

## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

*Strangers in Good Company* delighted me today. You must know it: a Canadian film produced in 2000. I took the time to engage with the film in English and French, and to hear the director, Cynthia Scott's, commentary. What a gift! Organic film making means inviting real characters to speak their lines to a situation. The validity and authenticity, the compassion and empathy of these human beings is a corroboration of my stringy hope that we are really redeemed. We are indeed a race of lovers.

Also this week I heard someone say: The place determines how people behave. I wondered as I watched this film if the quiet, pastoral, indeed, idyllic scene had been a noisy tenement – would these women have been so compassionate, empathetic, authentically human? Once again, as an educator, I am reminded how vital is the safety and beauty of the site of an educational event.

My first course at a famous state University was to be taught in a large room, with white walls, movable student chairs arranged in rigid rows, and a lectern and large desk on a raised platform. The fluorescent lighting could have worked in a surgical setting. I had to confess to the assembled graduate students that I could not work in this setting. My tiny cottage was not far from the university. I proposed that we meet there for our next three-hour session, and compare the experience. They sat around my tiny living room, some on the couch and chairs, some on the floor, some at the small corner table. At the end of the session, all agreed there was nothing to consider. That course was memorable. The course title was ADULT LEARNING and that's what we did: in a safe, softly lit, warm, crowded, real life situation.

I did not understand why that course worked so well in that setting until I saw this film today. Those graduate students came to my home as themselves...learned, spoke, questioned, argued authentically, as themselves.

Here's a new principle for dialogue education: authenticity.