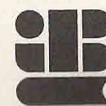


# Releasing the Imagination

Essays on Education,  
the Arts, and Social Change

Maxine Greene



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Published by Jossey-Bass

A Wiley Imprint

989 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94103-1741 www.josseybass.com

FIRST PAPERBACK EDITION PUBLISHED IN 2000.

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#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Greene, Maxine.

Releasing the imagination: essays on education, the arts, and social change/Maxine Greene.

p. cm.—(The Jossey-Bass education series)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-7879-0081-8 (cloth)

ISBN 0-7879-5291-5 (paperback)

1. Education—United States—Aims and objectives. 2. Education—Social aspects—United States. 3. Educational change—United States. 4. Arts—Study and teaching—United States. I. Title.

II. Series. LA217.2.G74 1995

370'.973—dc20

95-14659  
CIP

Copyright page continued on p. 217.

Printed in the United States of America

FIRST EDITION

HB Printing 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

PB Printing 10 9 8

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## The Author

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*Releasing the Imagination* reflects Greene's primary research concerns: contemporary philosophies of education and social thought, aesthetics and the teaching of the arts, literature as art, and multiculturalism. She has written more than one hundred articles in these fields and about forty chapters for collections and anthologies. The most recent of her five books is *The Dialectic of Freedom* (1988). She is a past president of the Philosophy of Education Society, the American Educational Studies Association, and the American Educational Research Association. She has also served on various state and municipal commissions for curriculum and assessment. Her present overriding concern is the establishment of the Center for the Arts, Social Imagination, and Education at

Teachers College. Her interest in the center stems in large measure from her continuing two-decade-long involvement as philosopher-in-residence with the Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education.

## Releasing the Imagination

## Introduction: Narrative in the Making

It has been said that if we as individuals are to determine what our relationship is to some idea of the good, "we must inescapably understand our lives in narrative form, as a 'quest'" (Taylor, 1989, p. 52). To me as well, despite or perhaps because of the fragmentation and relativism of our time, it appears that we must reach for conceptions of the good that will affect the direction of our lives. Therefore, the essays in *Releasing the Imagination* may be read as a narrative in the making. We who are teachers would have to accommodate ourselves to lives as clerks or functionaries if we did not have in mind a quest for a better state of things for those we teach and for the world we all share. It is simply not enough for us to reproduce the way things are. Now in the midst of my life, I view my own writing in terms of stages in a quest, "stages," as Søren Kierkegaard put it, "on life's way" (1940). The quest involves me as woman, as teacher, as mother, as citizen, as New Yorker, as art-lover, as activist, as philosopher, as white middle-class American. Neither my self nor my narrative can have, therefore, a single strand. I stand at the crossing point of too many social and cultural forces; and, in any case, I am forever on the way. My identity has to be perceived as multiple, even as I strive towards some coherent notion of what is humane and decent and just. At the same time, amidst this multiplicity, my life project has been to achieve an understanding of teaching, learning, and the many models of education; I have been creating and continue to create a self by means of that project, that mode of gearing into the world. And that project has crucially shaped the effort that has resulted in *Releasing the Imagination*.

The dimension of education that concerns me most has been teacher education. I have come to that concern out of a background marked by absorption with the liberal arts and by social

action as well. The values and visions of the civil rights movement of the 1960s and the peace movement of that decade still permeate my quest. Without any claim to the heroism of a Resistance fighter in the Second World War, I nevertheless quote the French poet René Char's view that Resistance fighters like himself "lost their treasure" when they returned to the "'sad opaqueness' of a private life centered about nothing but itself" (Arendt, 1961, p. 4). Char did not feel loss because he yearned for war or violence but because he recalled a time when people took initiatives, became challengers, and embarked on new beginnings. Similarly, even though our world has changed and become more complex over the years, I believe that what existed for many persons in our country in the 1960s and early 1970s was a comparable treasure; and I am convinced that, in the domains of education today, people can choose to resist the thoughtlessness, banality, technical rationality, carelessness, and "savage inequalities" (Kozol, 1991) that now undermine public education at every turn.

In *Releasing the Imagination* I hope to connect my own seeking with the strivings of other teachers and teacher educators who are weary of being clerks or technocrats and equally weary of that sad opaqueness of a private life centered about nothing but itself. I hope to stimulate a kind of silent conversation that may move readers to discover what they have to say once they attend to their own situations, to the actualities of their lives. In doing so, I want to be conscious of diversity of background and perspective. I want to attend to and express regard for difference as well as for what is conceived to be common. I want to acknowledge the resemblance of what lies around us to "a jumbled museum" (Smithson, 1979, p. 67). Yet I also feel deeply dissatisfied with what postmodern thinkers describe as "bricolage," or "collage," that style of communicating often thought suitable for the present time, when old myths, oppositions, and hierarchies are being overthrown (Schrift, 1990, p. 110). And I have looked for a way of speaking that might begin to constitute a common world for teachers and, indeed, many others. I do not intend to construct something I nominate to be the desired common world and ask readers to make it their own. Instead, I have set myself the task of arousing readers' imaginations, so that all of us can reach beyond the "illusory babels . . . odd intersections of meaning, strange corridors of history, unex-

pected echoes, unknown humors" (Smithson, 1979, p. 67) to some naming, some sense-making that brings us together in community.

Unless we make such an effort, it will be very difficult for us ever to decide what education ought to mean. We have associated it in the past with simple transmission, with communication, with initiation, with preparing the young "for the task of renewing a common world" (Arendt, 1961, p. 196). Now, with so many traditional narratives being rejected or disrupted, with so many new and contesting versions of what our common world should be, we cannot assume that there is any longer a consensus about what is valuable and useful and what ought to be taught, despite all the official definitions of necessary outcomes and desired goals.

One of the reasons I have come to concentrate on imagination as a means through which we can assemble a coherent world is that imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible. It is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called "other" over the years. If those others are willing to give us clues, we can look in some manner through strangers' eyes and hear through their ears. That is because, of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions.

Recall that for generations people were unable to conceive of little children constructing meaningful worlds for themselves or, in fact, making meaning at all, even as they learned to speak. At best, children were thought of as incomplete adults foraging in a world that did not "make sense" to them. Today, we read children's poems and journals; we listen to their stories; we find ourselves actually entering into their realities by means not solely of our reasoning power but of our imagination. Similarly, but more shamefully, white people in Western countries were unable to credit those they called "Negroes" or "Africans" with ordinary intelligence or with the ability to read and write (Gates, 1992, pp. 52-62). Women, too, more often than not, were thought of by men as soft and relatively childlike, unable to think theoretically or rigorously. One of the advances of our time is a (sometimes grudging) recognition on the part of many of us that those we have long categorized as other for whatever reason (ethnicity, gender, religion, education, culture, mores, geographic location, physical condition) share in

the human condition. Every one of us inhabits a humanly fabricated world, is mortal and can acknowledge that mortality, and can tell the story of what happens to him or her as he or she lives. Aware, then, on some level of the integrity and the coherence of what may seem to us to be a totally alien world in the person of another, we are called upon to use our imaginations to enter into that world, to discover how it looks and feels from the vantage point of the person whose world it is. That does not mean we approve it or even necessarily appreciate it. It does mean that we extend our experience sufficiently to grasp it as a human possibility.

Not always but oftentimes, the extent to which we grasp another's world depends on our existing ability to make poetic use of our imagination, to bring into being the "as if" worlds created by writers, painters, sculptors, filmmakers, choreographers, and composers, and to be in some manner a participant in artists' worlds reaching far back and ahead in time. It is the poetic imagination that enables us to enter into the social fabric and events of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* set in the English midlands, to journey in our country from the rural South to the lights and sounds of New York's Harlem in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, to experience a frontier wedding through the body movement of Martha Graham's *Appalachian Spring*, to move from a pain-scarred self-portrait by a vibrant Frida Kahlo to a contemplative young Virgin by Murillo, to feel enlarged by the soaring melodic structures of Verdi's *Requiem*. I will say much about such encounters on the stages of this quest, as I connect the arts to discovering cultural diversity, to making community, to becoming wide-awake to the world. For me as for many others, the arts provide new perspectives on the lived world. As I view and feel them, informed encounters with works of art often lead to a startling defamiliarization of the ordinary. What I have habitually taken for granted—about human potential, for example, or gender differences or ecology or what is now called "ethnic identity" or the core curriculum—frequently reveals itself in unexpected ways because of a play I have seen, a painting I have looked at, a woodwind quintet I have heard. And now and then, when I am in the presence of a work from the border, let us say, from a place outside the reach of my experience until I came in contact with the work, I am plunged into all kinds of reconceiving

and revisualizing. I find myself moving from discovery to discovery; I find myself revising, and now and then renewing, the terms of my life.

Even that is not all. We also have our social imagination: the capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, in our schools. As I write of social imagination, I am reminded of Jean-Paul Sartre's declaration that "it is on the day that we can conceive of a different state of affairs that a new light falls on our troubles and our suffering and that we *decide* that these are unbearable" (1956, pp. 434–435). That is, we acknowledge the harshness of situations only when we have in mind another state of affairs in which things would be better. Similarly, it may only be when we think of humane and liberating classrooms in which every learner is recognized and sustained in her or his struggle to learn how to learn that we can perceive the insufficiency of bureaucratized, uncaring schools. And it may be only then that we are moved to choose to repair or to renew.

What I am describing here is a mode of utopian thinking: thinking that refuses mere compliance, that looks down roads not yet taken to the shapes of a more fulfilling social order, to more vibrant ways of being in the world. This kind of reshaping imagination may be released through many sorts of dialogue: dialogue among the young who come from different cultures and different modes of life, dialogue among people who have come together to solve problems that seem worth solving to all of them, dialogue among people undertaking shared tasks, protesting injustices, avoiding or overcoming dependencies or illnesses. When such dialogue is activated in classrooms, even the young are stirred to reach out on their own initiatives. Apathy and indifference are likely to give way as images of what might be arise.

As my narrative in the making takes gradual and diversified shape, my concern for active learning in schools now in the process of reform will be apparent. I want to help us think in ways that move beyond schooling to the larger domains of education, where there are and must be all kinds of openings to possibility. To encourage this thinking, I have tapped certain human stories more than once, most particularly those that, like Virginia Woolf's story, speak of moving from entanglement in the "cotton wool of daily

life” to “moments of being” (1976, p. 72), to moments of awareness and intensified consciousness. I have laid out for us telling memories and visions from childhood, such as the moment of awakening recalled by the Lady in Brown in Ntozake Shange’s choreopoem, when a leap from the Children’s Reading Room to (against the rules) the Adult Reading Room led a little girl to the story of Toussaint L’Ouverture and “the beginnin uv reality” for her (1977, p. 26). I have presented repeated reminders of what it signifies to move from the mechanical chain of routine behaviors to moments, as Albert Camus wrote, when “the ‘why’ arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement. ‘Begins’—this is important. Weariness comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life, but at the same time it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness” (1955, pp. 12–13). 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?”

Moving from an account of school restructuring to a rendering of the shapes of literacy, this narrative in the making examines and reexamines processes of human questioning, responses to blank spaces in experience, resistances to meaninglessness. 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.

## Part One

# Creating Possibilities

## Chapter One

### | Seeking Contexts

Standards, assessment, outcomes, and achievement: these concepts are the currency of educational discussion today. What ought sixteen-year-olds be expected to know, whoever they are, wherever they are? How can school achievement in this country be raised to world-class levels? What is required for national primacy in this postindustrial moment? How can we socialize diverse young people into a “cultural literacy” (Hirsch, 1987) that will counter both relativism and ignorance at once? What sort of curriculum can halt what has been called the “disuniting of America” (Schlesinger, 1992) by multicultural demands?

Discourse on such questions has given rise to what is generally conceived to be contemporary educational reality. On the lower frequencies of our conversations, there is still talk of “savage inequalities” (Kozol, 1991), family deterioration, neighborhood decline, and diminishing opportunity. Racism, joblessness, addictions, and rootlessness are mentioned. But when it comes to schools, the dominant voices are still those of the officials who assume the objective worth of certain kinds of knowledge, who take for granted that the schools’ main mission is to meet national economic and technical needs. Traditional notions of ways to achieve efficiency feed into claims that schools can be manipulated from without to meet predetermined goals. The implication often is that for their own benefit, teachers and their students are to comply and to serve. How can teachers intervene and say how *they* believe things ought to be? What can they do to affect restructuring? What can they do to transform their classrooms?

Interested in shifting perspectives and different modes of seeing, I find myself turning to *Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man* (1955), a novel by Thomas Mann. At the start, the young Felix asks

himself whether it is better to see the world small or to see it big. On the one hand, he says, great men, leaders and generals, have to see things small and from a distance, or they would never be able to deal as they do with the lives and deaths of so many living beings. To see things big, on the other hand, is “to regard the world and mankind as something great, glorious, and significant, justifying every effort to attain some modicum of esteem and fame” (pp. 12–13). To see things or people small, one chooses to see from a detached point of view, to watch behaviors from the perspective of a system, to be concerned with trends and tendencies rather than the intentionality and concreteness of everyday life. To see things or people big, one must resist viewing other human beings as mere objects or chess pieces and view them in their integrity and particularity instead. One must see from the point of view of the participant in the midst of what is happening if one is to be privy to the plans people make, the initiatives they take, the uncertainties they face.

When applied to schooling, the vision that sees things big brings us in close contact with details and with particularities that cannot be reduced to statistics or even to the measurable. There are the worn-down, crowded urban classrooms and the contrasting clean-lined spaces in the suburbs. There are the bulletin boards crammed with notices and instructions, here and there interlaced with children’s drawings or an outspoken poem. There are graffiti, paper cutouts, uniformed figures in the city schools; official voices blaring in and around; sudden shimmers when artists visit; circles of young people writing in journals and attending to stories. There are family groups telling one another what happened the night before, describing losses and disappearances, reaching for one another’s hands. Clattering corridors are like the backstreets of ancient cities, filled with folks speaking multiple languages, holding their bodies distinctively, watching out for allies and for friends. There are shouts, greetings, threats, the thump of rap music, gold chains, flowered leotards, multicolored hair. Now and again there are the absorbed stares of youngsters at computer screens or the clink of glass and metal in school laboratories in front of wondering, puzzled eyes. There are textbooks with all their flaws, rows of desks, occasional round tables and paperbacks from which students can choose. For the one seeing things large, there are occasionally

teachers who view every act as “a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate/With shabby equipment always deteriorating/In the general mess of imprecision of feeling, undisciplined squads of emotion” (Eliot, [1943] 1958, p. 128). But there are also other kinds of teachers: those without a sense of agency, those who impose inarticulateness on students who seem alien and whose voices the teachers prefer not to hear. Yet the eager teachers do appear and reappear—teachers who provoke learners to pose their own questions, to teach themselves, to go at their own pace, to name their worlds. Young learners have to be noticed, it is now being realized; they have to be consulted; they have to question why.

The vision that sees things small looks at schooling through the lenses of a system—a vantage point of power or existing ideologies—taking a primarily technical point of view. Most frequently these days, it uses the lenses of benevolent policy making, with the underlying conviction that changes in schools can bring about progressive social change. As I have said, this may either be linked to national economic concerns or used to mask them. Whatever the precise vantage point, seeing schooling small is preoccupied with test scores, “time on task,” management procedures, ethnic and racial percentages, and accountability measures, while it screens out the faces and gestures of individuals, of actual living persons. And indeed, it seems more equitable to many of those who take a general view to do their surveys and their measurements without consciousness of names and histories. They assume that existing social interests are identified with the value of what they are doing.

How is the teacher to cope with this? How is she or he to avoid feeling like a chess piece or a cog or even an accomplice of some kind? The challenge may be to learn how to move back and forth, to comprehend the domains of policy and long-term planning while also attending to particular children, situation-specific undertakings, the unmeasurable, and the unique. Surely, at least part of the challenge is to refuse artificial separations of the school from the surrounding environment, to refuse the decontextualizations that falsify so much. As part of this refusal, teachers can be moved to take account of connections and continuities that cannot always be neatly defined. That means attending to the impact of street life in all its multiplicity, danger, and mystery. It also means being somewhat aware of students’ family life in its ease and unease. It

means becoming conscious of the dramas played out on the playgrounds and front stoops, in the hospital emergency rooms and clinics, and in the welfare offices and shelters and social agencies that affect the lives of the young. Police stations, churches, drug-dealers' corners, shaded places in nearby parks, libraries, and always the blinking light of television screens: all these are part of the educational reality seen large.

Teachers imaginative enough to be present to the heterogeneity of social life and to what has been called the "heteroglossia," or the multiple discourses, of the everyday (Bakhtin, 1981) may also have strong impulses to open pathways towards better ways of teaching and better ways of life. As did John Dewey, they may make efforts to identify the kinds of aims that give direction to their activities and to know more clearly what they are about (Dewey, 1916, p. 119). There is a significant restructuring movement underway today that does not require teachers to choose between seeing big and seeing small; nor does it require them to identify themselves as people concerned only with conditioned behavior or only with the conscious action that signifies a new beginning. Once granted the ability to reflect upon their practice within a complex context, teachers can be expected to make their choices out of their own situations and to open themselves to descriptions of the whole.

These emerging movements leave spaces for teachers to collaborate among themselves, with parents, and with teachers' colleges of various kinds. Networks are appearing of democratic schools, resurgent progressive schools, coalition schools, and magnet schools committed to renewal (Darling-Hammond, 1992; Elmore, 1990; Sizer, 1992; Wigginton, 1972). There is a general agreement among the educators involved that, as important as "caring communities" are, something more than such communities must be created. In the proposals coming from Howard Gardner at Harvard's Project Zero, Theodore Sizer, and others, "there is evidence of a very real concern that the curriculum be knowledge-based, interdisciplinary and capable of connecting with students" (Beyer and Liston, 1992, p. 391). Care, an end to violations, connectedness, and moral commitment: these too are talked about in increasing depth (Noddings, 1992; Martin, 1992).

In this aspect of the new reform efforts, there is considerable

sensitivity to grasping a total picture. There is a clear recognition that young people will require a great range of habits of mind and a great number of complex skills if they are to have any meaningful job opportunities in a day of closing doors. The capacities needed to deal with catastrophes have to be nurtured. Young people may have to deal with ecological disasters, floods, pollution, and unprecedented storms; they may have to cope some day with chemotherapy and life support decisions. Literacy in more than one medium will be required if people are to deal critically and intelligently with demagogues, call-in shows, mystifying ads, and news programs blended with varying degrees of entertainment. The ability to perform adequate planning, which takes a good deal of organizational thinking and a knowledge of how to see things small, will be needed.

Another part of the total picture, however, is that teachers are also being asked to treat their students as potential active learners who can best learn if they are faced with real tasks and if they discover models of craftsmanship and honest work. Only when teachers can engage with learners as distinctive, questioning persons—persons in the process of defining themselves—can teachers develop what are called "authentic assessment" measures (Darling-Hammond and Ancess, 1993), the kinds of measures that lead to the construction of new curricula. Refusing externally provided multiple-choice tests and being willing to see things big when they encounter students, teachers can devise the modes of teaching that are appropriate for these persons, that can launch them in diverse ways into what we now understand as inquiry. As Donald Schön has said, a reflective teacher listens to her students. "She asks herself, for example, How is he thinking about this? What is the meaning of his confusion? What is it that he already knows how to do? If she really listens to a student, she entertains ideas for action that transcend the lesson plan" (1983, p. 332). Schön writes about the new meanings given accountability, evaluation, and supervision by teachers "willing to make independent, qualitative judgments and narrative accounts of experience and performance in learning and teaching" (pp. 333–334). These are the teachers now being asked to assess students by means of portfolios and exhibitions and by asking students to account for what they are saying and thinking as they try to become different and move beyond where they are.

Any encounter with actual human beings who are trying to learn how to learn requires imagination on the part of teachers—and on the part of those they teach. When I ponder the students I have met in schools and colleges, I think of a variety of quests. There is, for example, “the search” in Walker Percy’s novel *The Moviegoer*, the quest that “anyone would undertake if he were not sunk in the everydayness of his own life. . . . To become aware of the possibility of the search is to be onto something. Not to be onto something is to be in despair” (1979, p. 13). Again, it takes imagination to become aware that a search is possible, and there are analogies here to the kind of learning we want to stimulate. It takes imagination to break with ordinary classifications and come in touch with actual young people in their variously lived situations. It takes imagination on the part of the young people to perceive openings through which they can move.

In many respects, teaching and learning are matters of breaking through barriers—of expectation, of boredom, of predefinition. To teach, at least in one dimension, is to provide persons with the knacks and know-how they need in order to teach themselves. No teacher, for example, can simply lecture youngsters on playing basketball or writing poetry or experimenting with metals in a chemistry lab and expect them to meet the requirements or standards she or he had in mind for that activity. Teachers must communicate modes of proceeding, ways of complying with rules and norms, and a variety of what have been called “open capacities” (Passmore, 1980, p. 42), so that learners can put into practice in their own fashion what they need to join a game, shape a sonnet, or devise a chemical test. Passmore writes that this involves the pupil in taking steps she or he has not been taught to take, “which in some measure surprise the instructor, not in the sense that no other pupil has ever done such a thing before . . . but in the sense that the teacher has not taught his pupil to take precisely that step and his taking it does not necessarily follow as an application of a principle in which the teacher has instructed him. The pupil in other words has come to be, in respect to some exercise of some capacity, inventive” (p. 42). I think of Mary Warnock speaking of the ways in which imagination enables us to realize that there is always more in experience than we can predict (1978, p. 202). I think of her explaining how children, when they begin to feel the

significance of what they perceive, “will make their own attempts to interpret this significance.” And how it will be “the emotional sense of the infinity or inexhaustibility of things which will give point to their experience, not a body of doctrine which they might extract from it, if they were doctrinally inclined” (p. 206). I think of Wallace Stevens’s “man with the blue guitar,” the guitar that symbolizes imagination. The guitarist speaks of throwing away “the lights, the definitions” and challenges his listeners to “say of what you see in the dark” (Stevens, [1937], 1964, p. 183). These are the listeners who have been asking him to “play things as they are,” because it is disruptive to look at things as if they could be otherwise. There is tension in this looking; there is a blank resistance for a while. But then resistance, imagination, open capacities, inventiveness, and surprise are shown to be joined somehow.

To approach teaching and learning in this fashion is to be concerned with action, not behavior. Action implies the taking of initiatives; it signifies moving into a future seen from the vantage point of actor or agent. That is what those now involved in school restructuring mean when they speak of active learning. They are interested in beginnings, not in endings. They are at odds with systematizations, with prescriptions, with assessments imposed from afar. Recall Dewey describing an aim as a way of being intelligent, of giving direction to our undertakings. He knew well that there are no guarantees; he was talking, as I am attempting to do, about openings, about possibilities, about moving in quest and in pursuit.

Dewey may well have been drawn, as I am drawn, by the lure of incompleteness to be explored, the promise inherent in any quest. In *Moby Dick*, Ishmael (skeptical of all systems, all classifications) says, “I promise nothing complete; because any human thing supposed to be complete must be for that very reason infallibly faulty” (Melville, [1851] 1981, p. 135). There are always vacancies: there are always roads not taken, vistas not acknowledged. The search must be ongoing; the end can never be quite known.

The chapters to come have to do with various kinds of searching in relation to teaching and learning and with unexpected discoveries teachers might make on the way. The silences of women and the marginalized have still to be overcome in our classrooms. The invisibility of too many students has somehow to be broken through. There are geographies and landscapes still to be explored

by those of us hoping that we do not all have to be strangers to each other in our schools but that we can strive to interpret our new and many-faceted world. Some lines from one of Rainer Maria Rilke's verses ([1905] 1977, p. 3), capture the power for knowing others that resides in how we choose to see things and that I will be exploring:

There's nothing so small but I love it and choose  
to paint it gold-groundly and great  
and hold it most precious and know not whose  
soul it may liberate. . . .

My interpretations are provisional. I have partaken in the post-modern rejection of inclusive rational frameworks in which all problems, all uncertainties can be resolved. All we can do, I believe, is cultivate multiple ways of seeing and multiple dialogues in a world where nothing stays the same. All I can do is to try to provoke my readers to come together in making pathways through that world with their students, leaving thumbprints as they pass. Our "fundamental anxiety," one writer has said (Schutz, 1967, p. 247) is that we will pass through the world and leave no mark; that anxiety is what induces us to devise projects for ourselves, to live among our fellow beings and reach out to them, to interpret life from our situated standpoints, to try—over and over again—to begin. In a sense, I have written *Releasing the Imagination* to remedy that anxiety. It grants a usefulness to the disinterest of seeing things small at the same time that it opens to and validates the passion for seeing things close up and large. For this passion is the doorway for imagination; here is the possibility of looking at things as if they could be otherwise. This possibility, for me, is what restructuring might signify. Looking at things large is what might move us on to reform.

## Chapter Two

# Imagination, Breakthroughs, and the Unexpected

Transformations, openings, possibilities: teachers and teacher educators must keep these themes audible as "Goals 2000: The Educate America Act" is debated and as we assess the practicality of the goals associated with it. This act has now been legislated into federal law. It sets forth national goals for education, intended to be achieved in five years. Five of them are generalized and unarguable: all children must be prepared when they enter school, graduation rates from high schools will be 90 percent, all Americans will become literate, the teaching force should be well educated, and parents should be involved in children's learning. The last two are more problematic: all students in the academic disciplines should meet world-class standards and rank "first in the world in science and math achievement," and a national assessment should be created to ensure that students can demonstrate competency over "challenging subject matter." This is presented as the new national agenda for education, and the presumption is that it is realizable, poverty and inequality notwithstanding. One problem has to do with the implication that standards and tests can simply be imposed; another has to do with the so far untapped diversity among American youth today—its still undefined talents and energies, its differentiated modes of expression. The familiar paradigms seem still to be in use; the need for alternative possibilities in the face of economic and demographic changes is repressed or ignored.

This chapter concerns the ways in which we and our students might come to use imagination in a search for openings without which our lives narrow and our pathways become cul-de-sacs. I also