The Loss of Metaphor: Some Thoughts on the Teaching of Language-and-Literature

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I The Problem and Its Precincts

Somewhere between the time when a tiny child says "Daddy" or "Mommy," and in that word expresses attitudes of dependence, security, and also a delight in the utterance itself, and that later time when he might write "the aforesaid contacting of the parties, being the real issue economywise," a loss in the use of metaphor and in the metaphorical sense of the world has taken place.

What I mean by metaphor in this essay is not merely the narrow sense of a particular figure of speech, but the assignment of value by implicit comparison or association to the objects of reality, and accordingly to those words that are symbols for these objects. Perhaps the usage will be clearer when I say that I am concerned with the loss of the connotative aspect of words, the infringement upon them by presumably denotative language, that results in a loss in the connotative (metaphoric) activity of the mind. (Just as readily available are the terminology distinctions of Cassirer and Langer, i.e., symbol and sign; or Burke's contrast of the language of poetry with the language of science. To some degree, I employ all of these terms in the hope that an eclectic terminology will allow my argument a wider range.) Nor should the phrase "metaphorical view of life" puzzle anyone. By this I mean only a view that forms relationships between ideas as well as between things in a connotative and thus imaginative way, and that assigns value by this process. In other words, the metaphorical view assigns humanistic values where the purported objective realism of science cannot. Furthermore, the metaphorical sense is an imperative for language skills that occupy a large part of all human life, and for this reason any weakening of it is a matter of general concern rather than merely a poet's problem.

As difficult as it is to determine whether our age of realism and its emphasis on technology is the cause or result of the loss of metaphor, it does seem possible to suggest that the indirect though pervasive influence of a technologically oriented civilization might elevate the language of science over the language of poetry. In some measure, this is what I believe has happened. I do not wish to redress the balance by crying down the one and praising the other, but rather by suggesting that the failure to understand the language of poetry has been accompanied by a loss of competence to use any language, including that of science. The loss of a metaphorical sense of language is finally responsible for failures in writing skills even when these are brought to

bear on--what seems to most students to be so far from literary art--the logical continuity of analytical discourse.

Before proceeding further it seems important that I try to identify the particular type of student towards whom my approach is directed, because there are any number of students with writing and reading problems that cannot be explained or explained away by what I have to say. The student (whom we all may have had in varying numbers) who is unable to write out six steps of instruction for the use of a pencil sharpener is not my concern here. I think that much intelligent and useful work has been done, and its results written about, in terms of teaching basic English to those who, though native speakers, have somehow remained quasi-illiterate. Less concern seems to have been devoted to understanding a less incompetent group, yet one nevertheless handicapped: that group of native readers and writers who can write out those instructions for the pencil sharpener, but who cannot develop in written form an idea that they themselves have orally hinted at; and who have trouble isolating or abstracting ideas or themes in literature. This group is neither unintelligent nor illiterate. Often (though not always) in using the spoken language a member of this group will give the impression of much greater promise in regard to his language skills than his reading or writing abilities will eventually support. The written work of this student might well suggest that he is not a native user of the language. And in his reading he may make no connection between his own speaking voice or those of his friends and the equivalent qualities inhering in the written example before him. I have heard these failings spoken of in terms of lazy language habits or lack of clear thinking. And though these characterizations cannot be denied, I do not think it is merely more diligence, earnestness, or hard work that is needed, but a particular kind of emphsis that has been too often lacking. Most of the students in this category that I have encountered have lost faith in the power of words in print (their own or someone else's) as a form of self-expression, and they also exhibit a less than fully developed metaphorical sense.

I do not mean to suggest that these students are wholly unresponsive to any metaphoric aspects of verbal art or other forms of discourse. During the blackest days of a term I might well think so, but it is not true. Merely listening to their speech confirms the falsity of such a bleak judgment. But the written word seems to be another matter. They can write English sentences, but are unable to write of their experiences (whether with life or literature) in a way that conveys a consciously controlled sense of outlook; similarly, they are discouraging in their inability to read in a way that permits them to derive meaning from the work. We have all known the student essay that merely retells the story or repeats the contents of the assigned reading--a most common response to a written assignment in literature courses. Or perhaps the essay is a collection of other writers'

facts--a common response to the writing assignment in other disciplines.

The fact that these students resort to this kind of "listing," and do not see connections and implications, seems not merely a matter of "organization" or "logic." As I see it, it relates to their failure to sense the expanding circle of implication that grows from words, phrases, and sentences used in the source work, and then in turn to fail to sense similar connections in their own writing. Some colleagues have identified the "listing" phenomenon as an unwillingness on the part of the student to take a stand, a timidity in regard to his own opinions and ideas. This may be partly true, but often when the student is queried orally it can be found that his failure to be committed is not absolute; he does in fact have opinions, but somehow these are frozen out when it comes to writing. My own view is that context is the determining factor here. Context in speech seems always to be defined, even though implicitly, by audience, situation, intonation, gesture, etc. Even using the "wrong word" can be overlooked by making it "sound right." This, of course, is not so in writing. Context needs to be created in the black and white of the print. Failure to realize this along with lack of knowledge as to how to accomplish it (which when combined are fundamentally a loss of faith in the fact that it can be accomplished) account in large measure for the awe and fear that grip the student-writer. To this part of the problem add the distinction I have previously hinted at concerning the language of poetry and the language of science. If the superiority of denotative language is seriously believed in and a kind of scientific objectivity is considered the most desirable end because of its exactness, there is little hope that the student will see how writing can provide context in the same way as speech. The written word has ceased being an agent of self-expression. Thus, the amalgam is either a written work without a sense of context, stripped of convincing opinions or ideas, or else one in which ideas and context appear but suggest no conscious control or order. The random quality of this work should not deceive us however. The student writer may seriously believe that the written word (even when it has sprung from his own mind and fingers in the haste of an eleventh-hour writing) is an absolute and fixed thing, about which there can be no question that he has "said what he meant" and "meant what he said."

The component elements of the problem interact disastrously. Objectivity confused with denotation and worshipped in a blind fashion can only mean a lesser role for opinion and implicit comparison (metaphor) since these suggest the subjective and are not single-valued or absolute. Thus, while striving towards the goal of denotative objectivity, these student writers have become unaware of what else is going on in their writing--in fact, they tend to deny that anything else is going on at all.

The relation between the problems of writing for this student

and his problems in reading should be clear. His ability to evaluate the contextual meaning of words, full utterances, and images in reading the writing of others is, in most cases, directly proportional to his awareness of these things in his own writing. I therefore, see the problem of teaching literature to be essentially the same as those encountered in teaching language. Certainly, essential to anything I will subsequently have to say is the understanding that in secondary school and in the introductory college English courses no distinction between reading and writing courses or units should be made (although emphasis at any moment will vary). (I do not mean to undermine the need for an organized approach to rhetoric, whether it be classical or new. Distinctions between classes of arguments and methods of accomplishing one's ends are important. I think, though, that the how-to-do approach can only succeed when there is some faith that words can move men by the appeal to logos, pathos, or ethos. And it is my contention only that we are often faced with the problem that the written word matters so little to the students we hope ultimately to train.)

I have somewhat overstated the extent and degree of the illness, but I have done so only to make clear the distinctions on which I would like to base my suggestions for some amelioration, if not a cure. I discover that there are responses, hidden or buried at varying depths, to the full values of language. The issue then is how to convert these to the level of rational discourse, self-expression, and communications to other persons. First, the response must be mobilized. Second, belief must be restored in the written word as transmitter of this response, as transmitter of values, personal attitudes and ideas. And third, a great deal must be learned about words, the various ways in which they are used, and about the uses of language in general. There is no sequential order to these items; they take place all at once even while they take place one at a time. The attempt to accomplish one bears directly on the accomplishment of the others. Hopefully, too, the methods of this approach will not seem such a bitter root as to offend those students whose language-health is only mildly infected.

II The General Assault

In the light of the tendency during the last decade or more to unify the teaching of composition and literature and to replace prescriptive grammar with elements of structural or generative grammar, my comments on the need to teach language-and-literature may sound like old hat. But even in the face of all that has been done, I would contend that often we are teaching about literature and about language rather than fully utilizing both of them for the presumed unity itself. I think that it must be recognized and agreed upon that an attempt to present grammar (traditional or generative) or a rhetorical system schematically as a series of clear cut rules or to teach literature as a series

of discoveries of fixed elements, terms, or genres is bound to defeat our ends.

More difficult to recognize are the pitfalls that can exist even when we are operating within the framework of a language-literature approach. Even here it is possible to confuse the student by widening rather than lessening the gap between the reading and writing parts of the program. Out of some of my own well-intentioned attempts to achieve force and clarity in student writing, I generalize the following failure. "Precision" and "exactness," those favorite editorial words, can easily become translated in the student mind as equivalents of "scientific accuracy." We combat vague generalization with a request for precise presentation of the idea, and often the student thinks this is a special way that leads to no ambiguity whatsoever. Thus the distinction between useful ambiguity, a multiplicity of related meanings, and incoherence is lost. Frequently the things we try to teach him about his own writing only serve to contradict (for him) what we try to explain about the reading of literature. Thus, unwittingly, even in the combined composition-literature course we can end up by assisting at the funeral of the metaphorical or connotative aspect of language--its fully symbolic (as opposed to sign) function. Noting that a student is not using a word with exactness, we mean that in context this particular word used in this particular way does too little or too much; at any rate it does not fully enhance what we glimpse as the signalled thought or intention of the utterance. The student, however, is not necessarily aware that this is what is meant--even if he has been told once or twice. The lesson is one that needs to be repeated and repeated, directly and indirectly, in every conceivable way if we are to break the habits of a far longer training and a much larger environmental conditioning than that of the class periods devoted to English language arts.

I do not think, therefore, that what must be done consists so much in a series of acts, exercises, or gestures as it does in adopting for ourselves and instilling in the students a governing attitude towards language--its theory and its multiple uses. And perhaps the best opportunity to get at this part of the problem while demonstrating the basic presumption that literature is a verbal structure is by an overemphasis at the ouset on those most stylized verbal forms.

My own choices for the task are poetry and prose fantasy (by which I mean the verbal creation of either wholly non-existent worlds or the highly imaginative or fanciful transfiguration of materials of the actual world). Both poetry and prose fantasy (excepting the class of gimmick-laden technological science fiction) pose serious problems for students of the sort that I am here concerned with. Precisely, I believe, because interpretation or the discovery of meaning in these works depends so greatly on a metaphorical sense and most particularly in the case of

poetry on the precise relationships and meanings of words (i.e., grammar and semantics).

Ultimately, for purposes of comparison and analysis other prose forms need to be used or the final leap to the students' own writing may not ever be achieved. But as we expand our materials for study, what we should strive to achieve always is a strong sense of the grammatical and lexical distinctions that exist between the various forms of writing, as well as distinctions between the different ways of organizing subject matter to provide different kinds of meaning. The analysis should not be principally for instructing about the genres or for garnering information from the works read (although these may be accomplished at the same time, just as some linguistic information results when emphasis is given to concerns other than language analysis). I think, though, that by being true to stylistic analysis within the language-literature node we can best avoid the unfortunate split between reading and writing that has taken place. I suspect, too, that the unity of form and content that we so often need to labor will become apparent more readily to the student.

Several objections to the direction of these proposals are worth considering because they rely, with the best of pedagogical intentions, on student interest and capabilities. The first and more easily answered objection concerns the presumed difficulty students will have in understanding and employing stylistic analysis. I think that the problem for those who find this to be the case most probably lies in their own sense of being trapped in the particular jargon of stylistics that they endorse. It is so easy to become enslaved by the terms of a grammar or any other system. And if our instruction consists largely in the acquisition of the vocabulary of one particular system, the students may well reject the approach to analysis and for obvious reasons other than its difficulty. When I first started bearing down almost exclusively on stylistic analysis with a freshman college class, the results were miserable. I discovered that I was trying to teach them all I knew about style rather than using stylistic analysis to redirect their attention and resuscitate an interest in words. I daresay that I killed what remaining interest they had in words. If through the study of style the students begin merely to get a glimpse of the connections between grammar and meaning, the formal and the semantic, a great deal will have been accomplished.

Another argument, one more directed to the selection of works than to method of analysis, comes to us flying the banner of relevance: Student interest in literature and in writing can only be mobilized by using source materials relevant to the students' age group, needs, problems, etc. The real issue here is lodged in the particular definition of "relevance" and in the subsequent determination of which works fit the definition. In principle, I have minimal objections to the use (but not overuse) of materials that rely for their interest on their relation to prior

experience or present attitudes and problems of the student group. However, considering the great range of objects and ideas that might be relevant in some way to the lives of students in the sixteen to nineteen age group, I am not convinced that one can simply pre-determine with Podsnappian authority what will in fact suit the Young Person. Too often the prescribing anthologies or lists of appropriate materials suggest a limitation analogous to moralistic categorizing of ideas as fit or unfit. It seems to me that the most useful way of admitting relevance as a determining factor is on the spur of the moment in terms of actual student response to the item at hand.

To the extent that we rely exclusively on the narrow or superficial kind of relevance of a work to the students' experience and knowledge, we are in danger of undermining the sensitivity to literature and language that we hope to stimulate. Certainly we lose that function of literature to expand actual individual experience by the vicarious experience encountered in print. But a more serious drawback along the same lines is that we may lessen rather than enhance that metaphorical capacity in the student to move from what he does already know or feel to what he as yet does not.

Furthermore, we make it more difficult for ourselves to analyze the students' failures to comprehend. Will a work be easier for one student to interpret because more relevant to him than to his fellows? Will our best efforts to focus attention on words be offset by glib (and possibly misleading) association with actual prior experience? One of the advantages of the literature of fantasy is that to some degree it avoids a few of the pitfalls that an adherence to the literature of narrow relevance creates. It greatly levels the experiential factor. To the work of fantasy, a student needs to bring a willingness (self or teacher generated) to explore. Few students will have advantages over the others in terms of past experience. Few will be prompted to confuse the details of their individual experience with that presented in the work at hand. Relevance is still a factor, but in a different way. The metaphorical quality of fantasy broadens the range of relevance, so that by the age of sixteen most of the students about whom I am here concerned will have had enough experience to serve as the basis for a very wide range of readings.

Selection of materials, therefore, should best proceed on the principle of how well the readings seem capable of arousing interest in the language--for both teacher and student--and give rise to exclamations of wonder at what a man can do with words if he tries. At times, using a work that poses great difficulties even for you is instructively useful to a class, and sometimes using material as remote as possible from the kind of lives we live every day proves the best means to being convincing about the power of language.

Before turning to specific strategies that may promote these general aims, a word needs to be said about the emphasis I have

placed and will continue to place on the role self-expression plays in this approach. When I suggest the encouragement of student self-expression as one means of enhancing belief in the power of language, I do not think that I am undermining the artistic integrity of the literary works read by creating a critical morass wherein all one need do is feel--the more strongly the better. On the contrary, it seems that an emphasis on self-expression can lead to a heightened understanding of literature. The assignment of value to experience is more than a matter of feeling and the kind of self-expression we encourage must take this into account. Out of a true self-respect for one's own writing a new respect for the writing of others can develop. And similarly, when we argue the particular expressiveness of a work of literature, we must do so in a way that will suggest respect for the self-expression of student writers.

III Hopeful, Sometimes Discouraging Strategies

Having come to that part where some specific suggestions are to be ventured, I hope that I will not betray my stated eclecticism. In no way am I interested in pleading a specific list of works (some anthology in existence or planned) or even the absolute validity of certain projects. A great variety of written works lend themselves to my goals. (A word about drama: Drama concentrates more on character than on objects. Thus, though many teachers regard it as a challenging form for students because of the lack of direction from an authorial voice, in certain ways I think it really less effective for analyzing style. In other words, most high school or freshman college class discussions about drama are likely to focus--and rightly so--on conflict and characterization. In contrast, the description and narration in fiction and poetry lend themselves to greater emphasis on words themselves, without undermining the essence of the genre. I realize that many plays can be cited to argue the contrary. I have used poetic drama and other stylized dramatic forms with success. Perhaps my bias here need best be identified as no more than a personal preference as long as the essential point about what is to be concentrated upon is understood.) The subsequent suggestions therefore represent only a partial list of things I have tried that have met with some measure of success in classes that have ranged widely in interests and language skills.

We can and should at one time or another with a class attack the problems of language directly, by outright discussion of language, its uses, and the meaning of "meaning." What does a symphony mean? or a polemic essay? Is it possible to ask, "What does Minneapolis mean?" I have discovered that students are more interested in such problems concerning the use of language than their writing and reading abilities might suggest.

Nor is it necessary to approach such discussion abstractly.

Any number of literary works can fire the discussion while at once indirectly proving the very things that are under analysis. A poem, for example, such as Frank O'Hara's "Why I am Not a Painter" can provide a wonderfully humorous gateway into a discussion of plastic art as indirect communication and how it distinguishes itself from poetry, and at the same time give rise to any number of related ideas and emotional responses.

One borders on the kind of discussion I am suggesting almost every time a student in class says, "I don't know what it means." When a student reads the sentence "I placed a jar in Tennessee,/ ...upon a hill" (Stevens, "Anecdote of the Jar"), and says he does not know what it means, this is worth pursuing in terms of the kind of meaning that escapes him--linguistic? semantic? metaphysical? What happens when we re-write the sentence with one substitution--"radio-tower" for jar"? Hopefully, I like to believe that after this class period the student could write "I scraped the sky with my pencil case" and defend it, know what he was trying to say. But even if he could not write that sentence himself, he knew that someone could. The one thing that really must be borne in mind about the kind of discussions of meaning that I am talking about is that we must not dazzle anyone with theories, with absolute criteria, but rather stir up some warm interest in the process of language.

It should be apparent that even when our momentary goal is direct discussion of the problems of language, the indirect approach to the problem of restoring metaphor is operative. At other times it comprises an examination (by lecture, discussion, conference, writing, etc.) of literature whereby the variety of uses of language, with emphasis on the connotative aspect, are studied in close detail.

One very helpful way, I have found, of proceeding here is by adopting the insider's or writer's viewpoint for purpose of analysis in the hope of re-creating the process of looking for the appropriate language. By this approach an implicit argument for words as self-expressive agents will be convincingly made. In turn this will help us to treat our students as if they were aspiring professional writers, keen on learning how to do what they want with words. Considering the lack of success that various forms of browbeating have achieved, I do not think that very much is risked by indulging the student in adopting such a persona. The old fashioned assignment of trying to duplicate or parody a style may prove to be, within this framework, a rewarding exercise.

Another old device that can be put to new uses is that of the prose paraphrase of a poem. Our purpose here, as distinct from the use of this device that incited its condemnation as a critical heresy, is not to make it possible for the student to tell about a poem in prose, to tell what it says. Rather it should be

to explore the differences between the uses of language, e.g., to discover how the elliptic, non-discursive logic of the poem can or cannot be translated into the logic of continuous discourse. What needs to be done for such a translation, and why? Is the poetry or the prose more valid for the expression of what it is that is expressed? A poem such as Frost's "The Road Not Taken" has served me in more than one class as a source-work for distinctions between the poem and a prose narrative and a prose argument. The paraphrase in this case calls for transitional words and explicit subordination of ideas, and for a questioning of how far the circle of connotations of the word "road" is to be expanded, among other things. Through the contrast that the paraphrase provides an instructive analysis of both the grammatical and semantic components of the language can take place. Nor is it necessary always to rely on the prose paraphrases of the students. Any number of poems find their source-inspirations in prose and the same sort of analysis can follow. For example, the second stanza of Hart Crane's "Voyages: II" bears fruitful comparison with a description of the sea that occurs in Chapter Fifty-one of Moby Dick.

Another very useful way of treating poetry for the teaching of language skills can be accomplished by using variants of the same poem that can be supplied by a variorum edition of a poet's work (as in the cases of Yeats and Emily Dickinson). I can think of no better way (though many equivalent) to explore the relation of grammar and meaning or diction and meaning than to follow through the revisions of a poem in its several stages. I could add that this can be done with prose also, and that at present there are several collections of prose fiction wherein the published version is set alongside earlier manuscript versions. The great advantage with poetry in this approach is its relative brevity, and the ensuing possibility to see the whole work almost at once--no trivial advantage in terms of apportioning class time or student powers of concentration.

What I have been saying about poetry has stressed a kind of linguistic analysis of it. Implicit, however, in the very selection of examples has been my interest in its capability as a resuscitator of metaphor. Let me turn now to the other favorite mode for my purposes, the literature of fantasy. My interest in works of fantasy is also for analysis of style, but even more in terms of the need such works create for interpreting the work itself, its verbal structure, and coming to grips with its large and small scale symbolism. Faced with certain works of fantasy or works employing fantasy, the natural curiosity of the student is moved to ask what it "really" means. Who is D.H. Lawrence's "Man Who Loved Islands"? Why does Forster create a heaven peopled by literary figures that is reached by a "Celestial Omnibus"? What is Kafka's abstemious "Hunger Artist" really up to? And how is it that Marcel Ayme puts an actual halo around a character's head in "Grace," and elsewhere acknowledges a man "Who Walked Through Walls"?

The use of the literary symbol is so pronounced in these kinds of stories as to be unavoidable. It is not merely a matter of levels of reading. And instead of simply seeking to explain away the symbolism by translating it into the theoretical terms of psychology or social science or some other discipline, what really needs to be done with this kind of material is to see why the author resorts to such extreme forms of metaphor in the first place. Here, as analogously in the case of the poem and its prose paraphrase, we can gain insight into the functioning of the metaphorical sense when we attempt a translation of the super-reality of these works into ordinary reality. The greatest value these works have for the student seems to me to be their waking-up effect upon the dormant metaphorical sensibility.

There is another way, an even more direct one, that can serve this very same purpose. Up to now I have been concerned primarily with an analytical approach on the part of teacher and student towards the literature read. Hopefully, while the analysis took place, a subtler and more lasting influence began to take hold. The student, sensitized to perceiving distinctions in words and language, began to incorporate this knowledge in a way that improved his own written work. I have presumed (until now) that this work would bear directly upon the process of analysis--or at least would be in the form of prose essays relating somehow to materials analyzed. However, it is possible, and I have personally found it indispensable, to have the student write his own poems (as an ungraded exercise, to be sure). Asked to do this at the right time during the term, the writing can be immensely instructive to both teacher and student. The teacher has an opportunity to discover that some remnant of metaphorical sense does in fact exist, concealed as it may have been in so much of the other work, and working with the student, who is more than likely to identify this exercise with self-expression, the teacher can proceed (with large generosity) to scrutinize the work with the same seriousness accorded to Frost or Crane. I have used this sort of assignment about one-third through a term and have rather regularly seen it to have good effects, both psychologically and in terms of actual language skills. I think that for many students who have never written a poem or dreamed of writing one, and had read just about as many at the start of the term, there took place something like a shock of recognition. Somehow it occurred to them that they actually had at their disposal the same tools and faculties that "real" poets had: their belief in the agency of words was in part restored.

I have followed through with these student poems and asked the writers to do prose paraphrases of them, and in some cases to attempt to write essays that would incorporate the substance of the poems. Proceeding in much the same way as we had with the published poems, it became evident that the method of analysis had now become better understood and personally more meaningful. The students developed a new sense of what the published poets

were doing.

All that I have suggested here in either this last example or those before points to an emphasis on exploring the uses of language and the ways in which it means, expresses, or communicates. Essentially, the approach involves taking hold of an idea or topic or theme and examining it as an actual or hypothetical poem, prose fiction, or essay. But the examination is neither for generic distinctions (the old theme and form approach) nor for informational content. It is for the study of the workings of language. And for purposes of reaching the fullest range of language, I would not hesitate to introduce some written forms rarely thought of as literature--perhaps a set of instructions on lubricating a sewing machine or some cooking recipes. I am not being facetious. Can we not profitably compare the quality of language and its aims in a recipe with a prose description of the same food in another context: "4 eggs at room temperature, 1/4 teaspoon salt, ..." compared with Proust's "petites madeleines,... moulded in the fluted scallop of a pilgrim's shell," in Swann's Way; or "3 pounds chuck or stewing beef cut into two-inch cubes" placed alongside Virginia Woolf's "Beouf en Daube," "the beef, the bay leaf, and the wine--all. . .done to a turn," in To the Lighthouse.

I firmly believe that only when the student-writer comes to appreciate the connotative or metaphorical implications of language and his true need to make use of these will he fully understand the nature of precision and clarity. And the understanding may even improve the writing of cooking recipes and the instructions for operating Xerox machines.

IV Final Pontifications

By way of summary I can think of three things that need to be borne in mind if the problem--as I see it--is to be attacked:
1) A pluralistic concept of meaning for the written forms of the language--one that will permit the widest search for formal and semantic meaning. This attitude will regard meaning in each work examined as a function of many variables. Thus our attempts will be to discover the intricate relationships between these functions and between their variables.
2) A willingness to teach a subject called language-and-literature or language-in-literature--not one or the other. We must teach less about a literary work, and exhibit less concern for the niceties of a specialized vocabulary that can limit (though it helps define also) perception. Instead, by concentrating more on the uses of language, we will enlarge those language skills of the student that make possible the fullest self-expression.
3) And finally, to spend whatever time is necessary in our varying situations to find the remains of that metaphorical sense of life in the student and then begin to capitalize on this, nursing it to the point where words become understood as symbols (i.e., both objects in themselves and suggestions of something else).

It seems that to the degree that we can restore belief in the written word as a valid expressive agent (and in this sense the word is always metaphorical), we will be creating a true basis for improvements in reading and writing skills. Perhaps we will only find one student in a thousand who will say, "With the right word I will move the world." But we may find many who will say, "With the right words I can and will make myself and my values known to those around me." And, I think, that if this is truly believed, the incidence of gnashed teeth and pulled hair among teachers of the English language and its literature will decrease.

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