

The Lamp Carrier

I've been thinking about the geography of learning
And how that map has no edges—
Is defined only by the sight of the learner.
It is a heart, of course, a beating wing
Over the high plains of someone's thought.
I imagined once a place in Robert Frost's world
Or Emily Dickinson's where the thin line
Of a person's life might arrive here—
In words and teaching that are like
Distant lightning on the horizon of what we may become.
It was, as my teacher put it, *Only marvelous...*
That singing about fences and trains and good neighbors,
Something to build on there in libraries
Late at night. A map may expand or reduce
But it must be followed, as one protohuman
Led another down a forest trail
Long ago. These students grow
And must be replaced as we were moved
By winds across our fields of light,
Turned out to a world as a kite is lifted
And held against a gust that might raise it.
Another way to say this is that the Lamp Carrier

Is needed. He or she agrees to bear us
Though the light marks him or her as well
For all to see. And every day is a challenge
To use it right, to follow
And lead too: Religio Doctrina Civilitas, Prae Omnibus Virtus—
Religion, Learning, Civility; Above All, Virtue,
Which is just another way of saying the word *love*
After all and in the beginning. Let us inaugurate
This in our hearts and carry it here and outward
For everyone, as the sea carries its child, the waves,
And the wind carries all of us eventually
In a pride of flying autumn leaves, the invisible
Future too, finally back to the ground
It came from, where sunlight illuminates
A nature we can only praise in its wondrous direction,
Where the river is going, where the clouds go.