A LIGHT IN DARK TIMES

MAXINE GREENE AND THE UNFINISHED CONVERSATION

EDITED BY

William Ayers and Janet L. Miller

Teachers College, Columbia University
New York and London

For Maxine

The photo montage on pp. 132–133 was created at the Museum of Education at the University of South Carolina by Lyn B. Rose under the direction of Craig Kridel, curator.

Published by Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027

Copyright © 1998 by Teachers College, Columbia University

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission from the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A light in dark times : Maxine Green and the unfinished
conversation / edited by William Ayers and Janet L. Miller.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-8077-3721-6 (cloth : alk. paper). — ISBN 0-8077-3720-8
(pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Greene, Maxine. 2. Education—Philosophy. 3. Education—
Social aspects—United States. 4. Educational change. I. Greene,
Maxine. II. Ayers, William. 1944– . III. Miller, Janet L., 1945– .

LB885.G682T43 1997
370'.1—dc21 97-38316

ISBN 0-8077-3720-8 (paper)
ISBN 0-8077-3721-6 (cloth)

Printed on acid-free paper

Manufactured in the United States of America

05 04 03 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Contents

Publisher's Note *vii*
Preface *ix*

I. SEEING PAST EXPERIENCES IN NEW WAYS 1

1. Doing Philosophy: Maxine Greene and the Pedagogy of Possibility 3
William Ayers
2. Philosopher of/for Freedom 11
Wendy Kohli
3. Dinner With Maxine 22
Mark Weiss, Candy Systra, and Sheila Slater
4. In the Presence of Others 33
Karen Ernst, Maureen Miletta, and Kathleen Reilly

II. A COMMUNITY IN THE MAKING 41

5. On Becoming American: An Exploratory Essay 45
Sonia Nieto
6. Maxine Greene and the Incompleted Project 58
Herbert Kohl
7. What Role for the Arts? 62
Leon Botstein
8. Social Responsibility and Imagination: Lessons and Letters 71
Sandra Hollingsworth
9. Education for Democracy 78
Linda Darling-Hammond

III. LOOKING AT THINGS LARGE 93

10. On Doing Something More 97
Deborah P. Britzman
11. Notes on the Intellectual: In Praise of Maxine Greene 108
William F. Pinar
12. Landscapes, Biography, and the Preservation of the Present 122
Craig Kridel
13. Restaging the Civil Ceremonies of Schooling 134
Madeleine R. Grumet

14. Autobiography and the Necessary Incompleteness of Teachers' Stories 145
Janet L. Miller

IV. WHEN FREEDOM IS THE QUESTION 155

15. Ethics and the Imagination 159
Nel Noddings
16. Meandering and Mattering: Moving Toward Horizonal Persons 170
Louise M. Berman
17. Living Dangerously: Toward a Poetics of Women's Lived Experience 180
Mary-Ellen Jacobs
18. Voicing From the Margins: The Politics and Passion of Pluralism in the Work of Maxine Greene 190
Peter McLaren and Carlos Alberto Torres

V. LIVED WORLDS 205

19. Greener Pastures 209
Michelle Fine
20. The Social Context of Educational Reform 219
Jean Anyon
21. Pursuing Public Space: Maxine Greene and the Sameness in Utter Diversity 229
Norm Fruchter
22. When Safety and Joy Are Breached 241
Jonathan G. Silin
23. The End of Innocence 254
Jo Anne Pagano
24. Maxine Greene and the Arousal of a Passionate Public 262
Frank Pignatelli

About the Contributors 267
Index 273

Publisher's Note

A painter I know, talking of art and the imagination, explains provocatively that in the process of making or knowing art, nothing remains of the imagination at all. In the end, you use it up and if you've used it well, what's left may be art. An active engagement with art leaves you breathless with its realness, consumed by its obdurateness, convinced of its inability to be any other way–ness. An encounter with Maxine Greene is much the same—there is a vividness that cannot be denied. Such encounter need not be personal: In her writing, her pull is equally strong, equally bright, equally gritty, equally unyielding. When she lends us her humanity and her intellect and refuses to give up either the poetry or the horror, we are richer and can be borrowed from in turn. The touch of Maxine Greene, softly urgent, moves us to act politically and humanly, spurs us to shun the light and reject the dark if together they cannot move us to act. Our imagination, fed by the glorious images she places before us, cannot be left in peace to enjoy simple beauty or simple justice—those "castles in the air." She implores us to mark the images and somehow, to resist. In the universe according to Maxine Greene, nothing is simple, nothing literal. We can only look over our shoulders and push onward in dark times.

In her writing and her speaking, when she reads a poem to us, describes a painting, a moment in dance or music or theater, we meet our own understanding and we are fully conscious. Her words rush one after another to make images of connections for us, ideas unconcealed for us, made real for us through her passionate, particular choices. We awake to the immediacy of her vision, the urgency of her message. No longer cynical, we can take new risks, tilt at windmills, separate out and listen to voices that were muffled before—we can become more human. When Maxine connects us to another's way of seeing, we feel powerful and compassionate and vulnerable all at once. We believe things can change and that somehow we can be a part of it. You cannot leave an encounter with Maxine Greene anesthetized—exhilarated, perhaps, or despairing, thrown off balance, always in the midst. . . .

I am neither colleague nor student of Maxine's in the usual sense. I am sometimes privileged to publish her words and in the course of that a friendship grew. Being here at TC, I could catch her—always breathless, just back from/just going to something interesting, something uncompleted, something requiring her presence and her passion. Yet sometimes a different kind of space opens and there comes a moment or two for coffee across the street. Ranging forward and back, among topics of rage and mind, we have never once failed to come around to our lived lives—to our children, our husbands, our families, our friends. And at the end, I am exhilarated or despairing, off balance, and always in the midst. . . .

Actions speak louder than words—unless you are a publisher. For a publisher, actions *are* words, and most of the time, that is a sobering thought. If you have had the good fortune to publish Maxine Greene, every now and then, the burden lifts and you can feel pleasure. By now, the exact origins of this book have been lost. Maxine is here, like the imagination, in the making and in relation to. Suffice it to say that planning went on for a very long time, the editors were sensitive to the concerns of their subject, and the publisher was too involved by half. Homage was not intended nor would it have been tolerated—canonization is not an option when you are in the process of becoming as Maxine Greene is. If an anti-icon exists, Maxine is its physical embodiment. And yet. . . .

To confront the power of her work and her ideas and to extend our own work shaped by that confrontation; to trace a trail so that others might search the ideas out for themselves; to turn them, flex them, and always keep the world in view—this seems a worthy purpose.

Carole Saltz

Preface

Maxine Greene described herself recently as "stumbling around with mostly questions, questions that continually arise, questions aching in my throat, questions leading to partial answers opening to other questions."

She was speaking at the art school at the University of Michigan, and it is fair to say that the students—tattooed and body-pierced with gaudy hair—were startled by this tiny woman with her huge vision, awed by her prodigious energy.

Maxine Greene invites us to "do philosophy," to struggle with ideas, with the arts, with the events of the world, with the daily newspapers and our idiosyncratic chance encounters—all in order to become more aware of ourselves and our world, more aware of our inter-subjective predicaments, and then, importantly, to act on our awarenesses. To act on what we find; to act, even with partial consciousness; to act, even with contingent understanding; to act, to be a participant in the world.

Maxine Greene invites diverse voices and unsettled questions, and she helps us to fight the vicious forms of relativism: cynicism, passivity, action-taming skepticism. She wants to change things.

She demands commitment and purposeful living, but she simultaneously fights the dogmas that ultimately distort and defeat those commitments. Maxine Greene is the preeminent American philosopher of education today. Her prolific outpouring of articles and books, her prodigious lecture schedule, and her ongoing teaching responsibilities have had an enormous impact on generations of teachers, researchers, academics, and school reform activists. Because her field is by nature boundary-crossing, and because her message is genre-blurring, she has unique influence in a range of worlds: arts and aesthetics, literature and literacy studies, cultural studies, school change and improvement, the teaching of literacy, teacher education, peace and social justice, women's studies, civil rights.

This book focuses on the issues and questions raised by Maxine Greene over several decades: social imagination, the place of activism, the importance of the arts, progressive school change, the role of culture, the meaning of freedom in the modern world. It is pointed toward the future, toward exploring these themes into the twenty-first century. While Maxine Greene's intellectual contribution and influence is touchstone, each author is identified and concerned with his or her ongoing works and projects, and this is the substance of each chapter. Each author takes off from Maxine Greene, a living, dynamic thinker and teacher, and moves forward. Each, in his or her own way, follows Maxine Greene's challenge to break through the frozen, the routine, the unexamined.

On the faculty at Teachers College, Columbia University, since 1966, Maxine Greene has taught courses in social philosophy, the philosophy and history of education, literature, writing, aesthetics, and education. She held the William F. Russell Chair in the Foundations of Education from 1975 to 1994 and is now Professor Emerita. As founder and director of the Center for Social Imagination, the Arts, and Education, she is currently working with schools and the arts community in New York and holds a monthly "educational salon" with city teachers in her home. Before coming to Teachers College, she taught at New York University, Montclair State College, and Brooklyn College. She has lectured widely at universities and educational associations here and abroad, was a Fulbright scholar briefly in New Zealand, and has participated in a number of European conferences on higher education. She is a past president of the Philosophy of Education Society, the American Educational Studies Association, and the American Educational Research Association. Her academic awards include a Delta Gamma Kappa Award for *Teacher as Stranger* as the "Educational Book of the Year" in 1974, two Phi Delta Kappa "Teacher of the Year" awards, the Teachers College Medal, honorary degrees from Hofstra University, Lehigh University, Indiana University, the University of Colorado, Bank Street College of Education, the University of Rochester, Nazareth College, the College of Misericordia, and McGill University. Her other books are: *Existential Encounters for Teachers, The Public School and the Private Vision, Landscapes of Learning, The Dialectic of Freedom,* and *Releasing the Imagination.* Maxine Greene continues to teach and write in interdisciplinary areas. She finds it impossible, apparently, to stop inviting students and colleagues to "do philosophy" in their own voices, to become more aware of their situations, to resist what they find unacceptable. She still hopes to create spaces where people will be willing to confront issues as they become visible in their consciousness and lived lives, to pose incisive questions, and to respond reflectively and actively to what they are able to disclose.

As she told us in a recent conversation: "When you have been around a long time and published enough, you can get installed on an unmerited pedestal. I try to avoid that, to keep saying I am still trying in these dreary days, that I do not know the answers, that I am still striving to pose the questions. And I am more and more convinced of the absolute necessity for encounters with the several arts from the range of cultures to keep imagination alive, to release young and old from confinement in single, closed rooms. . . . Asking, imagining, writing, teaching, I try with my companions, with my students, with live and wide-awake people . . . (in my own fashion) to awaken. Yes, I understand the absurdity; I know it does not matter under the blankness of the sky. But I have to resist meaninglessness along with objectness and cruelty and injustice. Otherwise, why live?"

Indeed, Maxine Greene is for many of us a light in dark times.

I

SEEING PAST EXPERIENCES IN NEW WAYS

> Looking back, I find myself seeing past experiences in new ways—and I realize what it means to say that I have lived one possible life among many—and that there are openings even today to untapped possibilities.
>
> Maxine Greene
> *Releasing the Imagination*

None of us can think of our own lives, can remember events and people and situations without some consideration of context, without some mention of social milieu, cultural forces, institutional life, historic moment. And as soon as we consider context, writ large, we are unable to retreat into a kind of privatism, or to withdraw from the world in ways that some versions of biographical self-exploration promote. Instead, we can periodically review our lives within contexts to which we must learn to attend in order to fight a plague, rebuild a school, tutor a child, or paint a canvas that makes a difference.

And so we look back, not just as a way of remembering our lives, but as an incentive for action. We remember our connections to particular individuals and places and events in order to see what still needs to be done, what still needs our attention as we move toward "untapped possibilities" for ourselves and others.

For a long while, Maxine Greene has been reminding us of the necessity for people to seek out their own human possibilities. Those possibilities exist only in relation and commitment to others and to taking action in an unjust and fragmented world:

> I wish it were really easy to see consequences of our teaching. Sometimes five years later you get a letter. I had a funny experience on a bus; I got on a bus in New York and a man was getting off and he looked at me and said (this is a very common phrase), "Maxine Greene, my God. I had you." I thought, well, that's good, he remembered. He wasn't afraid to remember. I'm interested in the kind of reflection and remembering that involves making changes in a particular situation, not just an admiring of it, but an identification of deficiencies and lacks, and an effort to overcome those lacks. Dewey talked about thinking as the idea that knowledge involves participation in which the individual goes beyond, breaking through structures, trying to build new structures. Dewey always talked about the fact that it isn't simply experience, it is reflection on experience that enables individuals to understand that they must continue choosing themselves as they live. Experience itself is just one thing after another, and you try to pattern it by organizing and to make sense of it by reflecting, by turning back on yourself and reflecting on your own stream of experience. You ask yourself, "How does this world present itself to me? Against my own background, my own biography?" . . .
>
> And so teaching is a question of trying to empower persons to change their own worlds in the light of their desires and their reflections, not to change it for them. The point of it all is for individuals to make sense of their own situations. Their social situations, their root situations have to feed back into their own sense making and their own actions. That's why it's so hard to know if you have any effect, really. If teachers come and tell me I saved their souls, I think I've failed. If a teacher comes and tells me, "You know, my kids got together and went to the principal's office and objected to the tracking that was going on," then I think, "Well, not too bad." (Miller, 1978)

REFERENCES

Miller, J. L. (1978, May). *An Interview with Maxine Greene*. Videotape. The Curriculum Collection, Museum of Education, University of South Carolina.

1

Doing Philosophy: Maxine Greene and the Pedagogy of Possibility

William Ayers

The venerable hall where John Dewey had lectured years before was filled to overflowing on that first fall evening, awaiting the start of Maxine Greene's introduction to philosophy class. The air was expectant; the antique room reeked of tradition and nostalgia. I was a new graduate student, and several people had told me to take this class, but I had never met Maxine Greene and had no idea what to expect. The topic was quaint, perhaps even decrepit—my expectations were decidedly low. And yet in the often familiar, sometimes odd collision of chance and choice, I found myself that first night only a couple of rows from the front—eye to eye with the podium—when Professor Greene arrived. I didn't know it then, of course, but it would become a seat I would seek out at every opportunity during my years at Teachers College and beyond.

Maxine Greene entered the room slowly, surrounded by animated students, weighted down with two shoulder bags brimming with papers and an overload of notes and books. I saw an already diminutive woman made tiny by the cargo accompanying her, and yet luminous somehow at the center of a crowd, the sudden, surprising eye of the storm. She moved steadily toward the podium, stopping often, speaking in turn to each student who sought advice for this, permission or a signature for that, and unloaded the chaos of paper and books, shuffling steadily through it, sorting, arranging, re-arranging, speaking all the while. By the time the last student had retreated to her seat—and without announcement or formal notice—class was underway. Like an intimate conversation with an old friend that is picked up, carried on, and then interrupted to be con-

---

An earlier version of this chapter was published in Kridel, C., Bullough, R. V., Jr., and Shaker, P. (1996), *Teachers and mentors*, pp. 117–126. New York: Garland.

tinued in the future, Maxine Greene's lecture was filled with spontaneity, intimacy, incompleteness, and forward motion.

"We were talking earlier—some of us—about what it might mean to *do* philosophy," she was saying, "as opposed to analyzing positions or searching exclusively for clarifying language. What might it mean to pose distinctive kinds of questions with respect to our own practice and our own lived situations, the kinds of questions that might make us more than 'accidental tourists,' more than clerks or bureaucrats or functionaries?"

Her way of speaking had lost nothing from a Brooklyn upbringing, and it was infused, moreover, with a lifetime encountering literature, existentialism, politics; her voice, husky from the ubiquitous cigarettes she then smoked, was filled, as well, with purpose and passion. Philosophy, she explained, had been understood in the classical mode to be a "love of wisdom" or the "queen of the sciences"; once philosophers broke with the notion that reason was tied inexorably to the "eyes of the mind"—and that Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and so on, could be apprehended by those wise enough or privileged enough to see through those eyes—philosophy began to be variously conceived. If it was any longer a "queen" at all, it was a queen whose crown had slipped considerably—it became a second-order discipline, one that did not possess its own ascertainable knowledge, one that was obligated to criticize, to question, to examine, to think about. William James had said that philosophy begins in wonder; Ludwig Wittgenstein associated it with resisting the "bewitchment of intelligence by means of language"; John Dewey with thinking about "what the known demands" in terms of attitude and action. Others thought about "doctrines ignorantly entertained," about "thinking about our own thinking," about the "identification of options and alternatives." Isaiah Berlin had spoken of philosophers "asking queer questions," not to be confused with ordinary factual questions or questions to be settled by logical argument or mathematical inquiry.

"Where is the nearest school?" Maxine Greene asked. "And how do state regulations affect that school? Does the curriculum include both physics and chemistry? Such questions, obviously, are variously answerable—like questions in the social sciences and even the natural sciences. But they are not the queer questions Berlin had in mind. Contrast them, then, with these: How are we to understand freedom? How are we to understand fairness, and how can it be reconciled with individual rights? How can we justify a commitment to critical reflection, aesthetic awareness, open-ended growth, or intercultural understanding to a public preoccupied with the need to focus on skills and proficiencies alone? Or more specifically, is it fair that my child be bussed to another neighborhood to go to school? Is it possible for the child of fundamentalists, say, to study Darwinian evolution in school and still accede to the creationist position? These are the types of questions that arouse the philosopher."

No philosopher myself, I was nonetheless aroused, as if startled from a dream by a flash of lightning. Professor Greene was challenging the popular notions of philosophy as a credo ("my philosophy is") or a high-sounding irrelevance ("that's just philosophy") or a condition of resignation ("I was philosophical about it"). She told us that when she had begun graduate school and had told her mother that she was studying philosophy, her mother had given her a long, cold look, full of disdain, and responded, "All right, Maxine, *say* something in philosophy."

But much more than discussing philosophy, she was challenging her students (and, I felt, me, personally) to join her in "doing philosophy": becoming more intentional and aware; confronting issues as they emerged in our own consciousness and our lives; interrogating our situations carefully and responding thoughtfully to what we uncovered and discovered. I thought of Amilcar Cabral's admonition to African revolutionaries: "Tell no lies; claim no easy victories." And I remembered Paul Potter's advice to young radicals in the early sixties: "Live your life so as not to make a mockery of your values." I was captivated.

"Doing philosophy" with Maxine Greene could be—had to be—both exhausting and exhilarating. Keeping up was the first challenge: She is a person on whom nothing is lost, an intensely observant person, vigorous as well as open in pursuing what is there to be seen. She sees largely what narrower minds miss, and sees particularity in vivid, nuanced detail. She is a voracious and acquisitive reader—and she reads, beyond philosophy, literature, science, the arts, politics, poetry, educational research, essays on feminism, and more—and the sources of her thinking include all of that as well as films and music and paintings and conversations and chance encounters and dance and political rallies. She somehow maintains the capacity to access a huge amount of what she has encountered, and she seems to draw infinitely upon it, inventing new connections, surprising ways of seeing, remarkable ways of being and acting. In one class session, we talked of the role of the arts in human consciousness and the ways in which "only beings who can think about the ways they are determined can free themselves." References were made that evening to Alice Walker, *Billy Budd,* Sartre and Dewey, Hannah Arendt, Isaac Asimov, Nat Hentoff, the murder of Leon Klinghoffer (who has a name) and the countless Palestinians in the bombed-out refugee camps (who remain nameless), "Breaker Morant," *A Room of One's Own,* and the cab driver who had told Maxine earlier that day that he hated the Cloisters because "it's up on that hill."

The explosion of the rocket ship carrying the teacher into space focused class another evening on the American infatuation with technology—"technicism" Maxine called it—and the degradation of science in the twentieth century through its marriage to technology, and on *Shoah* and Hiroshima and Lao-tse and Marguerite Duras and Albert Camus. "The problems we face," she said, "are not really technical—they are moral, they are ethical. A reliance on technical solutions leaves us still gasping, still empty."

At the very least students were given access to an active mind, inquiring openly and in full view. Because she harvested her teaching from her own lived experience, it always had an improvisational feel to it—fresh and vital and inventive, yes, but also firmly rooted in a coherent ground of core beliefs and large purposes. We could see imagination at work, and questioning that knew no limits, and dialectics. And students were invited, if they chose, to join in, to open themselves in dialogue and pursuit. "The purpose of this course is to shock ourselves into new awarenesses of what we take for granted and often do not see," she announced in her course outline. "It is to try to empower individuals to clarify and ground their own beliefs about the projects they have chosen for themselves to the end of creating themselves as thoughtful, articulate, critical, and humane practitioners in a profoundly uncertain world." When I hear people today talking about "high expectations for learners," and watch that, too, degenerate into a slogan, I think of Maxine Greene's expectations of us as a standard to strive toward, and of "shocking ourselves into new awarenesses" as a goal.

"My field of study is lived situations," she said one night, and that notion hit like a thunderbolt. She was gleefully blurring genres—philosophy, anthropology, literature, psychology, science, the arts—knocking down barriers, insisting on her right (and ours) to use everything—any discipline, any curriculum, any encounter—as nourishment, as a source to pose our own questions, confront our own problems, challenge our own fates. "I was proposing an arts project to a local school council last week," she said. "The council voted to spend their money on metal detectors instead. I was inadequate to explain the importance of the arts. On the other hand, what do I know of guns and knives and the importance of metal detectors? Maybe they're right."

"We are free and fated, fated and free," she often said, quoting Hannah Arendt, one of her teachers years before. "We are conditioned, entangled, thrust into a world not of our choosing, but also free to understand what is happening to us, to interpret, to envision possibilities, to act against all the 'determinisms,' to repair the deficiencies we find. We cannot choose to live in a non-nuclear world, for example, but we can, indeed, we must choose who to be in light of the threat of nuclear annihilation. Like Dewey, we can look at the world as if it could be otherwise, and then act on our own freedom." She told us, for example, about her feelings of horror as homelessness overwhelmed the city. One cold night, taking pity on a man she often saw sleeping across from her apartment, she steeled herself and invited him in for dinner. "What do you want from me, lady?" he snapped. "I ain't going nowhere with you." She admitted a sense of relief.

These were some of the riveting themes of her teaching (and her life). There are others:

- People are "condemned to meaning"—sentenced to create meaningful lives in the face of disorder and inhumanity, to read our lived worlds and to name ourselves in "our dreadful freedom."
- We can, with John Dewey, conceive of "mind as a verb rather than a noun," and can thereby open to the possibility of attentiveness, engagement, and action.
- Encounters with the arts can provide powerful opportunities for confronting the blandness of life and imagining a different world, a more humane social order.
- Freedom is neither an endowment nor a commodity nor an icon; freedom is not the Statue of Liberty, the flag, or any little fetish. Freedom can be thought of as a refusal of the fixed, a reaching for possibility, an engagement with obstacles and barriers and a resistant world, an achievement to be sought in a web of relationships, an intersubjective reality.
- To be human is to be involved in a quest, a fundamental life project that is situated and undertaken as a refusal to accede to the given.
- Teaching, too, involves a sense of the possible, of seeing alternatives, of opening new landscapes.
- The opposite of "moral" in our lives is not "immoral," but is, more typically, "indifferent," "thoughtless," or "careless."

None of this, for her, was put forth in class as simple, self-evident, or settled. She was not easily satisfied with principles or commandments or laws, even (or especially) her own. She demonstrated again and again a resistance to fad, to convention, to dogma of any kind. She chastised and prodded herself for our benefit, insisting on our right, indeed our responsibility to choose: "But still, I can't help myself, I wish you would choose Mozart and not rap." Pausing she added, "But maybe rap is better than Kohlberg in raising sharp moral issues."

Criticized by a student for assigning Marx, whose ignorance and insensitivity to issues of race and gender were righteously exposed, she replied, "I think you're quite right, but, then, I don't go to Marx to learn about racism or sexism." Challenged by a group of students to cancel class for the Jewish holidays, she steadfastly refused: "I don't celebrate religious holidays, but, of course, I recognize the importance of this to you." She typed her notes from class that evening and scheduled another class for any who wanted. And on another evening, when some students pushed the chairs and desks into a large circle as an emblem of equality and open discussion, she entered with a look of mild disdain, took her assigned seat, and said, "I don't think any of you signed up for this class to hear from each person equally. I certainly want access to your needs and desires, but I am not enslaved by them. I want to welcome your responsiveness, too, but let's not make a fetish of chairs in a circle."

"Some of us look with optimism at America becoming great again," she said one night. "We feel pious, patriotic, competent, and taken with the possibility of upward mobility. Others look with dread at a militaristic resurgence, at American power tied to indifference and decreasing public participation, American wealth amidst vast poverty." She challenged students to think of how their consciousness of the world plays on the way each of us looks at our own roles and responsibilities: "I must challenge mostly the muffled view, the way routines and methodical systems allow a life of habit and not choice."

The challenge, as always, was to choose in the muddy complexity of living a life without benefit of any entirely adequate road maps, or any court of last resort. Maxine Greene is a person of strong opinion and point of view and action, who can simultaneously question almost everything and use almost anything as a source of her questioning. She can act on behalf of her values and still hold even her own beliefs as, if not entirely contingent, at least worth another look. She can work hard and speak eloquently on behalf of women's rights, for example, or peace, or the environment—calling her an "anti-imperialist," an "environmentalist," or even a "feminist" feels somewhat false, a superficial reduction in her case. She is somehow beyond the labels, even the "good" ones, and perhaps in that there is an abiding lesson for all of us: "My field of study is lived situations"; "my goal is to challenge the taken-for-granted, the frozen and the bound and the restricted." When a group of curriculum "reconceptualists" attempted, she feared, to make her a kind of guru, she stopped going to meetings—I was reminded of Bob Moses, a civil rights leader in the South, changing his name when people insisted on him becoming a modern-day savior. When the "critical pedagogy" people embraced her, she continued interrogating and challenging all the pedantic posturing, all the certainty and settledness of the new dogmas. Running into an old friend at a Paulo Freire conference years ago—

someone making a name for himself as a neo-Marxist educator—I was asked, "You study with Maxine Greene; she's somewhat quaint, soft in her thinking, isn't she?" That he has moved from Marxism to "cultural liberation" is somehow not surprising. As for Maxine Greene, she embodies relationship, connectedness, attentiveness, aliveness to possibility, engagement with complexities—her own life project of citizen philosopher, activist, teacher. "Teacher can be posited as a goal, something to reach for," she said. "If ever I've arrived, I'm dead." This is what she seeks, imagines, holds as a possibility.

I was fortunate—I began teaching at the age of twenty in 1965 in a project linked closely with the civil rights movement. Our models were citizenship schools and freedom schools springing up all over the South, teach-ins just beginning in the large universities, and Myles Horton's Highlander Folk School. I absorbed the idea early that the hope for freedom and the practice of education could be linked, that teaching could be a powerful and natural key to social change. Because I first discovered and invented my teaching in upheaval it has remained, for me, an adventure full of struggle and quest, part of something larger, something far beyond itself. Teaching as pacification, teaching as the transmission of some certified, sanctified stuff, teaching as classification or invasion—this is what we were working against. What we sought was teaching as dialogue, teaching as resistance, teaching as action toward freedom.

And so when I was swept away from the classroom to a direct and dangerous confrontation with war and the state during those turbulent times, I experienced an unexpected coherence. Returning to a more formal teaching situation years later, I stepped into something close and familiar. No doubt, in teaching as in politics I could accede to an easy certainty, but for me teaching is (or can be) in important ways like fighting for justice, for peace, for freedom.

I expected no affirmation for any of this when I returned to graduate school at Teachers College, Columbia University, at the age of forty. Frankly, I was going for a credential alone: I would take only the minimum requirements; I would learn the language of the anointed; and I would move on, untouched. I expected no particular challenge, no substantial nurturance, no serious demand. But here I was wrong, for something dazzling—burning, bright, nourishing, and insistent—stood in my way.

I was by no means Maxine Greene's best student. I was no star in her universe. At one point, I angled for a job as her teaching assistant, offering to read papers or exams for her. She was a little aghast: "Students want my reactions to their writing, not yours." Another time, she responded to a paper I had submitted: "The first part is . . . illuminating as an instance of existential choice. . . . The second is, well, O.K. It uses a metaphor I think is questionable . . . and, it is a romanticized view. . . . I have to think of teachers and learners as situated, entangled, determined, engaged." This second part was soon published to wide critical praise. For me, Maxine Greene's luke-warm response and serious challenge to that praise remains the truest reading.

Maxine Greene has a boundless generosity—a willingness to share her time, her energy, her mind (especially her mind) with thousands of current and former students. Her table is always set for visitors, and whenever one arrives, that visitor is welcomed and embraced. Maxine knows people as well as events and can see to the heart of a friend as well as an issue. Her constant humility, sometimes glaring when set against her accomplishment, is a living example of inner security, wisdom, and maturity. She declines calling attention to herself, celebrating instead the accomplishments and possibilities she sees in others. She knows herself and knows her mission.

Every encounter with Maxine—her latest article, a book re-read, a lecture recalled, a card in the mail, a phone call, or a conversation over coffee—remains for me a sweet and perfect moment of support and challenge, of surprise and reunion. It is an opportunity to notice more of what there is to notice, to see more, to think more deeply, to *do* philosophy. I leave wanting to read more, to stay wide awake more, to resist the numbing effects of habit and convention, to consider the possibilities. Recently we talked on the phone, and she asked, "What do you make of the world?" We talked a long time. "I find in Europe cause for real despair. . . . But maybe at least in the children I can still see some hope," she said. Now I want to do more, to care for children more, to embrace people more, to dance more, to fight the power more, to move beyond where I am now. I feel spaces opening up before me; I feel called upon to pay closer attention; and I feel challenged to act on what I now see and understand. What more could any student ask of his teacher than that?

2

Philosopher of/for Freedom

Wendy Kohli

STRUCTURING THIS NARRATIVE: A PROBLEM OF REPRESENTATION

I feel obliged to announce, up front, my partisanship toward Maxine Greene: What follows is not a dispassionate piece, an objective assessment of Greene's philosophical work. Emboldened by David Halperin's (1995) recent book, *Saint-Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*,[1] I decided to risk the disapproval of my peers—and perhaps even of Maxine—and write what could be construed as an hagiography, that is, an essay that "venerates, idealizes, or even idolizes."[2] I do this because I believe that Maxine Greene is, simultaneously, one of the most influential and undervalued philosophers of education in this century. I also do it as an act of resistance against the typical way academics, particularly philosophers, criticize each other's work. I am not interested in setting my sights on the flaws in her arguments or in looking for inconsistencies in her positions over time. Instead, by engaging her writing on its own terms, I hope to convey some of the powerfully varied ways Maxine Greene has influenced education. To do otherwise would be to act in bad faith.

As I write this, piles—literally—of Greene's articles, addresses, and books surround me, engulf me, comfort me. Deciding how to summarize, synthesize, even organize her life-work is no small task. Do I move linearly, chronologically through her material, trying to capture the "essence" of her work in each decade? Or do I move in and out, recursively, stretching my gaze around themes that return over and over? How do I create the space for her voice(s) to come through, yet not lose mine in the process?

Reflecting her chosen philosophical grounding in existentialist phenomenology, with its emphasis on the problem of 'becoming,' Maxine Greene makes it difficult to fix a category on/around her or her work; she is continually encountering/constructing new realities and identities for herself. Anticipating postmodernity before it was *au courant*, she, just as her work, remains unfinished, incomplete, partial. So, what might be the best way to represent Maxine Greene's place in philosophy of education?

Originally, I imagined a weaving. The sturdy warp, constituted by the persistent themes of freedom, justice, community, democracy, and imagination, meets the colorful woof threads spun out of the multiple realities from/to which she speaks: the realities of educators, artists, women, children, people of color, poets, activists, and policymakers. On second thought, I realized that this weaving might have to take the shape of a three-dimensional tapestry, a form open to improvisation, to complexity, to singularity. This would better express the passage of time and allow for the reenvisioning of themes, *over time,* in different contexts. For example, although Maxine Greene has written and spoken for more than three decades about freedom, *the context* in which she speaks and writes is inextricably linked to the meaning she gives to the concept. She continually asserts the *situatedness* of her thinking, of her being. Unlike many philosophers who write about abstract, disembedded, disembodied, unchanging, "essential" notions of freedom, Maxine invigorates hers with the flesh and blood of the lived-world in which she is engaged.

The situatedness of Maxine's thought, however, is not confined to or defined by the role of "objective observer" of education or society at any particular historical moment. It also envelopes *her own* subjectivities, her own multiple and often contradictory identities that have shaped and continue to shape her take on the world, and its take on her. I think especially of her own subject-positions of woman: daughter, mother, teacher, urban activist, and Jewish intellectual. These are infused with her rich political, literary, and artistic sensibilities. And they are given emotional texture by the particular "walls" that she has met and transcended,[3] walls internal to her and those put before her by others. Maybe these walls could serve as the loom for the tapestry, the frame through and from which her creations are made?

I doubt, however, if any one of these devices can represent adequately the work of this formidable writer/orator/teacher/philosopher and her complex way(s) of being-in-the-world. Certainly a straightforward flat-matrix weave is insufficient, too static. But even a fluid, multidimensional tapestry may not be enough. Perhaps what is required is what Donna Haraway introduces as the "imagery of the cyborg," a technology that, among other things, "suggests a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and tools to ourselves . . . and is a dream . . . of a powerful infidel heteroglossia" (1991, p. 181). It is Greene's commitment to such a heteroglossia that makes her work so rich, yet challenging to represent in its richness. I embrace this 'crisis of representation' as my limit-situation—that, and the constraints on length imposed by a volume this size.

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

It is common knowledge for those who have followed Maxine's career that her initial connection with philosophy of education was a gendered accident; in her words it was "total chance."[4] I'm not sure that "total chance" is an accurate account of what happened; certainly personal decision and structural/cultural factors played a significant role in setting her course. But what is clear is that she did not start out as a young girl on a straight path to hold the William F. Russell Chair in the Foundations of Education at Teachers College. Just as Maxine situates her knowledge in lived-experience, I, too, shall situate her connection with philosophy of education to her own biography, particularly her identity as a woman.

Greene's formative involvement in philosophy of education at New York University in the late forties and early fifties coincided with the professionalization of philosophy of education as a field (Giarelli & Chambliss, 1991). According to Giarelli and Chambliss:

> Largely because of the enormous influence of Dewey, many philosophers of education in the first half of this century resisted the impulses to specialization and professionalization occurring in general philosophy. At the same time, however, the importance of philosophy of education naturally resulting from Dewey's influence made the development of professional training programs in philosophy of education unstoppable. Already by the 1930's and early 1940's, the second and third generations of people trained by Dewey and his followers at Teachers College were taking positions at outposts of higher education across the country and developing a professional conception of philosophy of education. The public schools were growing and teacher education programs needed faculty in philosophy of education. (p. 266)

They needed Maxine. As she tells it, she was "discovered" by one of these Deweyites, George Axtelle, who took her to lunch one day and encouraged her to go on for a Ph.D. She agreed. Soon she was teaching a huge (two hundred students) summer school course in Philosophy of Education, using the notes from the course she herself had just finished taking!

As a part-time instructor at NYU, Maxine was "hungry to teach anything," and learned as she went, teaching all kinds of "field courses" for teachers in the New York and Connecticut suburbs. When she got her degree in 1955, Axtelle moved on from NYU, leaving Maxine to fend for herself with a dean, "an awful guy," who thought she was "too literary." This, by the way, would not be the last time this criticism was made of her as a philosopher.

Seeking sanctuary in the English Department, she taught courses in "values and education" to survive. She also tried to get a job elsewhere in philosophy of education, but "there was nothing, especially for women at that time." Discouraged, Maxine toyed with going back to school to "get an honest Ph.D.," in philosophy.[5] Early on in her schooling, she got the idea that if any part of your degree was in education, "no liberal arts college would look at you—you weren't considered a real philosopher." So for a time, she thought she *wanted* to be "a *real* philosopher, a *real* scholar, not an education person."

These feelings, of course, did not result simply from her personal prejudices or proclivities. The field of philosophy of education as a whole struggled with its "intellectual self-image" (Giarelli & Chambliss, 1991, p. 267). There were deep differences over what counted as philosophy of education and what its distinctive contribution was to be. Tensions arose, especially for those who sought legitimacy through direct identification with the "parent discipline," philosophy. As Giarelli and Chambliss note:

> By the 1930's and continuing into the 1940's and 1950's, one way of relating philosophy and education was dominant in the professional literature. . . . Philosophy is the parent discipline, and education is to be nurtured by the wisdom of the parent. . . . On this view, the activities of education are derived from those of philosophy. (p. 267)

The Philosophy of Education Society (PES) was founded in 1941 to bring legitimacy to the field by "going professional" (p. 272). This involved identifying "philosophers of education as a distinct professional class marked by specialized training" (p. 268), a specialized training Maxine doubted she had. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, the period when Maxine Greene was entering the academic world as a philosopher of education, the primary source of philosophic legitimation came from the Anglo-American analytic tradition. This way of "doing philosophy" terrified Maxine; "it was so scary, the analytic time." According to her, she was "*so* scared at PES" that when she had to give a paper, she would "get all dizzy and almost faint." Friendly colleagues even offered to read her papers for her, although she never let them.

In addition to the hegemony of linguistic and logical analysis in PES, which did not provide a hospitable environment for a literary existential phenomenologist like Maxine, she had to face an almost all-male organization. Mary Leach, in an illuminating feminist reading of the society, found that "in 1961, for example, there was a lone female listed on the program, though a formidable one—Maxine Greene" (1991, p. 287). Things did not improve much until the late 1970s or early 1980s. Even then, it remained a predominantly male enterprise to present at PES, regardless of the ratio of males to females on the program, since the discursive practices that shaped the meetings were decidedly masculinist.

With things a bit unfriendly at NYU, in 1956 Maxine secured a full-time teaching position at Montclair State Teachers College—in English. It was through teaching a "mega-course" on world literature that she *learned* about literature; prior to this assignment, she had no "formal training in English, maybe one course, once." But the pressures of commuting, of a new baby son, on top of on-the-job training in literature were just too much. Not only was Maxine teaching "out of her field," she was also self-taught. This manifested itself in a lack of confidence and vulnerability to the judgments of those (men) who were constructed as "real" philosophers of education, those with *bona fide* training in philosophy and the blessing of the parent. After one year, she went back reluctantly to NYU as a part-time instructor for a few years before being appointed in 1962 to a tenure-track line at Brooklyn College teaching Foundations of Education.

"DOING PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION"

By the mid 1960s, Maxine had established herself as a formidable writer in academic and other public venues, including *Saturday Review* and *Mademoiselle,* and had moved from Brooklyn College to Teachers College. In retrospect, her arrival at Teachers College was nothing less than bittersweet. Although Lawrence Cremin, then chair of the Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences, wanted her on the faculty, she was forced to come in through the backdoor as editor of *Teachers College Record.* Hindsight suggests apparent sexist resistance to her appointment within the department; they had yet to ever hire a woman. It was only after first teaching for several years in the English Department that she was finally "allowed in" and given a proper appointment in Philosophy of Education. But Maxine's superb record as a teacher and scholar was uncontestable, leading decisively to her appointment to the Russell Chair in 1975.

Though an enigma to many, if not most, of her fellow philosophers in the Philosophy of Education Society, Maxine was elected to serve as its president in 1967. Her presidential address, "Morals, Ideology, and the Schools: A Foray Into the Politics of Education," took some brave shots at her language-focused peers. For example, she says:

> Now it is entirely evident that consideration of the social and political dimensions of education has not (with some notable exceptions)

> interested most educational philosophers in recent years. Various as our orientations are, most of us seem to have agreed (tacitly or explicitly) on the necessity to turn our attention to the teacher's speech and action in the classroom, leaving to the behavioral scientists events in the public realm "out there." (1967b, p. 145)

Ever one to connect her "public" and "private" selves, she offers an indictment of her audience when she remarks,

> As citizens, we may have served as consultants or participants; we may have raised our voices in debate; we may even have demonstrated and carried picket signs. *As philosophers, however,* [emphasis added] we have concentrated on the verbal moves characterizing learning situations, the implications of epistemological theories for curriculum-making, the structure of educational arguments, the contextual meanings of education concepts, the typical uses of educational terms. (1967b, p. 145)

In other words, they had not "done philosophy" as she would have it done; they had maintained the dichotomy and distance between their public and private worlds, keeping philosophy out of politics.[6]

Philosophy as a noun is transformed into a verb in the Greene lexicon. For her, the philosophical *act* requires one "to take the risk of thinking about what he is doing . . . to become progressively more self-conscious about the choices he makes and the commitments he defines . . . and to examine critically the principles underlying what he thinks and what he says" (Greene, 1973, preface).

Greene's approach to philosophy of education has made philosophical thinking possible for many different kinds of people; for her, it is not a domain reserved for the professional academic. Even as she confronted her own self-doubts about her status as a "real philosopher," she was able to blur those boundaries for others and invite them in. Teachers and administrators at all levels of the educational system have been transformed by her work, both written and oral. Greene breathes life into the educational cliche, 'connecting theory to practice.' Although complex and often overpopulated with references to other authors (Jacobs, 1991), Greene's writing invites the particular reader she has in mind—often a teacher—to adopt the stance of "someone who is involved and responsible, someone who looks out on the educational landscape from inside a specifiable 'life form'" (Greene, 1973, preface). There is inherent respect for the reader. Greene presumes practitioners can, of course, read philosophy and think philosophically.

For Greene, philosophy is not a dead body of knowledge, a static thing; it is an ever-evolving search for meaning and freedom; it is an opportunity to confront the world critically in order to change it; it is acting, choosing, deciding to live in-the-world, to experience the lived reality of one's existence. To do philosophy in this way is, echoing Jean Paul Sartre, Greene's "life project."

Her effort to make meaning out of the world in which she has been "thrown," is what resonates with so many educators. By speaking *from her own place* in the world, she is able to speak convincingly to them about *their* lived realities, *their* search for meaning, *their* need to make sense of *their* worlds and to change them. She offers openings, not orders, possibilities, not prescriptions.

PERSISTENT THEMES AND COMMITMENTS: GREENE AS PHILOSOPHER OF FREEDOM

Freedom is just one of several themes that have shaped the corpus of Greene's work over the past thirty years, themes that have been addressed with different audiences for different purposes, yet retain a certain consistency. Maxine's interpretations of freedom, justice, community, democracy, and imagination always reflect the changing historical, economic, social, cultural, and political situations in which they are embedded. They also mirror transformations in philosophy, as well as in social, political, and literary theory. In her work, Maxine struggles with the inevitable tensions between modernity and postmodernity, particularly as she takes note of difference, of 'otherness,' and yet speaks to the continued need for common connections among us. Being as prolific as she is, it is impossible to select one primary focus of Maxine's work. Her search for a multicultural democracy with people living justly in community is certainly reflected in decades of writing and speaking. But underlying this search is a necessary, even fundamental, commitment to and expression of freedom.

In an earlier essay (1989), I review Greene's work in relation to the problem of freedom, suggesting that as a result of her commitment to critical Marxism and existentialism, she insists "upon the agency of individuals and the possibility for freedom that comes through choosing and acting in the world as one recognizes and confronts the reality posed by external conditions" (p. 99). But this choosing and acting does not come without cost. As Greene cautioned us in one of her earliest works, *Existential Encounters for Teachers,* written in 1967, "Confronting his own freedom, his own need to choose, he is bound to suffer from disquietude" (p. 4).

And anguish. In her classic 1973 philosophy of education text, *Teacher as Stranger,* Maxine asserts that "anguish is the way freedom reveals itself. It is the expression of the nagging desire for completion—without any guarantee that the completion sought will be valuable when it is achieved" (p. 279). But this should not be a deterrent to action. Quite the contrary, for it is in this "dreadful freedom [that] the individual decides" (p. 279).

Emphasizing the connection between education and freedom, Greene reinforces the themes of decision and choosing. In her *Inaugural Lecture as William F. Russell Professor* in 1975, she says: "My concern is what can be done by means of education to enable people to transcend their private terrors and act together to give freedom a concrete existence in their lives. . . . My interest is not so much in freedom *from* or negative freedom as it is in the deliberate creation of the kinds of conditions in which people can be themselves" (p. 4). For Greene, acting, choosing, and deciding are what make a person free: "The person choosing breaks the chain of causes and effects, of probabilities, in which he normally feels himself to be entangled. He breaks it in part by asking 'Why?' by perceiving the habitual itself to be an obstacle to his growing, his pursuit of meaning, his interpreting and naming his world" (p. 7). Freedom, Greene says, "is the freedom to decide what sort of person you ought to be" (1973, p. 284).

EDUCATION FOR FREEDOM: MAXINE GREENE'S GIFT TO US

Education can play an important role in helping people decide their own paths. In fact, for Maxine these "connections between education and freedom" are so important that she says they are, "perhaps, the main theme of my life" (1988, p. xii). Through her unique way of doing philosophy, Maxine has inspired countless generations to "decide who we ought to be."

Saying she "does" philosophy of education, however, cannot quite express the depth and breadth of her influence on educators, artists, and others who read widely across and between disciplines. Nor does it represent adequately the aesthetic quality of her work as she draws on popular culture, art, literature, poetry, and film. At the same time, this essay proceeds from the premise that she is, first and foremost, a philosopher of education. That she has, through her own volition, forced that category to include her own rendering of what it means to be one, of what it means to "decide" who we are as philosophers of education and not let others decide for us.

It is through this rendering that Maxine has made the field more hospitable for many of us who draw on continental philosophy, the arts, literature, feminism, and discourses of the 'other' to do our work. Perhaps this is one of her finest, most powerful contributions: the openings she has created for others, particularly other women, even if it has often been at her own expense.[7] Her own ambivalence toward philosophy of education, manifested in her multidisciplinary writings, may be, paradoxically, the most certain of her creations. This ambivalence does not paralyze; if anything, it allows her to see multiple realities, to choose to act with passion, to know that there are always other voices to be heard. No one says this better than she:

> Thought, the pursuit of meanings, freedom and concern: there is no final summing up the themes of what counts as Philosophy of Education. Passion should infuse all these: the passion of sensed possibility and, yes, the passion of poetry and the several arts. Thinking of ourselves as subjects reaching out to others and attending to the shapes and sounds of things, we may resist the anaesthetic in our lives and the drawing back to anchorage. We have to know about our lives, clarify our situations if we are to understand the world from our shared standpoints, our standpoints as philosophers of education ready to commit ourselves to small transformations as we heed the stories, the multiplex stories, as cautiously as we transform. (1995, p. 21)

Certainly there is evidence of Maxine's resistance to the "anaesthetic" in the multiple ways she has transformed the educational world, as she has jarred us to "wide-awakeness." From young children in arts programs in New York City, down to policymakers in Washington, across the country to countless teacher educators, teachers, school administrators, and curriculum workers, we all have been moved by her generosity, her imagination, her eloquence. Maxine's unique gift of the word, both oral and written, brings philosophy to life for her diverse audiences. One would be hard pressed to find anyone who calls themselves a philosopher of education who has touched as many people as Maxine Greene has in her fruitful, passionate, unfinished, life.

NOTES

1. Halperin's (1995) "uncompromising and impassioned defense" of Michel Foucault's work inspired me to be unabashedly proud of Maxine Greene's place in education. Although not currently under attack the way Foucault has been in recent years, Greene has faced her share of demeaning sexist treatment and marginalization, particularly in the early years of her professional life.

2. See *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.*

3. She introduces this concept in her 1988 book, *The Dialectic of Freedom,* when describing the internal and external barriers individuals must overcome in claiming their freedom.

4. From a personal interview with me on August 16, 1993. Most of the direct quotes in this paper are from this interview, although versions of her story have been told in other contexts as well.

5. Luckily for her, she thinks now, a Columbia University philosophy professor advised her to forget about that idea and "just write." Although grateful that she did not invest in another degree, it still gnaws at her that she "did not have a very good education." This self-doubt is exploitable in an insecure field like philosophy of education, especially for us women who, *as women,* often doubt our ability and legitimacy in any case.

6. Or so they thought. Many of us would question the possibility for any kind of 'objective' or 'disinterested' knowledge, science or philosophy.

7. Maxine's decision to draw on continental philosophy, the arts, and literature was often met with skepticism, even disdain, by many of her (male) peers who, steeped in a more Anglo-analytic tradition, thought her work "unintelligible" and certainly "un-philosophical."

REFERENCES

Giarelli, J. M., & Chambliss, J. J. (1991). The foundation of professionalism: Fifty years of the Philosophy of Education Society in retrospect. *Educational Theory, 41*(3), 265–274.

Greene, M. (1967a). *Existential encounters for teachers.* New York: Random House.

Greene, M. (1967b). Morals, ideology and the schools: A foray into the politics of education. *Proceedings of the twenty-third annual meeting of the Philosophy of Education Society.* Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University.

Greene, M. (1973). *Teacher as stranger: Educational philosophy for the modern age.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Greene, M. (1975). *Education, freedom and possibility: Inaugural lecture as William F. Russell Professor.* New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Greene, M. (1988). *The dialectic of freedom.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Greene, M. (1995). What counts as philosophy of education? in W. Kohli (Ed.), *Critical conversations in philosophy of education* (pp. 3–23). New York: Routledge, Chapman, & Hall.

Halperin, D. (1995). *Saint-Foucault: Towards a gay hagiography.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Haraway, D. J. (1991). *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature.* New York: Routledge, Chapman, & Hall.

Jacobs, M. E. (1991). *Diary of an ambivalent daughter: A feminist re-visioning of Maxine Greene's discursive landscapes.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park.

Kohli, W. (1989). Education and freedom in the American experience: Critical imagination as pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review, 59*(1), 98–107.

Kohli, W. (Ed.). (1995). *Critical conversations in philosophy of education*. New York: Routledge, Chapman, & Hall.

Leach, M. (1991). Mothers of in(ter)vention: Women's writing in philosophy of education. *Educational Theory, 41*(3), 287–300.

3

Dinner With Maxine

Mark Weiss, Candy Systra, and Sheila Slater

We all have different versions of how Maxine first came to meet with us at Bronx Regional High School in the South Bronx in 1988. We remember her stepping out of the cab on Reverend Polite Avenue with her long skirt, wide-brimmed hat, and a shopping bag nearly overflowing with articles, reprints, magazines, the newspaper, and books. We remember sitting in on her classes (and Maxine sitting in on some of ours), going out to dinner, and attending conferences together. Best of all, we remember the conversations. Maxine calls them "conversations that echo from somewhere else, some deep place." The following text is such a conversation—one with many openings, reflecting themes we continue to explore together—academia and practice, friendship, community, social justice, art and politics, creativity, and narrative, and it still goes on. . . .

• • •

MAXINE: The point I want to make has to do with narratives. To me, a good narrative, a real authentic narrative, is really an effort to dig down and shape what you find in your life, in your history. Not just babble it or write it down for catharsis, but give it a shape so it will be understood by somebody else. That's like good communication. What's important is what in each of us is seeking expression, and what's different about us is what we have at hand to give it expression. I think what we try to do with kids is to help them with that expression. With you all I felt humble in a way. You're all good teachers, you're in such a hard place. Teachers College is such an armchair compared with the school where you worked. The setting, everything about it, the street outside. I was full of admiration that you were there with such spirit and such love for kids and respect for each other.

I don't see that in academe. In academe, I see competition and, still, white man elitism. I remember when Gaynor McCown, another teacher at your school, talked about the time a student was arrested for murder, and she showed a letter he wrote. He said, "I don't want my family to think I'm a murderer." He used a false name. I just remember Gaynor's feeling about that. I just couldn't get over that because that kind of access, concern, legitimacy you do not see, at least I do not see, in higher education.

SHEILA: One of the reasons we felt and feel so drawn to you is that there is a certain acknowledgment, a recognition by somebody, *you*, coming from academe, who sees the importance of all of this, and of those of us who are doing it.

MARK: When we talk about our teaching with you, it raises the level or it does something to whatever it is we're talking about. I'm not sure that we believed about ourselves all that you saw in us, but we lived up to some of the things. Your presence caused us to reflect on our teaching. It makes it more important; it connects it with a body of philosophy that I don't know, but you do.

SHEILA: Our discussions, these stories and your references to writers, to different philosophical points of view that you know very well, Maxine, show each of us that the road is not just one way. And it is in a way what we do with our students. It's what you do with teachers and students you're working with. You're listening to them; you're listening to what they say.

MAXINE: I hate to quote Hannah Arendt, but I always do. She says, when people get together as who they are and not what they are, an "in-between" opens between them. There are worldly relationships and over that there is the delicate web of human relationships.

• • •

MAXINE: I fell into this kind of work so randomly. I wanted to be a writer, and I was a political activist. After World War II, it was a little difficult to be an authentic activist. I thought I could incorporate somehow some of my ideas into teaching. I always suffered a kind of guilt, you know. It was a very peculiar feeling. First of all, people like me didn't become professors. Being Jewish, I found it weird being a professor. I also suffered guilt, a middle-class guilt mixed up with female guilt at acting like a big-shot male professor, wearing shoes that weren't mine. So the gift you gave me by accepting me was very important.

I wouldn't underestimate randomness in people's lives. It has a dramatic and a romantic appeal, and we are, all of us, like it or not, intellectuals, because we love ideas and puzzles and causes and wonderings and things like that. I think maybe in teacher education we don't make enough of that.

The funny thing is, I wanted to be a writer. Sometimes you wonder if what you first wanted stamped you. But I am sure now I couldn't have been a writer. And I probably would have been terribly disappointed. I did write two and a half unsuccessful novels. When I read someone like Raymond Carver, I know I couldn't do what he did. Or I read *The English Patient,* which I loved so much; and I think, that's the life, that's what I would have been happy to be able to do, to be a poet. I started out when I got out of college. It was my revenge on my American history major and the bad teaching I suffered. I wrote a very "subversive" novel in American history. It was about a folk singer I made up during the American Revolution who tacked his songs to trees, and then it was about the pre-Jeffersonian period, the Alien and Sedition Acts under which people were sent to jail for their sympathies with the French Revolution. They had these Democratic societies, sometimes secret. I was nineteen. I went to Philadelphia, and I got these penciled minutes for the Democratic Society meetings and didn't even know I was doing research. So I wrote a seven hundred page novel.

SHEILA: What did you do with it?

MAXINE: A friend of mine knew a literary agent. By then I was married, but my old Spanish Civil War friend used to come to the library and see me writing. The agent sent it to Little, Brown in New York and they sent it to Little, Brown in Boston. They thought it was too left-wing or something. I was so young; I didn't understand. It hurt to have something rejected, so I put it away. I don't think it was really good in any case. The second one was about a mulatto woman, a pianist, and this time I did all the research on the WPA Arts Project. Then Duell, Sloan, and Pierce asked me to rewrite it in the first person. I didn't know how to write about sex or anything like that; again, I failed. I started a third one years later. This was about a daughter of someone like John Dewey, who had maybe yes or maybe no squealed on somebody to the Un-American Activities Committee. She is looking in a quarry at the start, wondering if her father committed suicide. My own father committed suicide almost right after I wrote that, and it scared the living hell out of me. I never again wrote any kind of fiction. Then I was remarried and all that. My husband said, "Why don't you go back to school? At least you know you were good at school." When my little Linda had trouble adjusting to her new school, I thought, well, I'll take her back to her old school every day and I'll go to school myself. I wrote to every university asking where I could be a special student. All I needed was that it had to be between ten and two so Linda could be back at her Brooklyn school.

SHEILA: How old was she?

MAXINE: She was seven, and I'd been divorced. I always tell people, it's lucky it wasn't a physics class meeting from ten to two; it was philosophy and history of education at NYU, eight points, twice a week, three professors. I fell into it that way. But the funny thing is, that isn't what I wanted. I wanted it once I got in. You want the little success that comes next. I became the assistant in the class the next term. When I took my certification exam at NYU with five hundred people from all over the university, they said only 20% passed. When I took that exam, I was so sure I flunked that I wouldn't even register the next fall. It shows you that I didn't think I belonged. I haven't even bought a cap and gown, after all these years. I have always rented because I never thought . . . I never even had a card printed. You know how people have cards; I don't have a card because I never thought I would last.

I went to the New School when I was nineteen, and discovered I had enough honors points to leave Barnard. Nobody said, "Stay. Go to graduate school," or anything. I eloped, moved from my family's home, wanted to write. I was working with the American Labor Party and went to the New School part-time. I had these old German social democrats as teachers. I wrote a paper on collective security. Remember that? It was one of the icon phrases, "collective security." The United States would join the Soviets and others, I suppose it meant, in a common front.

MARK: When was that?

MAXINE: 1939 or '40, I think, at the end of the Spanish Civil War. When Barcelona fell, I thought I would commit suicide, that it meant the death of all our hopes because the Fascists had won in Spain. The New School people dismissed me, would not give me credit for my paper. They said I wasn't scholarly, was too radical. That is how I know what they were then. They were the ones, after all, who allowed the Nazis in and then they got kicked out.

SHEILA: I didn't know that. That's interesting.

MAXINE: I forgot their names; but I know various people have written about them. It seemed strange because the school was founded by such magnificent people—Alice Johnson, a Midwestern progressive (whom I once interviewed); John Dewey; Horace Kallen, one of the first pluralists among that group, who really believed in diversity.

SHEILA: I've never heard some of these stories before.

MAXINE: I'd like to tell it. It may be too old.

SHEILA: We talk about oral histories, and this is what we are doing in some sense. And I think it's just as valuable for us as it is for our students.

MAXINE: That's true. I don't know if this belongs here or not. My father had a factory when I was young. I became so ashamed about it, really ashamed. It was on 23rd Street and 4th Avenue in Brooklyn. Generations of Italian families worked for him, we were told.

MARK: Why were you ashamed? Where did the other values come from?

MAXINE: I try to remember now. He was paternalistic to his workers and, of course, hated unions. When I was at Barnard, I guess I met some radical people who confirmed what I was thinking. Among the high moments of my life was the time the SS *Bremen* came in from Germany, and many young people marched to the harbor, where some climbed the mast to try to pull down the Nazi flag. I wanted desperately to do that, but I could not climb. Not long after, probably with the same people, I was picketing some stores on Fulton Street in Brooklyn because they would not hire Black cashiers—and that was in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

SHEILA: You must have met so many interesting people.

MAXINE: I did, and I was arrested for picketing. Then I joined something called the Workers' Alliance, which specialized in taking furniture back after evictions. On one occasion, I saw something I never forgot in my life. It helped make me feel guilty and still makes me feel guilty. I saw a kid with a rat bite on his lip. I never forgot that.

The next thing that happened, I was pregnant and we were having a meeting at this Workers' Alliance thing, and a man came up with a pail and threw lye in the chairman's eyes, blinding him. There was a kind of continuum, I guess.

When I was a junior, my father let me go to Europe with a classmate. He gave me a list of tasks to perform for his business that I did not understand. On the boat, I met some men going to fight in Spain with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and I wanted to go to Spain. Obviously, I couldn't, but eventually I got to Paris and found a job with the Loyalist Embassy. It was the year of Guernica, and of a World's Fair. I met people I thought were noble people—Constancia de la Mora, Louis Aragon; and I cabled my father that I did not want to go home. He said I had to go home and finish college. Once back here, I began lecturing on Spain, and that was when I learned to lecture.

SHEILA: When I went to China in 1957, I didn't want to come back either. When we returned, we went around lecturing to different schools, showing slides. . . . I had been at a World Youth Festival in Moscow, and the Chinese delegation invited Americans to go to China and forty-two of us went for six weeks, and when we returned our passports were confiscated. I had no passport for years.

* * * *

SHEILA: Maxine, I've thought a lot about your lectures about aesthetics and the role of aesthetics, the role of art and creativity in my own life and how rewarding it is for me personally. I have seen the effects of art experiences with many students of mine who are nonreaders-nonwriters and yet who have great feelings about self-expression and creativity and artistic expression. When people individually have high degrees of self-expression, that's when the community functions at the highest level. I really believe it's the community that decides on the values, and that individual expression should be one of the values. I'm thinking about how I don't view it in terms of individual against community. I think in this system of education, the way you get individual expression is to have a sense of community.

MAXINE: That was Dewey's idea.

SHEILA (*laughing*): I knew I must have read it somewhere.

MAXINE: Is there a sort of invisible community that you feel part of? I think it's true in my world, because I think that you imagine people with high values and a certain way of teaching and doing literature. How do you identify yourself with respect to the context when you're living in a gruesome society? How do you think about what you do?

SHEILA: And how do you build a sense of community that moves in a more positive direction.

CANDY: It's so hard for our students to develop a sense of community. We value community so much, and we are trying to do things to foster community. But we can't do it only in a microcosm. There's a community outside, too, right? Sometimes the community that exists out there has a very negative impact for very real and very true reasons. Students ask, "What does a high school diploma get you? What does hard work get you?"

MARK: Now you're dealing with the issue of hope.

MAXINE: I like Dewey's idea of a community in the making. Not that there *is* a community, but community in the making: through dialogue, through doing things together, through shared concern, identifying something that is shared that can move you to some kind of action. Every time you say "community," it suggests there are all these concentric communities and you want your kids to make at least one. I have a feeling if you were to make a community within the big circle of a Martin Luther King ceremony, it would have to be made in terms of this generation's Martin Luther King, which is different from ours. The other thing I was wondering, when we talk about community, does that allow for very small local things like coming together to walk the little ones across the project yard, or to see to it that somebody has lunch? I think you make community by doing those little things. I think all we can think of now is local things, and hoping that (I don't know, you know much better)—you keep hoping that the outrage the children feel might be directed to something they can repair. They can't repair very much, but even the outrage they experience when the house is empty in the afternoon is sort of connected. Here's another example. A student of mine wrote a paper. She said her sister was in the riots in Los Angeles teaching in a school there. Two of the kids in her class were killed by crossfire. She said there was something positive about the fact that the children kept calling the teacher, even found out where she lived and came to her house. She felt it was a positive thing, that they came to her for protection, a white teacher. I suppose those are little moments when something happens.

SHEILA: I don't think you ever know the value of these moments, these experiences that the kids have and that we have, how they're going to re-emerge in people's lives, how they're going to be incorporated. Most of my students come from other countries, and they've recently arrived within the last few years. There's an enormous lack of trust about this country, this city, and the schools, and white teachers. I think for kids to experience something that you build together, and to know that it's possible, means that you know it *can* happen. The fact that you experience it means you can then assess why it does happen in certain situations and why it doesn't happen in others.

MARK: But you know it can happen in your classroom and they know that it can happen in your classroom.

CANDY: Are you saying that what you try to do in your classroom, as much as anything else, is establish this? Are you thinking consciously of collective, of community? This little group working together is a goal of yours?

SHEILA: In my classroom, we work very individually because of the nature of the task, but yes, I have a consciousness of developing a sense of community.

MAXINE: Is it common subject matter?

SHEILA: Well, that's interesting. It can be that. It can be a discussion about a particular topic. It's also the way we all interrelate in the classroom with one another—the responsibilities that we all have in order to live together.

CANDY: So, can I tell one short story? I was in a math class at a jail on Riker's Island. It was Peter Masongo's class. He's such a good teacher! Everyone was looking at math word problems. The idea today was not to solve the problem, but to answer the question, "What information is included in the problem that is unnecessary?" The first problem Masongo put on the board was, "Joe makes $8.50 an hour. He has $500 in his savings account. If he works a forty-hour week for seven weeks, how much money does he make on the job?" Well, first of all, a bunch of people got very upset because how much he has in his bank account is private information and should not be revealed. They didn't want to get to anything else because this conversation had to happen first. We found out a whole lot of stuff. Also, there was somebody who couldn't do the math but he could read the problem. The guy next to him didn't speak any English but was pretty good in math. So one of them was reading and translating into Spanish, the other was helping him, and Masongo was sitting there saying, "Gee, I have nothing to do."

SHEILA: He has such a great sense of community.

CANDY: So the class as a whole was doing this problem. I was off in a corner trying to teach subtraction. "If this is 1995 and you're twenty-nine years old, let's see if we can figure out through math the year you were born," which of course he already knows. It's all happening at the same time. It is a community, even though we're doing individual things, and—

SHEILA: Well, in a community of people helping one another, it doesn't matter whether they're doing it in one form as individuals or all together.

MARK: But the major thing of teaching is being okay not to know something, for everybody. It's okay not to know.

SHEILA: Yes, but people don't always believe that.

MARK: If that happens, if it's okay for the teacher not to know, then it's okay for the student not to know.

SHEILA: The student has to believe that whoever is saying that means it.

MARK: But that goes back to a connection with Maxine, which is that it's okay not to really know some philosopher. Not to know him personally, the way she does.

* * * *

MAXINE: I saw the president of the college today because a colleague and I went in to argue for the hiring of another philosophy teacher. My colleague and I had different ideas. My colleague thinks that a philosopher should be an intellectual center who keeps Teachers College in touch with the aims of a graduate school. I said I thought that a philosopher at Teachers College should really have something to do with the philosophically complex issues, say, of professional development schools and teacher education. Does that make sense to you, or does that just justify my own life?

CANDY: Why does it have to be either/or?

MAXINE: Well it doesn't really, except that the really academic philosophers don't see it that way. They think to do philosophy, to keep Teachers College's head above the murky waters of practice, is to read Heidegger, to focus on the classics and the canon. I'm interested in metaphor and its many implications for practice and thought. Also, I am interested in the role of theory and the connections between philosophy and literature, and I keep thinking about the meanings of all this for public schools and their present day populations. I believe a good teacher is the kind who can get fascinated by many sorts of ideas even though she won't have much chance to teach Habermas. It is odd, though, to determine what is relevant, what really matters in the world of ideas. Before now, in social philosophy, I taught Marx, the neo-Marxists, the existentialists, the critical theorists, Foucault. This time I used a large number of essays on liberalism, on issues of freedom and equality, on the public and the public space. We read Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and Camus's *The Plague.* And I decided to end with a book on Camus, Arendt, and the idea of rebellion. It's not the usual neo-Marxist thing I did, but people do get fascinated with Arendt. So you say, what's the use of that if they're going to go wherever it is and teach New York City's high school students?

CANDY: But you don't believe that.

MAXINE: No, I believe a good teacher should have a tough time learning, should not be given soupy stuff, should be introduced to ideas and struggle with them. Really, I was trying to say to the president that the concerns of teachers are as profound as any philosopher's concerns could be. They have to do with good and bad, with freedom, equality, and justice and all these things. Don't they?

MARK: Well, there's so much lack of content in teacher education. It's so often solely about methodology.

SHEILA: It depends on where it is. When I did my master's in Adult and Community Education at City College, I felt that there was a lot of struggle in the department about what the content of the courses should be and that they should be related to real issues.

CANDY: On the other hand, part of what upsets me so much in high school classrooms right now is that it seems like the content somehow comes from God. There's not an urgency to be creative, to be thinking actively, to be making what Maxine was calling those possibilities. I worry about that. What exists is a variation on the theme of the right answer.

MAXINE: Oh really, still the canonical thing?

MARK: I would like to get back to the issue you were raising about a philosophy professor, and philosophy, and how it informs the teacher who is practicing in the classroom, and the relationship among the four of us. In Paulo Freire's new book, *Pedagogy of Hope,* he talks about this exercise that he did where he says to a group of peasants, "You ask me a question that I can't answer, then I'll ask you a question you can't answer." They go through ten things. And the peasants have ten questions he can't answer about agriculture, and he has ten questions they can't answer about philosophy.

MAXINE: That's exactly the point I was going to make; I think that's very good. Very good. You talk about story and narrative; we each have our story. We have the language in which to express it. If you do away with that position of power, all there are are different stories.

But Paulo goes beyond that. After that dialogue with the peasants, one of them asks, "How come the doctor knows all those things?" "Because his father was rich and sent him to college." And then Paulo goes on to say that you have to teach them more than how to oil the wheel. There's a language of power that people have to know. To me the delicate issue with schools is how you affirm the richness of people's original stories and at the same time make them want to go beyond. That's my idea of imagination. How can you make them want more? I mind some teachers romanticizing the stories so much, and some of the stories would be so much better if the language was richer, if they knew a little more, if they could make metaphors. Teachers sometimes forget that the students, too, need to be empowered: to say better, to say more clearly, more richly what they have to say. It's not just the language of power that you have to know in order to make it in this society, and Paulo says that. But I really do believe that people like us, if you read poetry and novels and so on, begin to talk less literally and have more flexible use of language.

I was listening to NPR to the poet Mark Strand, whose work I love, who did a book on Edward Hopper, the painter. Strand was saying that everyone in Hopper's paintings is thinking about something. It's not just that they're lonely, they're thinking about something. His use of words opened up the Hopper painting of the woman in the window in my mind. It wasn't that they were big words, it was the arrangement of words and the metaphor and the simplicity. I thought, if we could all talk like that, if teachers could do that, what kids would see.

CANDY: Yes, his use of words opens the possibilities. Art acts as a model. Now that I know Mark Strand can do that with Edward Hopper, maybe I could decide that I could do that with something else. And why is that seen as the province of the arts? Why can't we open that to studying history? Why can't we create the moment of indecision? Instead of studying what the encyclopedia says, if you really had to do the research yourself, if you really had your own historical questions and you had to face the indecision or the complexity, wouldn't that open up history for you?

MAXINE: I keep giving an example of how teaching the Civil War could be changed by the movie *Glory.* It's very moving, but according to one of my students, these guys are sacrificed, there's no point to it, and it's a male military ideal that's used. I knew that, but I didn't know it as much until that student said it. The other funny part was that I thought I never knew there was a black battalion. I thought I never knew, but Robert Lowell has a collection called *For the Union Dead,* and the poem "For the Union Dead" is about a monument in the Boston Commons, and it's a monument to Drew Scott, that young colonel from the movie. It describes the whole thing. I read it and dropped it out of my mind until I saw the movie, and that was as interesting as anything else.

SHEILA: You know, it's funny, I showed *Glory* to my class two months ago. Some of the kids said, that's crazy to volunteer knowing you'd be killed. Then we ended up talking about what it meant for these black soldiers to be fighting for an end to slavery.

MAXINE: It was a wonderful issue to raise. Moving around from perspective to perspective, using language can enrich kids if they say better what they meant to say, as long as you respect what they want to say. They have to feel the dignity of being listened to.

MARK: The building is such a delicate process. You say, "I respect you; we trust each other," and they have a voice.

MAXINE: That's what I'm getting at.

4

In the Presence of Others

Karen Ernst, Maureen Miletta, and Kathleen Reilly

One of Maxine's favorite philosophers, Hannah Arendt, said, "For excellence, the presence of others is always required." Maxine believes this and is extraordinarily generous with her time. For five years, our writing group has reflected her interest in collaboration as a way to take the stuff of our lives and experiences as teachers and reshape them. For the most part, Karen concentrated on her dissertation, taking us through the phases of interpreting data about the connection between art and writing, and really preparing the basis of her now published book, *Picturing Learning* (Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH, 1994). Maureen was teaching at Hofstra University and pulling together the threads of her experience developing an innovative multiage classroom; she has just finished her book, *A Multiage Classroom: Choice and Possibility* (Heinemann, 1996). Kathleen was just beginning her work as a teacher researcher by applying for National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) grants and trying to synthesize and make sense of her data. Her studies are published in "Teacher Research and the Clearing House." Maxine was doing at least twenty or more different kinds of writing. Sometimes she would read a preface she wrote for someone else's book, or she might have just delivered a paper in Iowa about aesthetic education; she could have a draft of a piece about French feminist writers for *Harvard Educational Review,* or she could have an idea floating around that she just whipped into five or six pages.

We certainly were from diverse backgrounds and in different places when we came together, but each of us left with something uniquely centered on our work. Maxine was interested in our projects, always seemed to have a nugget of current information that informed our writing and encouraged us to keep at it. Her energy is staggering. Her strength lies in her openness to other worlds, in her intense curiosity about the way other lives are lived, and in her commitment to the belief that it is in community that change flourishes. Our afternoons with Maxine affected each of us profoundly, as you will read here, and we share a deep respect and affection for our dear friend.

* * *

KAREN

I drew six-year-old Jessica as she got up from the rug to approach a painting, another student's copy of van Gogh's *Starry Night.* I noticed the contrast between her tiny, hot pink "Snoopy" sweatshirt and the boldness of her response to the painting. Pointing to the picture, she moved her hand in a circle as she spoke. I recorded Jessica's words: "I notice the swirls in the trees. I notice how she put her own colors in the picture because she probably didn't like the colors he chose. I like all the details." Drawing this event into my research journal helped me focus on Jessica and remember the importance of my job as a teacher to help my students notice their world, to respond to art and literature, to express themselves in many ways, and to know how to learn independently. As I recorded Jessica's words I made the connection to Maxine Greene. Her questions and ideas permeate my classroom experiences. Jessica and all of my students have a distant teacher in Maxine Greene.

She was my mentor, a member of my dissertation committee, and she propelled my thinking, heightened my understanding of what I do as a teacher, and continues to push me to provide experiences in my classroom that open the world of imagination and art to my students. It was from reading Maxine's words and listening to her speak at Lincoln Center that I began developing an understanding for a philosophy of education that made sense to me. It was from that experience along with teaching that led me to pursue a doctorate. Sitting next to her in our writing group, I thought that she remained larger than life.

Line and word is the way I record experiences in my journal. At each group meeting, I drew Maxine as she listened to our stories and laughed at our anecdotes about the classrooms where we taught. I used my journal at these meetings to draw her, to help me focus on her and capture her words as they seemed to tumble from her mind. "Imagination is the capacity to open spaces. Art can contribute to the drive for the men and women who change the world." I also drew her to calm and center myself, knowing that it would be my turn to read, to unveil the chapters of my dissertation, and then be suspended by her questions (see Figure 4.1).

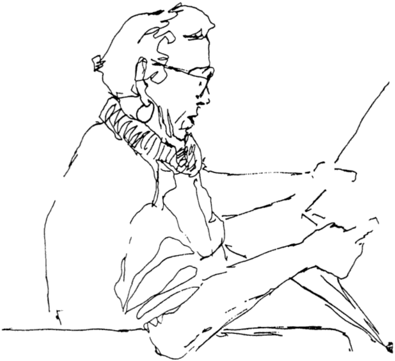

Figure 4-1.

"I am interested in how you disclose. You are making sense of the world by using line. Drawing is unconcealing," she said. Her responses would fall on my ears in rapid succession. She would at once help me to know what I had taken for granted, connect it to theories and philosophies of others, and then challenge me. "There is that whole problem of image and words. This is only an approximation. How is art a form of knowledge?" I learned not to try to answer her questions but only to write them into my journal. At every meeting her response would send me to more reading, more thinking, writing, and realization.

Each time I read, she challenged me to be aware of my selection of words. Maxine loves words and plays with the subtleties between them. "What does meaning mean? Should we use understanding instead of meaning?" "What do you mean by powerful ownership? What is the opposite of powerful?" "That is not the title you want. Let's look for another." Hers was the philosophy supporting my work, while at the same time she participated in its creation. She taught me to consider the art of my teaching and the craft of the languages—drawing and words—I used to tell the story of my experience. She elevated my experience as a teacher to a picture that seemed larger than I had imagined, then she challenged me to look at its expression in the smallest detail.

She would point out what meaning was there and then question the idea. "This is a story. Is it a celebration? There is great danger in this being a personal journey." Her questions kept me in a constant state of tension, and I now know that it is the tensions in my own classroom that propel me to question, change, and make learning better for all of my students. "Aren't you showing you have broken down the barriers [between art and writing]?" "Emphasize how independent they become in your classroom." Her questions helped me consider what I should show in my narrative. My heightened awareness made me see my students and classroom in a new way and has helped me understand the value of my work with young children.

"Is it the same for all children? How does it feed into the culture?" she challenged. I could never be satisfied with the microcosm of my own classroom. She urged me to look larger, to question how my work could touch others and how what I was showing would challenge the children to look in new ways. She cautioned me every step of the way. "Watch out when you refer to art as meaning that which children do. They are not fully developed artists." "How does image get translated into poetry?" "What is the relationship between freedom and structure." "Show that the arts are not elitist." Maxine urged me to stroke the canvas of my work with wide, bold strokes, then work at the details with a tiny brush, and to always step back and question and change.

My mind would feel the pressure of her wide and deep knowledge, but she was there listening, laughing, supporting, looking for a better word, and moving me in new directions and to new understandings. I wrote in the margin of my journal, "It is a compliment," on the day she said, "I've never read anything that makes it possible." Was she referring to the Jessicas who march up to the picture and respond with an authority beyond what I would expect of a six year old?

"Dewey," she said, "talks of making connections in experience. For me, it has to reach beyond the appearances." Most days in my classroom as students share their paintings, write about the meaning inside their pictures, or respond to my questions about imagination, art, and learning, I feel a connection to Maxine. I look for ways that art can be central to learning, and in my days of off-balance I look for new possibilities. I push myself to go beyond appearances, to go beyond a celebration, and now urge other teachers to do the same. When six-year-old Jessica stood before that painting that day, moving her hands and her words with feeling and care, I knew Maxine was present. Maxine helps me make learning possible in my own classroom.

MAUREEN

Maxine walked to her class on the philosophy of John Dewey, struggling to balance books and papers. She dumped everything down on the table at the front of the classroom and announced to the sixty or seventy assembled students that she was terribly nervous. She always was, she said, at the beginning of a semester. She hadn't slept well, and her stomach felt "queasy." Every teacher in the room knew just what she meant. I fell in love right then and there.

Maxine's openness is more than symbolic. She gives herself completely to her students and invites them to follow her example. What is most appealing about Maxine is the combination of hubris and insecurity that she embodies, which captures the essence of what it means to be a teacher. On the one hand, we dare to engage in the reconstruction of schooling, but we also suffer the consequence of feeling that whatever we do will never be good enough or wise enough or sufficiently significant. Meeting with her in our writing group is cerebral, but I always experience the same mixture of confidence and uncertainty every time we meet. I am particularly aware of it when I have to read something I have written. Kathleen and Karen and I know ourselves to be capable, competent writers, but we often put out a disclaimer before we share our pieces. Maxine does the same thing. She will shyly pull a manuscript from her black bag, muttering, "I'm not sure if this works," and then she'll read her magical, metaphorical prose, and we'll be transported and inspired and amazed.

Maxine can make the most unintelligent questions sound brilliant. "I hear you saying," she'll begin. Or, "I think you mean," and then she'll rephrase the question referring to the most recently published novel, or last night's television drama, or the morning *Times*. She makes the same transformations for us in our writing group. She listens intently for nuance and asks questions that cut to deepest meanings—sometimes hidden even from the author. She supports us, but also points us to new paths and possibilities. I remember working on a piece about children's picture books and Maxine's supportive but insistent questioning of its relevance to diverse student groups. I worked in a suburban setting, and Maxine was there to remind me that I needed to pay more attention to city schools and their problems.

Maxine was once asked what she thought were the characteristics of a good teacher, and I keep remembering that, when she listed a few, she included a "tolerance for ambiguity." Perhaps the greatest gift she has given us in our writing group is the awareness of the ambiguous nature of teaching and an understanding that when our timidity is battling our aggression, we are ourselves becoming more attuned to subtlety, to profundity, and to possibility at the same time that we are struggling to make sense of our experience.

Though others may seek conformity and certainty, Maxine asks those hard questions with elusive answers that cause confusion and sometimes pain. But she always opens windows and, as our afternoons end, she sends us off to discover new ways to look at the familiar.

KATHLEEN

Whenever I hear myself say that I have been in a writing group with Maxine for several years, I have to quickly add that she certainly doesn't get any help from me . . . when Maxine reaches into her bag and casually pulls out a work-in-progress, it's usually in need of very little editing . . . maybe just a patch here and there, but never anything major. So, if I do talk about being in a writing group with her, it is mostly "to edify, to explain" in J. D. Salinger's words. She is such a city mouse, and when we meet at my house, she travels an hour and a half north to the Connecticut woods and the river that runs parallel. At a June meeting in 1991, she pulled into the driveway with Maureen, and stepped out with her signature black straw hat pulled down around her face the way I like to think Edna St. Vincent Millay wore hers. As she walked through the gate, she tossed off the question, "Will there be croquet?"

It was at this session that spread through a long afternoon in my sunroom that I just made notes about the way she asks questions. She told me later on that day, "I'm so full of questions that I can't answer." That was her response to my struggles with my research questions. I thought that I was colliding with myself . . . too many questions . . . data enough to drown in. . . . I was moaning about being loaded with questions and impatient for answers. Maxine nodded with complicity . . . she has the most natural way of easing you into her intellectual jet stream, as if you belonged. "Questions gather in me and sizzle," she continued, "I think too fluidly; I was obsessed with the imaginary when I was younger, . . . not so sure I've changed that much." Here was a typical Maxine response giving me permission to wander, to grope with my barrel of questions about my students and their writing . . . she never said that I should shape my approach in a different way. Rather, she instantly recognized that I was stuck with my own musings, and in a heartbeat, she added . . . "You really should celebrate your embeddedness, Kathleen." Hmm . . . should I do that? . . . that would be some trick, I thought . . . but the afternoon wore on after lunch, and I found some change occurring. Rather than fight for definition and refinement in my research, I would just proceed even though I was weighed down by it.

I read my journal, describing the way Anne Berthoff's *Dialectic Notebooks* were helping my students audit their own meaning when they read and wrote about the literature we studied. Maxine, Karen, and Maureen listened to my discoveries, frustrations, wonderings . . . with all of the student papers and notebooks to look at, make sense of, write about, I felt that there was no way out of this that would mean anything to anyone else . . . but, Maxine again, said the right words: "I could never break with my involvement," she remarked . . . and there was another gift . . . I was involved in the way that every teacher should be . . . up to my ears in change . . . and Karen, Maureen, and Maxine brought me to that fact face to face . . . it simply had not occurred to me that I was a factor in this research . . . I preferred, I see now, to be a spectator, too . . . but, that would never do . . . not with this group.

Maxine's presence always lightened and deepened our sessions together . . . she is very witty, loves to laugh, and does it spontaneously . . . ideas amuse her, perplex her, seduce her . . . and it is all there on her face when she is listening to one of us, responding, questioning. Her questions can be killers, more global, and far reaching than we want at times . . . in a discussion about the way that journals work in my classroom, she posed "Is there a pedagogy of journals?" Eek, I thought, of course there is, isn't there? . . . or at least, there should be, I realized. The summer afternoon continued with the four of us taking turns reading, writing notes, responding . . . I remember that I was still stuck in my own thick descriptions of research, and I suggested to Maxine that I was thinking too abstractly, perhaps . . . what do you think? "A metaphor brings the severed parts together . . ." she added . . . and she was right, of course.

Maxine knows instinctively about the balance of the abstract and concrete . . . she taught me that teacher research is a way to change, and I learned, too, in our meetings together, that change has already happened before you know it. The process involves grappling, considering possibilities, and it was in our group that I learned to write the story of the changes I made as a teacher. It was during our sessions that I came to recognize my own epistemology, what it is to know something, to admit that meaning is contextual. Learning to connect what I know with what I experience was the critical piece that initiated the changes in my classroom. Writing and thinking together brought me to Maxine's theory that qualitative research was an aesthetic activity, that seeing the subtle gradations of change in my classroom were "framed moments," in her words, points of reference frozen in the context of the classroom.

I think Maxine has convinced us that all of the "psychic risks" that surface during our writing group are the grist for a life lived fully. Many of those touched by Maxine will agree that she is the most informed, current, on-the-cutting-edge woman they know . . . she's seen every movie, play, museum show, and her connections to literature boggle my mind! After an afternoon of listening to Maxine make allusions to so many and varied works, I remarked that I felt as if I hadn't read anything. Typically, Maxine answered, "Oh, I know what you mean . . . so do I!"

So, I have taken the cues from Maxine: I have learned to think more fluidly than ever, to wallow in my data, to pile up questions until I feel stuffed, to trust my instincts, to value the entire process. Writing with Maxine, Maureen, and Karen has been liberating, inspiring, energizing. Often I think we have lost all focus, that we should have an agenda to follow . . . but it never will happen that way.

II

A COMMUNITY IN THE MAKING

> All depends upon a breaking free, a leap, and then a question. I would like to claim that this is how learning happens and that the educative task is to create situations in which the young are moved to begin to ask, in all the tones of voice there are, "Why?" . . . I place the release of imagination with which I am so deeply concerned in context in a variety of ways while discussing an emergent curriculum, the moral life, and justice in the public space. Because so many of us are newcomers and strangers to one another, I particularly emphasize pluralism and heterogeneity, what is now often called multiculturalism. I choose to do so in connection with the arts and with a community always in the making—the community that may someday be called a democracy.
>
> Maxine Greene
> *Releasing the Imagination*

In a recent conversation, Maxine Greene drew our attention again to issues of freedom, imagination, democracy, and the making of community:

> I want young people . . . to identify themselves by means of significant projects. . . . It seems important, as I have said too often, that the projects are most meaningful when they involve others, when they touch on others' lives. Care may be important; but more important in my life has been the feeling of connectedness in marches or campaigns or deliberate efforts to make something better—to plant, to build, to stop the killing, to cherish the young. There is, as most of us know, a special joy in being part of a movement directed to something in the distance, something that shines and beckons and is not yet. Hannah Arendt once wrote about the French poet and resistance fighter,

> René Char. After the Second World War ended in France, he wrote about the sadness of going back to the "opaqueness of private life" from the freely chosen Resistance experience. Leaving that behind, he said, "we lost our treasure." The treasure was being face to face with others in a struggle for liberation. They had all chosen in their freedom to take part; and they were together without masks or pretenses, as *who* each one felt herself or himself to be. . . . Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote of unexpected moments when people feel their identity with other suppressed groups they never knew, and how, acting in the experience of that mutual recognition, they opened a space where they could be free. I suppose that is an ideal possibility. It is an image of a journey we hope to take with others. . . . I choose to live the life of someone capable of indignation at undeserved suffering and silence and exclusion, someone who refuses to feel a righteousness of indignation. An effort must be made to change what is wrong, what seems so deeply, desperately unjust. And oddly, I know that the real joy in life stems from the feeling of incompletion, of not having found the way. So, like so many others, I reach out for roles to play, for personalities to come in touch with, for an abundance of desire. I do not want to end up in isolation, even in the midst of things; I never want to become accustomed to a dry little life. And I realize fully that to live otherwise is up to me.
>
> In teaching, I suppose I want to communicate that. I feel successful if I can make it possible for students to come upon ways of being they have not thought of before. Part of that demands an activation of imagination; part, a refusal to screen the self off from the world. None of us is separate and autonomous; none of us can possibly be an "island" in John Donne's sense. We are, like or not, part of a "main" our imagination can bring into being. (Ayers, 1995, p. 323)

So much of the bewildering ennui of modern life is built upon our isolation from one another. We blame ourselves. After all, we are said to be free, we are told that we are a nation of communities, we see all around us the rigging and the decorations of democracy.

There is a deep sense of alienation, of powerlessness, of a loss of any normal human agency, and an accompanying language of victimization and determinism. Overwhelmingly, there is a sense of immutability, of permanence. Crime, crummy schools—these are simply *there,* God-given and unchangeable. An attitude of alienation, abandonment, and atomization descends and permeates our relationships. Most of us can remember a time *before* homelessness was a major social problem—all of us remember a time when we didn't see children begging on the streets. Now homelessness is another "given"—we have become accustomed to one more unacceptable dimension of life.

The enduring loneliness is propelled in some measure by the official insistence that democracy is a text already written—it is the flag; it is the vote. Never mind the Tweedledee-Tweedledum sameness of the Republicrats; never mind the millions of dollars required to hold office; never mind the alienation of most people from meaningful public life. Our democracy is good; your problems are personal.

To think of democracy as participatory, to think of people actually making the decisions that affect our lives, is to notice that while we experience our problems as personal—we can't find adequate child care, perhaps, or our child is not learning as she should in school, or the options for our aging parents are inadequate—they are, indeed, social. It is to move from me to us, from loneliness to society. It is to move in a different direction.

REFERENCE

Ayers, W. (1995). Interview with Maxine Greene. *Qualitative Studies in Education, 8*(4), 319–328.

5

On Becoming American: An Exploratory Essay

Sonia Nieto

What does it mean to be an American? This is in some ways the quintessential American dilemma, yet it has not historically invited a deep or sustained critical analysis. In spite of repeated attempts to answer the question throughout the successive generations of both newcomers and old-timers that have characterized the building of our nation, either easy speculation or pat answers have been the usual result. Why is this? For one, there is in place an unstated assumption of what it means to be an American; for another, questioning the assumed definition seems almost heretical because a number of troubling contradictions challenge the taken-for-granted definition. Yet for many, it is a deeply troubling issue that, it seems to me, is at the root of much of the continuing disunity in our country.

The question of becoming an American is one that has haunted me for many years, but until recently I have not focused on it in any deliberate or conscious way. My intense fascination with this question is motivated by my own background: Even though I was born in this country and have spent my entire life here, even though I was formed and educated and lead a productive professional life in the United States, when I am asked the inevitable question, "What are you?" I always answer "Puerto Rican." Why is it that for me being an American seems inherently to conflict with being a Puerto Rican? Ironically, I myself recognize that I am in some ways undeniably American; that is, my experiences, tastes, and even values immediately define me to most onlookers as "American," albeit with a deep connection to my Puerto Rican heritage. Several years ago, I was jarred when speaking with an island-born Puerto Rican who commented that he could tell at first glance that I was born and raised in the United States simply by looking at my body language! Here I was, convinced that I was as Puerto Rican as any Puerto Rican, that I had *"la mancha del plátano"* (the stain of the plantain) firmly imprinted on my face and body, and yet he saw my American roots through it all.

I must also admit that the unprecedented opportunities I have been given in the United States have made it possible for me to far transcend what my possibilities might have been had I not been raised and educated here. Although it is true that these opportunities are not held out to the majority of Puerto Ricans, among many others, and that our society has a long way to go before fulfilling its ideals of equal access and opportunity for all, it is nevertheless true that the fact that the ideals exist *at all* has made a dramatic difference in the lives of many people. My life as a fairly successful academic, teacher, and writer would probably have been impossible if I had been raised on the island in the working-class family with little formal education from which I came. Yet I resist being defined as American, and this is troubling for me because on some deep level I understand that I deserve the right to claim this identity if I mean to work to change what it means.

I am not alone in the quandary concerning my identity. I have met a great many people over the years who have similar feelings. Many of us who are what can be called "bicultural" (not necessarily because we have chosen to be so, but because of our circumstances) have faced the same dilemma (Darder, 1991). Is one an American by the mere fact of being born here? Can one be born elsewhere and still be an American? How many generations does it take? Do we belong here or there, in neither place, or in both? Does being an American have to erase or diminish automatically our accents, our values, our hues and textures? Where does our language, which sometimes is unacceptable both in our communities of origin and in the larger society, fit in? Do we have to "trade in" our identity, much as we would an old car, to acquire the shiny new image of American? How can we reconcile the sometimes dramatically differing value systems, languages, expectations of appropriate behavior, and the contradictory activities that take place in our everyday lives?

The question of identity is reverberating with more meaning and currency than ever as we approach the year 2000. Our nation is becoming more diverse and also more divided along lines of race, ethnicity, language use, social class, and other differences, although it can be argued that this division is not due necessarily to our growing diversity but rather to our inability to deal with it. Addressing issues that arise as a result of increased diversity demands both insight and care rather than arrogance and simplistic notions of unity. It is my purpose in this exploratory essay to reflect on the question of what it means to be, or as I have stated it in the title of this chapter, to *become* American, not only as it might be answered in a personal way for me, but also how as a society we might think about it.

DICHOTOMIES AS ANSWERS

In my own life, I had often come across a simple answer to the question of being an American: One is either an American or one is not. Simplistic *either/or* formulations are commonplace in our society, and problems such as these generally get answered in terms of dichotomies. Maxine Greene's work has provided me with both insight and hope in trying to answer the question of becoming American, so I begin this essay by referring to her thoughts on dichotomies. Rather than considering *community* and *pluralism* as necessarily or deterministically irreconcilable, she has instead challenged the respective boundaries and rigid parameters of both of these concepts. For example, she has written, "I want to break through, whenever possible, the persisting either/ors. There is, after all, a dialectical relation marking every human situation. The relation between subject and object, individual and environment, living consciousness and phenomenal world. This relation exists between two different, apparently opposite poles; but it presupposes a mediation between them" (1988, p. 8).

The traditional boundaries of fixed identities became clear to me when I was doing research in preparation for my first book several years ago (Nieto, 1992). Extensive interviews with ten academically successful students from a variety of cultural backgrounds revealed to me the familiar image of my own persistent dilemmas with identity. This was somewhat surprising because these young people were about three decades younger than I, but the same kinds of challenges were apparent in their lives as had been in mine when I was growing up in Brooklyn in the 1940s and '50s. I thought that surely by now this issue would be resolved one way or another; what I found instead was that the students were in the tumultuous midst of developing their identities in an ever-changing and even more complex world than was mine. Yet the students, unlike me, were also tentatively challenging the assumption that one must sacrifice culture and identity to become an American.

Although we had not asked these young people to lay claim to an exclusive identity, many of them chose to do so and often they defined themselves as either American or as a member of their national origin group. Underlying this choice seemed to be a recognition that our society demanded complete allegiance in return for the privilege of becoming an American. These young people were not always willing to pay the price. Take, for instance, Manuel, a young Cape Verdean man of nineteen who was the youngest of eleven children and the first to graduate from high school, an accomplishment that he must have known might not have been possible had he and his family remained in Cape Verde.

Yet in his eyes, the price in loss of identity that is frequently paid for the privilege of an education, success, and "fitting in" may be simply too high. Manuel stated the problem in this way: "That's something that a lot of kids do when they come to America. They change their names. Say you're Carlos, they say, 'I'm Carl.' They wanna be American; they're not Cape Verdean. . . . That's wrong. They're fooling themselves. . . . I identify myself as Cape Verdean. I'm Cape Verdean. I cannot be an American because I'm not an American. That's it" (Nieto, 1992, p. 176).

James, a Lebanese Christian (Maronite), faced a similar dilemma. Although by all outward appearances James was "American" in tastes, habits, and future goals, he too felt the pressure of difference. Born and raised in the United States, he had learned from his parents to cherish the Arabic language he spoke, the religion he practiced, and the culture they still maintained. This was not easy, however, in a school where he was a member of a minority so invisible that it did not even make the school cookbook, the international fair, or the foreign-language-month celebration, the few indications of the school's response to a growing multicultural student body. What other students knew about his background was thus mired in a web of superstitions and stereotypes. Try as he might to dismiss these as unimportant, it was clear that they had an impact on him: "Some people call me, you know, 'cause I'm Lebanese, so people say, 'Look out for the terrorist! Don't mess with him or he'll blow up your house!' or some stuff like that. But they're just joking around, though. . . . I don't think anybody's serious, 'cause I wouldn't blow up anybody's house—and they know that. . . . I don't care. It doesn't matter what people say. . . . I just want everybody to know that, you know, it's not true" (Nieto, 1992, p. 134).

Nevertheless, rather than hide behind the identity "American," which he could certainly claim and which might prove far easier to negotiate, this is what James said about who he is: "First thing I'd say is I'm Lebanese. . . . I'm just proud to be Lebanese. If somebody asked me, 'What are you?' . . . everybody else would answer, 'I'm American,' but I'd say, 'I'm Lebanese' and I feel proud of it" (p. 136). Further reflecting on this complicated issue of identity, James used the example of his idol, the biking star Greg LeMond, as a critique of forced assimilation: "Even though somebody might have the last name like LeMond or something, he's considered American. But you know, LeMond is a French name, so his culture must be French. His background is French. But, you know, they're considered Americans. But I'd like to be considered Lebanese" (p. 136).

One of the youngest students to be interviewed, thirteen-year-old Yolanda, who self-identified as Mexican, also talked about the saliency of her background. Although aware of the low status of Mexicans in the general population and of the conflict that might lead other young people to either hide, change, or erase their identity, she stated, "I feel proud of myself. I see some other kids that they say, like they'd say they're Colombian or something. They try to make themselves look cool in front of everybody. . . . I don't feel bad like if they say, 'Ooh, she's Mexican' or anything. . . . For me, it's good. For other people, some other guys and girls, don't think it's nice, it's like, 'Oh, man, I should've been born here instead of being over there.' Not me, it's O.K. for me being born over there 'cause I feel proud of myself. I feel proud of my culture" (p. 184).

In this research, one of the most consistent, although unexpected, outcomes was the striking combination of *pride* and *shame* that these young people felt about their culture. That is, the great pride they felt was not sustained without great conflict, hesitation, and contradiction. For these young people, pride in culture was neither uniform nor easy. Upon closer reflection, this was an understandable response: After all, a positive sense of cultural identity flies in the face of the assimilation model held out as the prize for sacrificing ethnicity, language, and even family loyalties. But the internal conflicts that resulted were also quite apparent.

Sometimes the conflict and pain are too great and, rather than attempt to somehow reconcile cultural differences, the choice may be made to become an American on traditional terms. The alienation from family and culture as chronicled by Richard Rodriguez in *Hunger of Memory* is a case in point. In the following reflection from his book, Rodriguez speaks with tremendous nostalgia about losing his native language, but also with absolute certainty about the folly of providing such programs as bilingual education as a bridge or buffer for children to learn to fit into what he called the "public world" of school and society:

> Without question, it would have pleased me to hear my teachers address me in Spanish when I entered the classroom. I would have felt much less afraid. I would have trusted them and responded with ease. But I would have delayed—for how long postponed?—having to learn the language of public society. I would have evaded—and for how long could I have afforded the delay?—learning the great lesson of school, that I had a public identity. . . . I continued to mumble. I resisted the teacher's demands. (Did I somehow suspect that once I learned the public language my pleasing family life would be changed?). (1982, pp. 19–20)

Nowhere can a more poignant reminder of the wholesale acceptance of the "either/ors" to which Maxine Greene refers be found. Rodriguez's dilemma, that is, was predicated on a difficult choice: either lose your "private language" to become a public person, with all the benefits it entails; or retain your "private language" and forfeit a public identity. Rather than *English plus Spanish,* the formulation was *English or Spanish.* The result, in Rodriguez's formulation, was learning English and accomplishing a high level of academic achievement. However, as we see from his autobiography, this kind of "success" is often accompanied by tormented musings on what might have been lost in the process. The idea that one can be *both* successful *and* maintain one's cultural and linguistic identity is not part of this formula.

An alternative approach, also in the "either/or" paradigm, is to resist assimilation and instead maintain one's native language and culture. This approach operates on a continuum, ranging from retaining an idealized and pure image of the native culture, to a more pragmatic approach where learning the second language and becoming more or less familiar with the host culture is the outcome. The more extreme form of this cultural maintenance, that is, complete isolation and rigid nationalism, in the short run provides a shield against assimilation and can be seen as a healthy response to the violent stripping away of identity that is characteristic of what it has meant to become an American. In the long run, however, it is unworkable and unrealistic in today's complex and interdependent world. In speaking about the more extreme forms of Afrocentrism, it is what Cornel West has called "a gallant yet misguided attempt," (1993, p. 4) because to believe that any culture will remain intact and static when placed on new ground is hopelessly romantic at best. Culture, writes Thomas Bender, "is not an emblem of achievement to be worn; it is a resource to be used. It is not fixed and permanent. Cultures change as they are used as resources for addressing new experiences that history presents to us" (1992, p. 13). Thus, culture is dialectical, responding with inventive new creations to both the positive and negative influences of transplanted migrations and immigrations.

In the end, a static cultural maintenance is both implausible and exclusionary and this realization may help explain my impatience with "cultural purists." In some gatherings of Latinos, for instance, there is sometimes a fervent insistence that only Spanish be spoken (almost the flip side of the "English-Only" insistence, but without its institutionalized and hegemonic power). Ironically, this kind of purism may in the process alienate further those second-, third-, and even fourth-generation Latinos who happen not to speak Spanish. Or my anger when Spanish-speaking elitist intellectuals, for example, disdainful in their rejection of U.S.-based artists, state unequivocally that Latino literature can be *only* that literature written in Spanish. For them, English, Spanish and English, Spanglish, or any of the other creative combinations used by U.S.-based artists, are simply out of the question because they represent a corruption of what it means to be a Latino. These kinds of definitions, whether of Latino or of American, fall back on simplistic notions of culture as static and fixed and are thus flawed and untrue to reality. That is, they fail to acknowledge that culture must be mediated in human interactions. Rather than a bounded box of artifacts and values, culture is more like an amoebae that changes shape with every move. Either/or dichotomies are unsatisfactory in either case.

CHALLENGING THE "EITHER/ORS"

If one is to eschew either/or positions, that is, if one cannot either wholly maintain native culture, nor accept assimilation as inevitable, what is to be done? The young people who we interviewed for my study offered a range of possibilities, although in most cases culture was still perceived as immutable. Some of them, although feeling quite proud of their culture, of their ability to function effectively in at least two worlds, and of their bilingualism, also learned to feel ashamed of their culture and of those who represented it. Sometimes, it was clear they blamed their parents or others in the community for perceived failures, and they absolved the school of any wrongdoing. For others, the conflict was too great and led, among other things, to reaching the conclusion that one could not be both American and Cape Verdean (as in the case of Manuel); that "Puerto Ricans are way badder than Whites" (as in the case of Marisol, a Puerto Rican girl who nevertheless loudly proclaimed her pride at being Puerto Rican); or that their culture should not necessarily be important in the school, although it is in the home (as in the case of James, whose culture was so invisible in his school).

The pressures of assimilation proved too great for Vinh, who talked at length about what was apparently a depression he had suffered: "I've been here for three years, but the first two years I didn't learn anything. I got sick, mental. I got mental. Because when I came to the United States, I missed my [parents], my family and my friends, and my Vietnam. . . . I am a very sad person. Sometimes, I just want to be alone to think about myself. . . . Before I got mental, okay, I feel very good about myself, like I am smart. . . . But after I got mental, I don't get any enjoyment. . . . I'm not smart anymore" (Nieto, 1992, p. 146).

The choices made by most of the young people were based on hard-learned lessons concerning the price of cultural assimilation. Forced to make a choice, they were generally making it in favor of their heritage. This decision can also be problematic because, although a courageous stance in light of the negative messages of ethnicity and culture that they hear and see daily, it may limit their possibilities. That is, in choosing *not* to be American, they may have also decided that they are not deserving or entitled to help shape and change their society. Making the choice to have no attachment, they may feel also that they have no rights or responsibilities.

Needless to say, questions of race, colonial status, and social class (in sum, issues of power or powerlessness) are at the very heart of the conflicts I have described. In particular, the weight of a history of white supremacy and racist ideology, unacknowledged but unmistakable in their impact, are a continuing legacy in our notions of who is most likely to be defined as American. Most Europeans, even relatively new immigrants, can be accommodated into the cultural mainstream almost immediately because of their white skin privilege, their status as more or less "voluntary immigrants," and also often because of their middle-class or professional backgrounds. Although they may face the pain and alienation of all new immigrants, they, and certainly their children and grandchildren, rarely have to contend with even making a choice; it is made for them. They almost immediately become "American," fitting into the mainstream of race and class that has been defined as such. Asians and Latinos, and ironically even American Indians, on the other hand, may have been on this soil for many generations but are still asked the inevitable "Where are you from?" reserved for outsiders. Their faces or accents are constant and unmistakable reminders of their roots in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and even Indigenous America, and this question once again belies our society's claim to accept all people on an equal basis.

BECOMING AMERICAN: A NEW PROPOSITION

Departing from either/or formulations, some new directions are being proposed, both by theorists who think about marginalized ethnicities and cultures, and by those who live these realities every day. What if we were to insist that everyone needed to *become American,* rather than begin with the premise that they need to *be American,* so that all of us, including those from the dominant cultural group, found it necessary to renegotiate identity on a continuous basis, to be formed and reformed every day?

This new formulation would lead to Maxine Greene's "passions of pluralism," where the newly conceived "great community" of which she speaks might become a true possibility (Greene, 1993). Community, of course, without the informed consent of its constituents becomes simply an imposed and bureaucratic identity, and those who have not had a hand in constructing it chafe under its definition. This is what has hap-

"Bill Ayers and Janet Miller have put together a substantive and personal encomium to a philosopher who for over 30 years has reminded us of the reach and power of the imagination. Attention to its possibilities might help us transcend the pedestrian aims promoted by the well-intentioned efforts of those seeking to remedy the ills of our schools."

—**Elliot W. Eisner,** Professor of Education and Art
Stanford University

"Maxine Greene is the preeminent American philosopher of education today. Her work has had an enormous impact on generations of teachers, researchers, academics, and school reform activists.... This book focuses on the issues and questions raised by Maxine Greene over several decades: social imagination, the place of activism, the importance of the arts, progressive school change, the role of culture, and the meaning of freedom in the modern world. It is focused on the future, toward exploring these themes into the twenty-first century."

—From the Preface

A Light in Dark Times: Maxine Greene and the Unfinished Conversation features a list of extraordinary contributors who have been deeply influenced by Professor Greene's progressive philosophies. While Maxine Greene is the focus for this collection, each chapter is an encounter with her ideas by an educator concerned with his or her own works and projects. In essence, each featured author takes off from Maxine Greene and then moves forward.

Just as Maxine Greene herself has, this unique and fascinating collection of essays will influence a wide range of worlds: arts and aesthetics, literature and literacy studies, cultural studies, school change and improvement, the teaching of literacy, teacher education, peace and social justice, women's studies, and civil rights.

In addition to volume editors William Ayers and Janet L. Miller, distinguished contributors to this book include Jean Anyon, Louise Berman, Leon Botstein, Deborah P. Britzman, Linda Darling-Hammond, Karen Ernst, Michelle Fine, Norm Fruchter, Madeleine R. Grumet, Sandra Hollingsworth, Mary-Ellen Jacobs, Herbert Kohl, Wendy Kohli, Craig Kridel, Peter McLaren, Maureen Miletta, Sonia Nieto, Nel Noddings, Jo Anne Pagano, Frank Pignatelli, William F. Pinar, Kathleen Reilly, Jonathan G. Silin, Sheila Slater, Candy Systra, Carlos Alberto Torres, and Mark Weiss

William Ayers is a school reform activist and Professor of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. **Janet L. Miller** is Professor at National-Louis University's National College of Education.

BOOKS BY MAXINE GREENE FROM TC PRESS—

The Dialectic of Freedom
1988/Paper and cloth

Landscapes of Learning
1978/Paper

TEACHERS COLLEGE PRESS

Teachers College
Columbia University
New York, NY 10027

ISBN 0-8077-3720-8
EAN
90000>
9 780807 737200

Cover design by RoseStudio