Another way to meet our professional needs is to be aware of other workshops, seminars, and conferences sponsored by related organizations. I've contacted leaders in the Minnesota Reading Association and Twin Cities Reading Association and asked that workshop dates not conflict as we do our planning and that ALL workshops be publicized to the members of our three organizations through our newsletters. This will maximize our reach and effectiveness, minimize postage costs and assure a variety of inservices.

Stay happy; enjoy your students; and be good to yourself,

Mary Jane Hanson

LITERATURE: CHANGING THE BALANCE OF PASSION AND MILD INTEREST

by Carol Bly

Whenever a speaker addresses a group of professionals, and the speaker is not in the same profession, you should be wary as a hawk! No one would venture into your lair (if we can call a meeting of the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English a lair) unless he or she meant to ask you to do something more--or something less--than you are now doing. Outside speakers never come to tell you "you are perfect--just carry on!" If they are not teachers of English themselves, and I am only occasionally, not professionally, a teacher of English, you have to assume that they will be hoping to change your Job Description for you. Coming from the outside as they do, they will call it "bringing you a new perspective;" listening to their inexperience and their arrogance, you might call it meddling--and both would be right.

If someone wants you to see your job as less than it is, watch out: they want you less powerful or less visible in the public eye, so that their ideas, not yours, will have the

critical mass in forming public opinion. Watch out against people who congratulate you for the technical achievements of your field: they are like a man with his back to Ali Baba's cave, smiling hard at you and talking fast, but always edging away from the cave and very forcefully telling you, "How wonderful you are, never to be shouting 'Open, Sesame!' around here! Congratulations on never using that word 'sesame!' How wonderful you all are about not using that word!" Certainly they are flattering you so as to distract you from investigating the veritable treasure of that particular forest. Arch-conservatives often do that with teachers: they generously praise you for going back to basics, teaching grammar (which needs doing) and teaching authors' skills as if they were mechanics (which doesn't need doing). If teachers can be seduced into teaching a holy subject--literature--as if it were a question of mechanical manipulation, then there will always be elements of society that are pleased: how useful it is to have a large cadre of the younger generation leaving values to their betters--to have a large cadre who do not recognize moral challenge, because they've been taught to see everything from third-grade English to English III in high school as nothing but a series of mechanical problems to solve--such as how such and such an author uses symbol to entice the reader or how such and such an author uses tone or mood further to suspend our initial disbelief. Students grown mechanically insightful can answer such questions as "How does Chekhov use symbol to move us?" There is nothing wrong with giving some time to Chekhov's symbolism--but there is a good deal wrong with it if it means we do not show students that his plea for the moral view, for our joining the human race in caring, as given straight out in the short story, "Gooseberries," is our major business.

If any individual person or group asks you to choose less than the great moral overview as your major business, then I suggest they are asking you to do much less than your job. And whenever anyone asks someone else, in another field, to do less--to have less scope--to be more technical, to be less holy,

for goodness' sake watch out. They are wanting to fill whatever moral vacuum you teachers create with their own idea. If someone says how skillfully we avoid entering the cave, we had better assume that someone wants the cave's treasure for himself or herself.

I have come to ask you to rewrite your Job Description differently. For various reasons, high school English is generally taught as if the reading of literature would provide students with a mild lifelong interest. The textbooks suggest as much. (If you assess the Notes and Questions for study at the ends of the unit divisions, you see the sensible tone of mild interest.) There is nothing evil about teaching high school English as if it were a source of lifelong mild interest. One could do worse with young people. But it is very much the same as if clergypeople steered clear of all the major issues of the day. It is much the same as if clergypeople never spoke to the ravages visited on us all by corporations and governments--but simply settled for making mildly interesting remarks about the good old values of private life--courtesy in the home and patience with the neighbors. Those are the tiny considerations of religion, in the way that authors' methods are the tiny considerations in literature. We know that such religious teaching is nostalgic, reassuring and traditional in America, like stuffed socks on Christmas morning--and like stuffed socks it is of mild interest. It is as likely, as Christmas toys, to make our world a fairer place. We've all watched innumerable comfortable clergy abdicate from the world's gravest considerations. Sometimes English teachers do it, too.

The high-school English teacher is in the perfect position to change the moral tenor of public life because he or she has so much access to eighteen-year-olds. The other professions which proffer values, and talk about what is just or unjust and about what human beings in large groups do to one another, are social workers and psycho-therapists. Their access isn't half so impressive as English teachers'. The social workers generally are working with people who have been all their lives

leeward of the hull when the fair winds filled sail--the unlucky or unfairly conditioned, and comparatively few of their clients arrive at leadership in the United States. Psychotherapists, generally speaking, reach only the very few: they reach the rich who have acquired a taste for human development through process. That is very few people. But nearly every child in the United States has at least four or five years' exposure to English teachers. So why are we using those precious hours teaching things such as techniques which grown writers use to make the artifices we call poem and story? Such subjects are appropriate to grown writers, not to kids.

Low self-esteem drives people to bury themselves in technological approaches. There is a prevalent, uneven, but nonetheless prevalent, low self-esteem among English teachers. Of all the professions based on good will, teaching English seems to carry along the least arrogance or even ordinary confidence. As I have had a look at this low self-esteem, I found myself saying over and over: yet this is the group of all groups which should have more--much more--moral influence on young people. That is because literature is by its very nature crusading: it is forever offering us an image of life and saying, "Given this, fellow-species-member, don't you see what we ought to do? Given this, fellow-creature, shouldn't we rejoice more? Shouldn't we reform more? Such phrases as "ignorant armies clashing in the night" (Arnold) and "rough beast, its hour come round at last, Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born" (Yeats) are the remarks of the reforming heart. So I think that a measure of the low self-esteem felt by so many English teachers is that they are in a crusading field, but they treat it like a hobby. They take up an interest in the sub-skills (language usage, for example) in the way that retired intellectuals take up an interest in compost-pile techniques. They are tricked, by the textbook writers and by one another and simply by American habit, into avoiding the major task of the profession in favor of small successes with the smaller, technical tasks. It takes one to know one. I am a writer and I know every single piece of moral

sloth--I have exercised every single kind of moral sloth there is--in my field I have written literary letters on a Monday morning instead of attending to the serious work I have in progress--story or essay. That is winning the little ones, as they say, and not going to the big battle, where all the meaning is. Housewives do it, too. I know, since I have been one for twenty-three years or so. They are cross with the kids and then they shine all the brass, especially the candlesticks never used. You can tell in two ways when you have settled for winning the little ones and avoiding the major crusade: first, you tell by the look of exquisite boredom on the faces of your clients. Let us say the class have just read or told Lawrence's "The Rockinghorse Winner" or Orwell's "The Road to Wigan Pier" or Tim O'Brien's "Civil Defense;" now the instructor asks, following the usual kind of thinking in high-school English unit discussion paragraphs: "How did D.H. Lawrence use the supernatural in the story for foreshadowing?" As soon as such a technical question is heard, all the lively, mortally-touched faces in the room go slack and whey--as indeed they should. It is precisely the same as when the children come home to the housewife or house-husband, ready to make the huge switch from their schoolday adventures to their loved-home adventures, and the homemaker says, "Get your hands off that candlestick: I have just finished doing off all the brass." We can tell by our clients' boredom, then. A second way to tell that we are winning the little ones and failing to grapple with the major battles is by our own cynicism. If the Department of English jokes are more than 50% cynical, then the Department is showing unconscious frustrations in its work. Half-consciously perhaps, we suspect we are despoiling, not enhancing our area. We are to study, Shakespeare tells us, "what we most affect." If we recall carefully enough, we surely will remember that what made us "affect" literature was not the pyrotechnics of Brooks and Warren but our boyhood and girlhood love of reading.

A second cause of low self-esteem in English teachers is probably that teachers tend to be surrounded, just as outnumbered pilgrims are, by people who don't share the same dream at all.

As Eliot reminds us in "The Journey of the Magi," the wise men were probably accompanied for days and days and weeks and weeks only by cursing camel-drivers. There must have been weeks of the lonely journey for every half-hour of the spiritual birth. Teachers go through something the same. If they love a work like Hamlet and are teaching it, they listen to one hundred petulant remarks such as "Well, I didn't get that out of it at all!" for every single word of enthusiasm. It is a natural depressant of the trade--not worth getting burnt out about, but undeniably there, like a small haze over the city's windows.

The third cause of low self-esteem in English teachers is loss of funding and with it, of public respect. We are not in style. English and American literature, never much in style in a commercially-bent culture, are less in style now that all levels of cultivation are sinking. No matter how we tell ourselves, "But all these who look down on us are simply products of the mass culture: Ortegay Gasset would have been on our side, not theirs!", we nonetheless absorb the disrespect accorded us by thousands of students, thousands of their parents, and thousands of middle-level business people across the United States. I remember being surprised to read in Bruno Bettelheim's The Informed Heart that although the Jewish prisoners at Dachau knew the SS guards were wrong-thinkers, they nonetheless absorbed the hatred and contempt of the guards--and to Bettleheim's horror and probably their own horror, translated it into self-contempt. In other words, contempt--when we are not able to swat back at it--is catching. We take it inside. Social workers report this phenomenon over and over again in cases of battered children and battered women. I have noticed a valiant effort to fight the contempt of technocrats: in myself and others I have heard a contempt in return. It takes the form of snobbery, victimizing anyone who works at carburetion or in wiring potentiameters and so on. Unfortunately or fortunately, contempt-in-return doesn't do any good, psychologically. English Departments in which the cocktail conversation is sneering at the same university's or college's technology

departments are not more confident in their bearing than English departments which simply coexist or even cooperate with their technical colleagues.

The only thing to do, I think, when we work in a field involving values, is to ignore the contempt of the world outside, ignore the pressure to look at our field as just one more area where technical aptitude is the only real consideration, and to plug away at our work as though we might change the world. If teaching literature is to be a passionate endeavor, then let's say there are two psychological steps to take before looking at actual curricula.

The first psychological step to take is not to feel apologetic for the past or present failures of English teachers. Every field is full of dreadful practitioners, and nearly every really good practitioner has been, at some time, a bad one, so let's eschew any time-wasting apology. Social scientists, who ought to be ever widening the enclave of caring, moral citizenry, have spent nearly a century now, imitating the physical sciences at their worst--stalling around collecting data--just like the cold-hearted middle-level lab people in E.T. Just for the record: of all the social scientists receiving significant federal funding, two-thirds work for the Department of Defense. Early psychologists, who should have seen all the wonderful chances they have for freeing people from blocks and habits and repressions so people can be more of themselves than our culture encourages, in fact have been devoted, by the hundreds, to manipulation--helping management break unions, helping people adjust to situations which perhaps they should not adjust to, and helping people control other people's behaviors when perhaps they should not be controlling those others' behaviors. Writers, who should have been using their love of image and metaphor to free young people's moral imagination, have spent their time in large numbers hacking or writing "for" a market. All the professionals have appalling histories and appalling present practitioners--so it is important to ignore all that. Let's never start change by "starting where we are." A useful first

step is to make friends with people outside our professions and to stay in serious relationship with them.

I wonder if all of you or any of you know the great story called The Lemming Condition by Alan Arkin. The story takes place on the day when all the lemmings on the plain are going to go west and jump into the sea. None of them has questioned the wisdom of this every-seven-years' activity--racial suicide. But one lemming named Bubber has a friend who is outside the lemmings: it is Crow. Crow says something like, "What are you guys doing down there? You look as if you were moving!" "We're going today," Lemming said. "Going west." "West!" Crow exclaimed. "West! That's the sea!" Gradually he gets the particulars of the plan out of Bubber, and wants to know if they can swim because it's "a lot of water out there." When Bubber returned to his parents and said Crow had asked if they could swim, both parent lemmings sneered. They said remarks like "O that's the very sort of thing you could expect from someone like Crow!" and "Consider the source!" Crow offered to drop Bubber into a very shallow, safe puddle he knew of, to see how he liked it. He promised to fish him out instantly, if the swimming didn't go too well. Thus, because of having an outside friend with a specific, ad hoc suggestion (which he followed), Bubber was saved. He did not go to his death with the rest.

The next psychological step to making any change is to make a list of everything that is wrong. It is twice as important first to make a list of what is wrong than to start off positively, as the expression is, and make lists of what is right. We are going to leave anything that is right alone, anyway, so we don't need a list at this point. Some of the things that appear to be wrong are natural to our species. Literature is some sort of an attempt of culture to overcome natural characteristics, so it isn't difficult to get up a list. For example, here are seven characteristics of human life which are simply givens for our species:

First: we are given by nature a good deal of intensity of feeling, but only for growing to maturity, for mating, for

young males' war-making. After we have grown big and strong and have proliferated, nature doesn't care two cents about us, apparently: our intensity is followed, unless we are cultivated people, by years and years of placid, low-key emotional life, pain avoidance whenever possible, and resistance to any holy project that lessens the comfort level. That's natural middle-aged life for you!

Second: we are given by nature a love of natural beauty--but nature gives it only to children and young people. After that, you have to cultivate it in some way. Most farmers love nature, because they cultivate that particular emotion. Most literary people love nature, because all their poetry-reading and fiction-reading keeps reminding them of its beauty.

Third: we are given by nature a love of technical prowess. When two people are not getting along very well, usually the less cultivated one can be seduced into at least good manners by having some technical ability of his or hers referred to and asked about. Say that a peaceworker gets into a conversation with an F-15 pilot. If the peaceworker says, "I bet you pull a lot of G's in that aircraft. It must be awful learning to adjust to it!" Chances are the F-15 pilot can be made to drop his or her sneering at spineless pinkos and leftwing softheads long enough to warm to the subject of that demanding airplane. Boasting of skills is part of the species.

Fourth: we are given by nature a love of power, which, for our purposes, means most usually a love of class system.

Fifth: we are given by nature a love of peer esteem.

Sixth: we are given by nature a love of abdicating moral decision-making, in favor of a chosen or self-appointed leader, whom we are then willing to adore. It is less painful to love a leader than to be morally responsible--and nature avoids pain.

Seventh: and finally, we are given by nature a love of establishing a few ethical values--but regarding them as valid only within our sovereign borders. That is, perhaps everyone has a right to equal economic opportunity, but that is (to the merely natural man or woman) only in the continental United States

Outside that, everyone look out. A more civilized way in which this sovereign-limits morality works is the fact that small liberal-arts colleges seldom band together for joint application for funds. Departments within a college may cooperate on askings for Budget, but individual private colleges are loath to cooperate in funding askings from outside groups. They are willing to federate loosely, for incidental professional sharing of one sort or another--but not for money. The invisible, natural reason behind this is that beyond one's sovereign borders all is fair in the money scramble--and therefore, one keeps one's borders sovereign so one can keep a free hand! It isn't immoral: it is simply natural.

The last psychological step needed for change, now that some sort of a list of natural limitations has been made, is simply to make the decision that we, our group, in our case, teachers of English, will take on some moral leadership and try to effect the change. It is a deliberate assumption of power--a very strong mindset indeed. Why English teachers? Why should they be the ones to decide on moral directions for Americans or for anyone?

The answer lies in making a list of what not nature, but culture, has to offer. Right away, as soon as we've identified what culture really means, we see that it is a series of non-natural emotions and activities. Nature and culture do not move hand-in-hand. Yeats is not the only one who felt that once out of nature it would be ridiculous ever again to take the shape of any natural thing! Here is a rough list of what culture concerns itself with:

First: When we are cultivated, we take all our impressions of nature inside curselves and then represent it for others as it moves us. We have done it for centuries and centuries. In the cave paintings at Lascaux there are wonderful animals drawn from the side, showing the pike-orange shades of flank and withers, with whiteness in contrast--and then the head is shown straight on, enabling the artist to show us the antlers more beautifully. It is not magic or an attempt at magic: it is the artist drawing

all the things that touched him or her most - not realism. Literature also is not realism. No art is.

Second: When we are cultivated, we have a hatred for injustice and a love of friendship which extends everywhere: there are no sovereign bounds to our values. If we dislike violence in one place, we think it is just as abhorrent somewhere else. For example, after repeated efforts, nineteenth century liberals were able to get across to people the idea that kids doing seventeen-hour days in coal mines was wrong not just for upperclass Englishmen but for working class Englishmen. If enough of us read Michael Harrington and other broad-ethic writers about economics, we will begin to be cultivated about economic manipulation: we will begin to see that what is right for the First World is right for the Third World. The notion that ideas are real and that they know no sovereign limits is a cultured idea.

Third: When we are cultivated, we hear out and believe the story of those who are powerless. We can hear their voices. They carry weight with us. The natural thing is to take cognizance only of powerful people's opinions. Twentieth century psychology has succeeded where a good many religions have previously failed: it has demonstrated to thousands and thousands of people that the wounded are the ones who can do the healing, that the little people at the table are important, and so on. Cultivated people despise the natural pecking order of leghorns, or of Sandhurst graduates, or of social-class bullying.

Fourth: This last item on the list is the most vital one. When we are cultivated, we do not believe what our leaders say unless it has no variance with our experience. Further, we do not listen to leaders unless they have something new to say. We do not love accepted ideas and stale language. We would rather risk disapproval from peers than be bored. The natural man or woman loves dead ideas. The very ease with which dead ideas come slick off the tongue is dear to the natural person. "That's the way it goes!" is the cry at funerals, for example. "You never know when it is going to be your turn!" and "Sometimes we don't really know the value of a thing until it is taken away from us!" "Human nature doesn't change--that's one sure

thing!"--and so on. When the lack of cultivation is low enough so that boredom isn't an issue, such platitudes, true or untrue, have tremendous value: they are safe and they are sociable, too.

The marvelous fact is that English teachers bring otherness into millions of students' lives. Literature is nothing if not a hodgepodge of examples of lives quite different from our own. When a midwesterner, for example, reads literature, the midwesterner suddenly has a mind's eye full of not just soybean fields and Nicollet Avenue but the lagoons of Malaysia and the icepack north of Franz Josefs Land. Any glance at anything other than ourselves is delightful to our species. We love it. If we get no cultivation--no books--we will take interest at least in natural creatures and perhaps in machinery. But once we get books, we get a taste for "How are the others living? What is it like somewhere else? What is like and what is unlike my life in the life these characters are living?" I won't labor the point, but simply go on to say that otherness, ironically, is also the basis of any decent ethic. What is good for me is not moral evaluation but what Lawrence Kohlberg in Harvard's Center for Moral Development calls "pre-moral stage" or "pre-morality." As soon as another enters the picture and must be considered when decisions are made, the moral interest has entered. If we go back and look over the seven attributes of natural, uncultivated life, we see that the other, as such, doesn't enter in as anything for which sacrifices will be made. If we look at the list of four attributes of cultivated people, we see that all four depend upon our having seen, in our feelings as well as with our eyes, things and people other than ourselves--and having been touched by them.

Whoever tells children their first stories is the one with moral influence. Now most families are de-cultivated: that is, most families do not read aloud to their children even when the parents came from families in which reading aloud was important. This means that the English teacher may well be the only person in a young person's experience who puts stories into his or her mind's eye. Television doesn't count, because the

eye simply picks it up. It is the translation of written or heard words--symbol--into story--a job done by the human mind, which makes otherness into reality for any human being. Churchmen used to perform the storytelling function for people who hadn't much access to books: now they have much less contact with most Americans. That leaves the English teacher.

If we agree that English classes can make a difference in ethical development, then what actual curriculum changes can we make? I would like to offer a few suggestions, but they must be fairly approximate and weak compared to the suggestions professional teachers can offer. Earlier in this talk I said it was an advantage to have friends outside one's normal sphere. Bubber the Lemming's life was saved because he finally listened to Crow. But the best help we get from outside our profession is likely to be a different perspective on values--not specific steps. Crow suggested the lemming rethink how good or bad an idea it was to jump into the ocean when you couldn't swim--but he didn't lay out a week-by-week program for Bubber's life afterwards. My specific ideas for teaching high school English are very limited because my experience is limited. Nonetheless, here they are:

The title and unit headings for literature textbooks for the last three years of high school and the first year of college should be related to humanity, not to literary forms. For example, the heading shouldn't be The Short Story Before and After 1920 or Tone and Symbol but rather something like Natural Aspects of our Species vs Cultural Aspects of our Species. Then the fiction and drama and poem selections would be thought of as content, not as technical challenges. There is another value to using words like nature versus culture. When people know there is a contest, they can take sides. They have to know the names of the two sides, though. We absolutely cannot exert willpower and make sacrifices of any kind if we do not know the words for the issues. To give an example: if children do not know the whole issue of cheating versus honor, they will cheat unconsciously because it is practical. Honor, never having been discussed, won't even be an option. If, on the other hand, the word honor itself is familiar

and frequently mentioned in class, and better--stories about it and stories about its absence--are told and discussed in class, then honor--as a deliberate willful stance--is one possibility for the students in any given situation. If one is familiar with the idea that just naturally one will act in some ways, and that one must act against nature in some ways, one may choose to act against nature in some ways. Most people in our time have never once heard the idea that something contrary to nature could be desirable.

The second notion for curriculum I would suggest is that English teachers never use fill-in workbooks. An odd psychological and moral fact is that people who write down history--keep records--tell their story in one form or another--feel free to change history and act on free will. Treatment centers for disturbed children operate on this principle almost without exception. The child must keep records. Oddly, any human being who keeps records suddenly realizes that history could have gone the other way--and perhaps tomorrow, I will make it go the other way. For some reason, writing whole sentences, explaining the past or the present, gives power over the future. A drunk who can write how many ounces of alcohol he or she has drunk in the past week, day by day, is much more capable of cutting down the ounces tomorrow. It is a very odd, heartening fact. Therefore, I suggest that English students always be provided with empty notebooks. Workbooks, to be filled in, produce drones. People who have filled in other people's workbooks will tend always to accept other people's scenarios. Taking orders without evaluating them, after all, is simply--inside oneself--the process of filling the mind with the mental image someone else has written or described rather than with any counter--image of your own.

The third suggestion I would like to make applies to adult, continuing education as much or more than to high school and undergraduate literature coursework. It is that when students take notes on scholarly or even fictional books, they divide their notepaper vertically in half. In the lefthand half, they write the notes they need to make about the work at hand. But on the righthand side, which they can leave unused if need be, they write

down their own spin-off thoughts--which came to them during the course of reading. If a person had such notebooks kept from the age of sixteen until the age of twenty-two, that person would have a book, an original book, written in outline form. Soon the mind, knowing that notes would be taken on its activities, would think of more and more observations it wanted to make. It would feel honor being accorded its own ideas, not just some other author's ideas.

The fourth suggestion is that we emphasize perfect grammar and good sentence rhythm. I feel most confident of this suggestion because I have tried it a great deal. I have also, with adults, tried totally ignoring grammar and the physical construction of sentences and so on--to see what good that might do. Over and over, I have come back to the fact that spit and polish--pride in language--is very important indeed. The inner, symbolic events don't happen for student-takers-of-notes or writers-of-papers unless there is all sorts of outward pride. In another sphere of life, I have noticed with fascination how interest in litanies, in church, has paled since the so-called where-it's-at litanies have been in use. People love and crave beauty: perfectly ordinary people want to get beautiful letters, not repetitive ones full of clumsy constructions. People want to write expressively, too. Episcopalians, it turns out, for example, want to feel slightly unsure about the meaning of "and the darkness comprehendeth it not" rather than listen to "and God fixed it real comfortable for everyone there."

Language is related to emotional expectations. If students are told they must get right the difference between the verb "to lie" and the verb "to lay" and that they must never again use "real" as an intensifying adverb (and it would be a relief if teachers of English would stop using it that way, as well!), then the students think they are being groomed for some task in life. If everything they do is OK, as is, they know they aren't being got into shape for any wonderful expectations in life. They unconsciously grasp that they belong to some class that can talk any way it likes; it isn't going anywhere anyway. Let's take an

example from the world of falling in love: when a man and woman use nothing but crude expressions with one another during the first six or seven weeks of their relationship, they begin to repress their very intense, nearly holy, feelings for one another. Their relationship has developed a crude lifestyle: that crude lifestyle feels like reality--and sadly, a thousand times sadly, they continue in it, unable to get away into their deeper regard for one another. All their lives, then, they may be stuck saying such things as "you turn me on, baby" instead of "I have never before felt such desire and such marvelous interest in anyone--not in my whole life!" There is a huge difference. It is the same in studying literature. If we can encourage people to use the language of strong feelings, we can encourage people to live in the world of strong feelings. And when people live in the world of strong feelings, it is amazing the number of brutal public acts they do not take. It is amazing the number of brutal large organizations they refuse to join, or having joined in a moment of poor judgment, how quickly they will try to change them or to resign! Beautiful language needs to be heard from ghetto to farmyard, somehow--however we can manage it.

None of these ideas for English teachers is new. Some schools have already redone their high school curricula in such a way that the humanities--how human beings regard themselves and behave themselves--are prevalent in special courses. St. Paul Academy and Summit School, in St. Paul, are even teaching Kohlberg's moral-development-stage theory to high school upperclassmen. The odd fact, however, is that the two subjects taught in high school that should have to do with values are most frequently taught merely as technologies--psychology and English. I am loudly, desperately, asking for us to pull all technical literary criticism down from first consideration to about third consideration in our high school English and college freshman courses.

We should not waste much time getting at this change of priority. Anyone who has experienced the ethical vacuum in

American high school class discussions knows are pathetic it is that we work so little at making people conscious of goodness and badness. Millions of us must simply wander through life as creatures of nature, following aimlessly this fairly primitive drive or that fairly primitive drive--having this primitive response to what the President said or what the Russians did, or having that primitive suggestion about what America ought to do to this country or that country--and all of it accompanied with a cynicism and hopelessness that slaves must have felt.

After all, there are seven things we want to do if we are educated people: it is best simply to list them! Good lists can be changed and improved; bad lists can be thrown out in fury or contempt--but having no list means having no clear idea--and having no clear idea is abdicating from our philosophical interests.

Here are the seven I see:

1. We want to learn about life much, much faster than by merely living through it! Why arrive at age 93 and say, "Ah--I have the picture! Now I am ready to take those actions a human being should take!"

2. We want the ability to make moral decisions not by recourse to peer opinion or by slavish adherence to doctrines of any kind--but by making a mental image of all the people or creatures in the scene and then, based on the image, deciding what would be fairest and loveliest for all.

3. We want to feel enough curiosity to overcome the fear we naturally experience when old ideas of ours and our parents come into conflict with new data or new, better ideas.

4. We want to develop enough bravery, just like a psychic muscle, really, to consider very grim likelihoods, very bad outcomes, without denying. That is, we want enough bravery to sacrifice the comfort of denying bad news, when it is true news.

5. We want the ability to act at the key moment--with as little lag between the crisis's appearing and our doing something appropriate and brisk as possible.

6 We want enough spine to live for sustained periods of time without peer support. No human being can be really fully

grown until he or she has had the experience of standing absolutely alone in command, in a policy, or in a values fight.

7. And finally, we want to have lively enough hearts so that we care for the res publica--not just our own families and the families of our children, but for thousands of people whom we'll never see--and for corners of this universe, flora and animals--which we may never personally visit.

There is no particular reason to be wonderfully educated unless we mean to change what's bad and fall in love with what's good in the world. English is a marvelous natural course of study for world-changers. It is also a pleasant hobby, goodness knows. But hobbyists, interestingly enough, don't live so happily as the world-changers, so let us use our wonderful field--all the incredible poems of it, all the incredible stories and novels and essays of it--to show people how to leave mild hobbies forever, and join the world-changers. It means showing people how to leave behind mere nature, and cynicism, and relaxation, and to fill their kit instead with culture and nervous excitement, and the great companion of both culture and nervous excitement--which is humor.

Carol Bly - Luncheon Speaker (MCTE 1983)

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1984 WHIM CONFERENCE ON CONTEMPORARY HUMOR

DATES: March 28 to April 1, 1984

PLACE: Phoenix Townehouse Hotel

SPONSOR: ASU English Department and Conference Services

DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS: January 1, 1984; Proposals must include a $20.00 Fee and a one-page abstract.

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