to the rhythms of the English language. I encouraged the student to consider

carefully whether he had any pedagogical and curricular justifications for teaching the sonnet besides a long-standing tradition in school English classes that the sonnet will be taught. But nothing I said could ameliorate the student's sense of urgent and pressing need to know how to teach sonnet writing. According to the student, the sonnet was the privileged poetic genre he needed to teach, and he wanted to be ready to teach it, even devoid of any consideration of social, political, historical, contemporary, and local contexts.

So, in the following poem, I ruminate on how I am always rooted in my backyards, in the specific local contexts of time and place that shape me. I am not denying the significant value of attending to the whole wide world. Of course not. I am only contending that teachers and students need to begin with the intricate and intimate and integral mysteries of their backyards before they lay claim to knowing the vast world.

WEST COAST PRAIRIE

last Saturday while biking the dike around Lulu Island, a sand sculpture swept and shaped in the mouth of the Fraser River, Norm asked me why I had moved to Richmond,

and I confessed, economic necessity, the only place I could afford, no other reason, and Norm said he chose Richmond because it is flat and has farms like Saskatchewan,

how when he first moved here, years ago, the Coast Mountains around English Bay held only threats, the world written in the geography of our growing up, and I told him

about Corner Brook curled in the Humber Arm with the world's biggest paper mill belching steam smoke sulphite all day, every day, except Christmas and Labour Day,

and how I always thought the world had come to Corner Brook with Ann Landers, Ed Sullivan, Hollywood, Eaton's catalogues, and Millbrook Mall with an elevator,

and visits by famous people like Pierre and Margaret Trudeau, Gordon Lightfoot, Ian and Sylvia, Gordie Howe, Hollywood actors (though I can't remember any), the Queen even,

until I left Corner Brook for the first time at 15 and went to Montreal and couldn't believe how big the world was, so much bigger than TV and Saturday matinees,

and after growing up perpendicular on the side of a hill like a robust Merlot, kissed by wild autumn, spring ice, summer blast, and winter light with long shadows on the retina

of the heart, I now live in Richmond with one long wet season, flat like Saskatchewan, and remember Jigg's dinner, dark rum, cod's tongues, stewed moose, fish and brewis,

jigs and Celtic rhythms, Al Pittman's poetry, Skipper's rants, storms sturdy enough to knock you off your feet, and stripping the willow with Eddy Ezekiel on accordion,

always going back in my poems, knowing I have left and never left, knowing I can always go back and never go back, the world written in the geography of our growing up

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4) To Live Poetically is to be Still

Poetry invites me to be still, to remember to breathe, to hear and see and know with the heart. And as a teacher, I need to be still, I need to remember to breathe, I need to hear and see and know with the heart. I am middle-aged, and all my life I have been a student or a teacher, but only now, after a half century of living, am I learning the simple and significant lesson that I need times of slowness and silence and stillness. I need opportunities to breathe deeply, to attend to the world around me with care, to rise up in action from places of quiet deliberation. This is the message I most eagerly share with student-teachers. In the following poem I ruminate on the poet's way of attending sensually and

inquisitively and meditatively to the world, everywhere expansive and inviting.

COULEES

not much flows in these coulees
except the cool dry wind
persistently claims ownership
refuses an easy hospitality

shrubs cacti grass
cling to the coulees
like a brush cut
that can't hide the scalp

the sky is a concave ocean
pulled toward the centre
of the universe always moving

prairie grass, sage and wild rye:
no sage would try to name
all the things that grow in these coulees

a coyote writes lines in the wind,
reminds me I cannot
both see and write, and still
I write in order to see

like a gopher, a poet digs
an intricate map
of subterranean lines
with holes for popping up

I see the shadows of birds
but I cannot see the birds

the sun soothes with the wind
woos me into sleep
leaves me woozy even

I dwell in the coulee that does not flow,
this dry, arid coulee where cacti flame

I wait for the coyote
write nothing

perhaps writing will come
in February when I am far away

flowing with the lines of sun
and trails and gopher hollows
and the roots of cacti

succulents can find water
where there is none,
suck the dry earth
like an orange sucks my dry mouth

In "Three Days to See" (1932/1968) Keller writes:

Now and then I have tested my seeing friends to discover what they see. Recently I was visited by a very good friend who had just returned from a long walk in the woods, and I asked her what she had observed. 'Nothing in particular,' she replied. I might have been incredulous had I not been accustomed to such responses, for long ago I became convinced that the seeing see little. (pp. 426-427)

Keller concludes the essay with words of advice that can inspire all teacher-researchers:

Use your eyes as if tomorrow you would be stricken blind. And the same method can be applied to the other senses. Hear the music of voices, the song of a bird, the mighty strains of an orchestra, as if you would be stricken deaf tomorrow. Touch each object you want to touch as if tomorrow your tactile sense would fail. Smell the perfume of flowers, taste with relish each morsel, as if tomorrow you could never smell and taste again. Make the most of every sense; glory in all the facets of pleasure and beauty which the world reveals to you through the several means of contact which Nature provides. (pp. 435-436)

Keller not only reminds us to be sensually receptive and perceptive in the world, but she also suggests how much our senses are connected to our imagination, spirit, and humanness.

In *Moby Dick* Melville (1920) describes an episode in which a rowboat is scudding across the ocean in pursuit of a whale. The oarsmen are passionately driven by their single-minded aim to capture the whale; they are groaning with their exertion. The episode is violent and

turbulent. Melville observes that the success of the hunt requires that one person do nothing. The person is the harpooner who must sit quietly in the bow of the boat. Melville explains: "To insure the greatest efficiency in the dart, the harpooners of this world must start to their feet from out of idleness, and not from out of toil" (p. 297). Our world is a frantic world, frenetic and frenzied with false hopes and facile solutions. Such a world aches for harpooners who can rise out of stillness to engage in wise and worthwhile action. This is the kind of teacher that I seek to become, and the kind of teacher that I encourage others to become.

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5) To Live Poetically is to Live With Trust

For six years I taught in a school in a small Newfoundland town with a principal who did not trust his colleagues or his students. He was concerned about order, about having enough seats for all students, about managing the timetable and the school bells and discipline, and he lived daily in fearful anticipation of problems and dilemmas and catastrophes (always lurking in the corners), and sought daily the simplest solutions to all problems and dilemmas and catastrophes. The school was like a complicated machine that had to be coordinated and fuelled and oiled and timed in order that the parts could function. There was a sense that planning and organization were all that was needed for the effective operation of a school. Fred would not allow the eight teachers on the staff to have a master key that would give them access to the different rooms of the school like the laboratory, gymnasium, library, and cafeteria. He claimed that the teachers would mislay and lose the keys, and that students might find them and break into places they were not permitted. So, in the staff-room there was a key-board with keys for the rooms of the school pinned and labelled. Because the teachers had a way of sticking the keys in their pockets and forgetting to return them to the key-board, Fred tied large objects to the ends of the keys – a 12-inch ruler, a wrench, a portion of green garden hose. Teachers still sometimes

mislaid the keys or poked them in their briefcases or even pockets. I frequently had to ask Fred if I could borrow his master key because my students were waiting for me to get the floor hockey equipment or were milling around outside the library door. Sometimes I asked for my own master key. Sometimes I grew angry. At least once while I was doing supervision duty during lunch break, I had to climb over a seven foot barrier and drop down into a storage room in order to get a bucket and mop after a student had been ill in the hallway. Sometimes I reasoned with Fred, and sometimes I pleaded, and sometimes I glowered. But, of course, nothing I did convinced Fred to change his mind, and that was the most frustrating lesson I learned over and over about Fred. He never changed his mind. He had boundless confidence in his decisions. Fred was not a good administrator because he could not trust anyone. He needed to manage everything and everybody all the time. But the educator who lives poetically knows how to live trustfully. In the following poem, I consider several philosophers; each represents a concerted effort to understand how to live well in the world. But I especially admire Blaise Pascal and Charlie Brown because I think they both nurtured the resilient heart that keeps on trusting, even in the face of difficult and dispiriting challenges.

FOUR PHILOSOPHERS

Nietzsche the madman believed in words,
believed that coupled words
conceived and gave birth to truths
like beams of light producing
holograms of worlds in worlds,
projected images with sense only
of substance. Armed with an unsceptical
faith in words, he asked too many questions
and above all insisted on answers,
an odd habit for a philosopher
who ought to have known better;
only a few questions have answers
and they are seldom worth asking.

F. Scott Fitzgerald once observed
that a writer must be able
to juggle two polar concepts in the air,
believing and disbelieving both

(for example, at the same time
 the world is a mess/the world is a wonder
 the world is a wonder/the world is a mess).
 Obviously he couldn't keep
 the balls and sticks and rings
 rising and falling in circles and loops
 since he cracked up, wrote about it
 and died at forty-four, filled
 with gladness it was finally over.

Pascal confessed a relationship
 with God is a gamble (having devoted
 his life to facing the poker-faced God).
 In mathematics he sought him and discovered
 only a computer of infinite numerical order
 and probability. In monasteries he sought him
 and found silence reverberating with music
 he alone heard. All his life he twisted
 a multicoloured puzzle without solution
 (admitting though he might be in God's
 image, God didn't look familiar at all)
 and with a poet's endless delight
 played the puzzle anyway.

Charlie Brown kicked himself
 into the air for the six hundred
 and seventy-seventh time, even
 as Lucy, once more, yanked
 away the football. Believing with Linus
 without end in the Great Pumpkin
 who fails to show, valentines
 that never arrive, and white rabbits dancing,
 Schulz' squiggle of lines is a clown,
 a cousin of Pierrot, almost knows
 most things worth knowing,
 with a silver star on one cheek,
 and a mercury tear on the other.

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6. To Live Poetically is to Laugh With Indefatigable Hopefulness

In a trenchant article in the newsmagazine, *Maclean's*, Francis (2001) wrote: "Education is ... one of society's most fossilized, rigid and change-averse institutions" (p. 50). That is a strong indictment, but whenever I grow pessimistic or cynical, I return to Freire (1985) in whom I hear a voice full of passion and hope, compassion and concern: "Each day be open to the world, be ready to think; each day be ready not to accept what is said just because it is said, be predisposed to reread what is read; each day investigate, question, and doubt" (p. 81).

The effective teacher fires the hearts and the imaginations of teachers and parents and students, not with platitudes and shopworn homilies that nobody believes, but with the model of a life committed to learning and teaching, to risk-taking and experimentation, to journeying and growing. Being a teacher is a way of life, the living out of a vocation or calling, a way of dwelling in the world. The teacher is a visionary whose feet are firm and steady in the soil (even mud) of real lived experience with all the constraints imposed by time and money and differences of opinion, while at the same time dreaming new possibilities.

Kolbenschlag (1988) observes, "we know that social institutions like the Church, the corporation, the local schools, exist to enable human flourishing, but we experience deprivation within them" (p. 8). She proposes that "the refusal to relate is the sin of our times: the refusal to recognize and respect another's existence; the refusal to speak, to negotiate; the refusal to confront; the refusal to touch one another and cherish the flesh of the 'other' " (p. 41). As Kolbenschlag declares, "the challenge to both men and women is to invent new myths. People are changed, not by intellectual convictions or ethical urgings, but by transformed imaginations. We must begin to live out of new myths" (p. 179). Inspired by Kolbenschlag, I seek to write hopeful possibilities in my

poetry. I am not naïvely blind and deaf to all the clanging, glaring reasons that militate against hope in the world, but I am faithfully committed to composing possibilities for joy. And I can think of no more serious and sincere calling for all educators. The following poem is a testimony to hope.

CLIFF EDGES

I went away. Falling water imagined
me in other places I have been,
I wish to be. My moonshone spirit
leaps off cliff edges without even
looking for a river to fall into.

The world is a hot, noisy place
like a pulp and paper mill. Still
the only place I want to be.
I will not write the world
with a refusal to lean on light,

like Caitlin who filled binders
with scraps of disaster and dread,
like a deranged disciple

of Peter Mansbridge, well-paid
to point out a world of woe,
perhaps no longer recognizes joy,
like the colour-blind, can't even
comprehend whole bands of possibility.

I will not record the lines only
of shadow's sadness, leaning on light,
a rumination of rough cut stones,
all always recalled in the blood
with its own circular course.

Franck (1993) in a delightfully wise book titled *A Little Compendium on That Which Matters* writes about "The New Order" which he describes as "the anonymous, unorganized, organic network of awareness beyond all ideological labels" (p. 23). I recognize my own connection to Franck's "New Order."

It is a network of loners, encompassing those who reflect on the meaning of being Human in our technotronic rat trap, who dare to fathom the depths of life, of death, in order to attain a life-praxis, an ethos suitable for this end-time: a religious orientation to existence. Without badge, without watchword, they recognize, hearten one another. (pp. 23-24)

I am part of "a network of loners." I am a loner, but I am not alone. I do not speak as part of a collective voice. As a researcher and educator and poet, my voice echoes other voices, but it does not seek to mimic or impersonate other voices, or to silence other voices, or to harmonize with other voices. Instead, I seek to cry out like trumpet calls an urgent invitation to listen to the light, to wake up, to know the world differently, outside the typical parameters and predictions. I am part of a network of loners who seek to give heart to one another, speaking to the heart of the other, hearing the heart of the other in our hearts. As a teacher I am always eager to learn from other teachers, such as my mother-in-law who offered me a gift of wisdom.

RESURRECTION PLANT

(for Vivian)

on the summer day
my life was spinning
out of its prescribed orbit
and I could claim
no line of gravity
my mother-in-law

reached out and touched
a flower in her garden,
This is the resurrection plant
because regardless
of how much you cut it back
it always grows again

*poetry is the flow of blood
breath, breathing, breath-giving,
the heart's measure,
the living word
that inspirits hope, even
in the midst of each
day's tangled messiness*

As teachers, including student-teachers, experienced teachers, retired teachers, may we always live poetically with a playful heart, in language, in love, intimate with our local locations, growing in stillness, full of trust, always hoping. May we know constantly the heart of pedagogy.

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