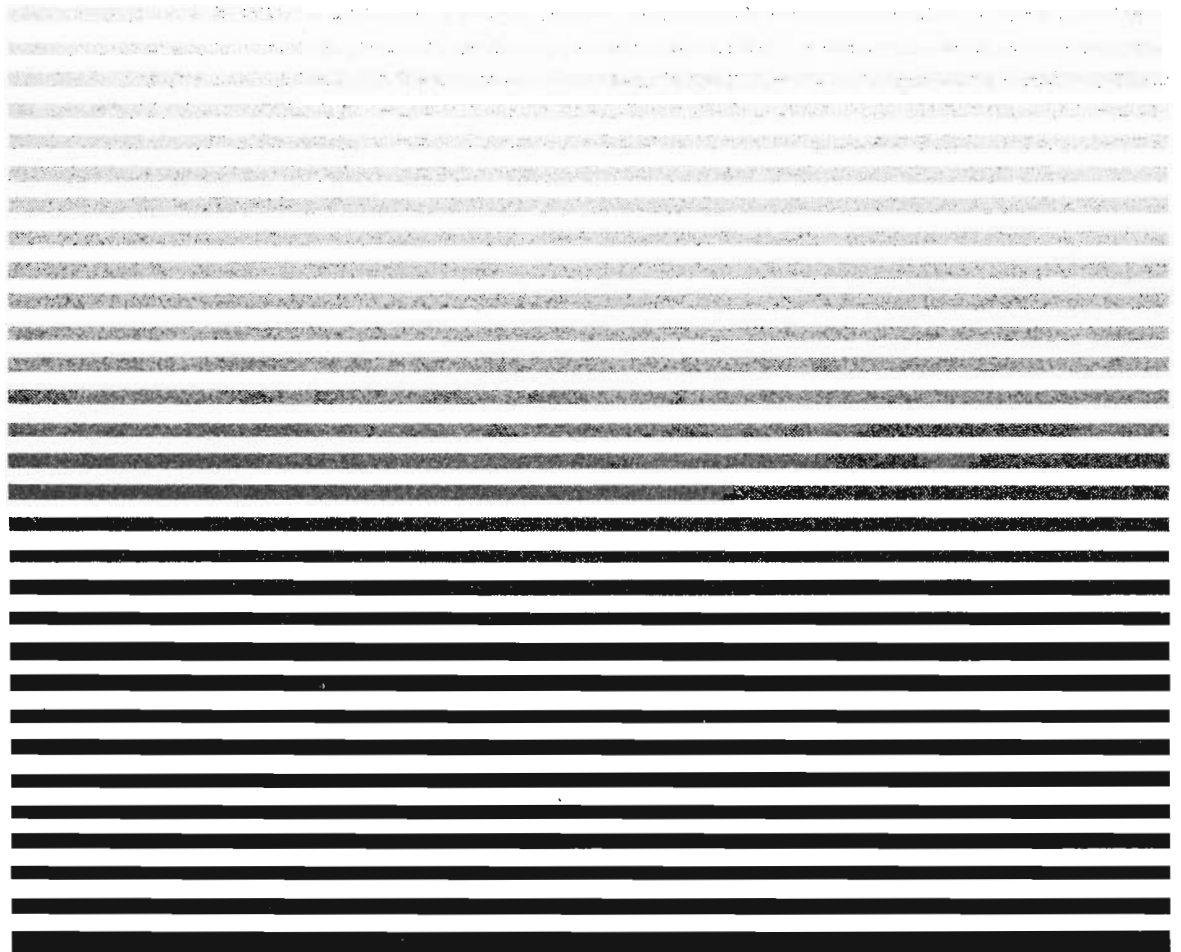


*Active Learning and
Aesthetic Encounters*

*Talks at the Lincoln Center Institute
1994*

Maxine Greene



N C R E S T

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NCREST is supported by a major grant from the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. NCREST's work in New York City, through its Center for School Reform, is supported by the Leon Lowenstein Foundation and the Aaron Diamond Foundation. Other funders have included Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Center for Collaborative Education, the Danforth Foundation, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Fund for New York City Public Education, Impact II, the Lilly Endowment, Inc., the Andrew Mellon Foundation, the Metropolitan Life Foundation, the National Center for Research on Vocational Education, the New York Community Trust, the New York State Department of Education, the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, and the Rockefeller Foundation.

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NCREST
Box 110, Teachers College
Columbia University
New York, NY 10027
Fax: (212) 678-4170

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March 1995

Note to the Reader

The following are talks given to the teachers who attended the Lincoln Center Institute programs for three weeks in July 1994. The institute has been in existence for about 20 years. It involves numbers of public school teachers working with practicing artists to learn something of the languages of the several arts. Our idea is that if someone learns to move the way Martha Graham dancers move, she or he attends to a Martha Graham dance performance not only cognitively, but as a physical being -- imagining, perceiving, feeling, *engaging*. The same applies to participation in a dramatic event by learning to move, to improvise, to gesture, to role-play. With music, teachers may sing in ensemble or learn to shape the medium of sound by using diverse instruments or their own voices. Where the visual arts are concerned, participants gain experience "reading" paintings at the Museum of Modern Art -- in part by composing themselves, making their own imprints on brown paper or cardboard or wood. The experiences with the artists feed into what we call "attending": There are performances, concerts, and various kinds of exhibitions. I have had the privilege for these 20 years of talking about attending, about art experiences and aesthetic education, about imagining and perceiving and noticing and knowing in ways, I hope, that sustained and extended dialogues with teaching artists and the responses to works of art. The culmination, of course, comes when artists and performances come to classrooms in school terms. My hope is that the words spoken at Lincoln Center relate to the discourse being developed among those engaged in the work of NCREST. I want to think they are words about teaching and professional development, as well as about wide-awakeness and the place of the artistic-aesthetic in our lives.

Maxine Greene

Introduction

This time of your life (whatever time it is) will offer you occasions for reflecting on experiences you have had with works of art -- and for posing questions you may never have posed before. Also, working with teaching artists, you will find your perceptual and imaginative fields expanding as you work with movement, sound, image, the interplay of gesture and dialogue, expanding in ways (as some of you know) that are unpredictable. Indeed, one of the things we find out about engagement with the arts is that they bring us into a domain of possibility, a domain of the unexpected and the unexplored. You will find out here, as well, how what you discover in your seminars helps to open this domain, how it may send you off on adventures of meaning you may never have anticipated before. It will happen in the next few days, I promise you, if you are present here in the first person. It will happen as you find yourself seeing more, hearing more, noticing more, feeling more, as you move from your work with the teaching artists to the performances and exhibitions awaiting you -- awaiting your active attending, not merely your passive receiving, your heeding from a distance what is there, after all, for you. When I say "in the first person," I think of Thoreau, of course, who at the beginning of *Walden* wrote: "We commonly do not remember that it is, after all, always the first person that is speaking." He added, you recall: "I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well." Neither Thoreau nor I meant that we ought to separate ourselves from our community. Indeed, the more vitally participant you are in the community (of teachers, let us say, of art-lovers, of art-makers, of those at this moment eagerly awaiting a new beginning), the more fully alive you will feel yourself to be, the more you will be in touch with yourself. I do not have to remind you of the values of dialogue, of what one philosopher describes as "making music together." Nor do I have to remind you of the significance of shaping your own narrative, your own life-story, and of opening yourself to other life-stories. You are no longer playing a role; you are no longer clerk or bureaucrat or functionary. You are in process -- and aware of being in process -- of creating yourself, of coming to know how you are in the world. I think of Thoreau again telling his reader (when he is talking about the uselessness of continuing to buy new clothes) that most people want, "not something to *do with*, but something to *do* or rather something to *be*."

This aesthetic education enterprise, this moving from *doing* to attending and engaging, has a great deal to do with what you, as living women and men, want to *be* -- even as it has a great deal to do with what you want to *do* with the arts and the pursuit of aesthetic experiences in your classrooms. I hope you feel the connection between what we hope will happen here and what some of us hope is happening or will happen in the schools under the rubric of school restructuring and reform. When I say that, I have mainly in mind the focus on what we call active learning by young people we now realize are capable of making meaning, are caught up in multiple acts of finding meaning, who desperately want to learn how to make it, how to find it, how to put it into words or images or musical sounds that might make the world less alien, less inscrutable, so that they can *read* some of what is

happening around, *name* it, resist the anesthetic, the controlling, the banal.

You will come to realize here at the institute, if you have not already, that the engagements we want to make more likely with particular works of art -- *Hamlet*, let us say, the music of a jazz quintet, the Alvin Ailey ensemble's *Three Dances with Army Blankets*, the story of Orpheus -- also call for an active engagement on the part of those who come to them, an aware participation leading not to *knowing about* but to personal understanding, a reflective understanding emerging from perceptual and imaginative doing, as John Dewey would say, and undergoing. We want to see this happen in classrooms, as we want to enable it to happen in your lives; and we realize that only as you attain the wide-awakeness that stems from aesthetic awareness are your students likely to feel it, to find out what it means, to find out how it means to be. This is quite, quite different from traditional art appreciation, as it is quite, quite different from any sort of literalism or spectator approaches or formalist attitudes toward art. We have engagement in mind, increasingly informed engagement in the first person. We have perspectives in mind and modes of being no one of us can chart in advance.

I wish you pleasure and reflectiveness and wonder and delight. It is always thrilling to begin.

Lecture I

What accounts for the experiences we have come to call aesthetic experiences? In what way do they differ from ordinary experiences -- like driving to work, doing the shopping, putting the children to bed, preparing a lesson plan? How do they differ from experiences with nature -- looking up to a cloud-capped mountain, say, watching a primrose suddenly open to the light, listening to the wind in the trees? How might an aesthetic experience differ from the breathless experience of watching a white car followed by police cars on a California freeway, picturing someone inside the car with a gun held to his head? The study of aesthetics actually begins with questions like these -- questions, I must say, I long ago began to love. There are other questions too that bring us closer to remembered encounters with created works in the various domains of art -- plays, say, ballets, films, short stories, works of music. What is it about Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" that makes me feel as if I am in touch with something transcendent, something loftier than I am in the universe -- for all that I am a secular person convinced she lives under an empty sky? Why does Diana Rigg's *Medea*, with the killing of the children, the unmitigated horror against clanging metal panels, leave me exalted at the end when Medea stands there, outlined against the stormy sky? What explains my moving into E. L. Doctorow's novel *The Waterworks* (1994), and feeling myself immediately part of it? The narrator warns the reader that what he is reporting are the visions of an old man:

All together they compose a city, a great port and industrial city of the nineteenth century. I descend to this city and find the people I have come to know and for whose lives I fear. I tell you what I see and hear. The people of this city think of it as New York, but you may think otherwise. You may think it stands to your New York City today as some panoramic negative print, inverted in its lights and shadows . . . its seasons turned around . . . a companion city on the other side (p. 59).

Yes, it is an unreal city, a created city; and nevertheless it is not only recognizable, but more recognizable than the living city around us today. What *is* it about a literary work that can make our confusing life more intelligible -- enable us to give it meaning it never seemed to possess before? The questions multiply; the questions throb; and it is because they do that I want to know more and more about the significance of the arts in human experience, in my own experience -- and wonder uneasily what it would be like without the arts.

I should like to say that this has something to do with what we are doing here together. We know, and I am sure you know, that simply knowing something *about* jazz music or the tale of Orpheus or the tragedy of Hamlet is not the same as understanding it -- and that understanding it may lead to entering it, participating in it, making it, as Dewey said, an object of your experience. In fact, Dewey always distinguished between what he might call a product, a string of sounds, strokes of paint on a canvas, words in a text -- no

matter what their name or fame -- and a work of art. A work of art, he said, ought to be understood as what happens in experience when you encounter *Medea*, say, or the tale of Orpheus or the Alvin Ailey Ensemble *Three Dances with Army Blankets*. It is not likely to happen, however, unless you attend in a certain way, unless you are engaged as a feeling, perceiving, intuiting, thinking, imagining being in your distinctiveness, reaching out from your lived situation to enter the work. What we try to do here at the institute, when we undertake aesthetic education, is to make such engagement increasingly likely for persons at different ages in the world we share.

Aesthetic education has to do with creating the kinds of situations in which those various capacities can be activated with one another -- in such a fashion that they release a perceiver to participate, to engage -- not simply to sit back and to contemplate. This, of course, is one reason for the workshops that are so important here -- that give our institute its distinctiveness. You are being offered opportunities to learn to communicate in the various languages of the arts -- to enter into a conversation with movement, to understand tension and release of tension, to make shapes in time and space when you work with a dancer, to explore musical sounds in such a way as to feel them (as Dewey put it) agitating directly "as if they were a commotion of the organism itself." Think of the difference between attending to *Hamlet* after you yourself have enacted some of the soliloquies, confronted what it might be like (and who does not know) to feel yourself totally inadequate, to say "Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I," moved from the glowing image of man the paragon of animals to that desperate modern question, "And what, to me, is this quintessence of dust?," and simply watching the play from the outside, as tragedy, once performed by an all-male cast at the Globe Theatre in Elizabethan England, with a hidden meaning having to do with something rotten in the state of Denmark smart students are expected to unearth. I surely do not have to remind you what it signifies to move to an exhibition of pencil drawings or water colors after trying yourself to find your image, to set down your perception of the riverfront, your sense of the fog lowering over the river's surface -- from your vantage point, your point of view, making what you see somehow yours -- and then discovering how a painter (Cezanne, Van Gogh, Homer, Picasso, Glackens) selected from the appearances surrounding him and enabled you to see through his eyes -- a face of the world you may have never suspected, a view of things that expanded the landscape suddenly, the perceived landscape on which you move through your life. When this happens, when you see differently, hear differently, deal differently with the mystery and the confusion of things, you have not only transmuted what lies before you through making it an object of your awake experience, you may well have transformed yourself.

There were times, as many of you realize, when you were expected to be inspired by works of art, or moved to pity and terror, or drawn to an enhanced love of nature or God. And you might have been expected to set aside all that and focus on the work itself (the poem, say, in its remarkable intricacy and autonomy, entirely separate from the ordinary and familiar). Your experiences were considered external to and irrelevant to the work. In fact, there were and are many so-called scholars who believe that opening poems or plays or paintings to the interpretations or responses of "plain people" (like thee and me) would

inevitably reduce them to something vulgar and oversimplified. A proper distance was supposed to exist between everyday consciousness and the bleak wonders of the heath in *King Lear*, or the graveyard in *Giselle*, or the long string passages at the end of Mahler's Ninth Symphony. Here at our institute, we are experiencing all sorts of invitations to enter in, to respond in our own ways, to achieve diverse works as meaningful against the landscapes of our lived lives. Encounters with jazz music have only recently been seen as encounters with "art," as challenging and complex as any encounters with what has long been taken to be "high art." Some of us, during these days, have had the experience of being invited in by jazz musicians, as we moved and applauded and even sang along. Many of us attended to the gestures of the musicians, the slants of their heads, the tapping of their feet, the improvisations, the riffs; and we discovered what it might mean to participate in the process of art-making. Some of you involved with "whole language" and what is called "reader response" approaches to literature have found out the ways in which reading stories and novels can move people to shape their own narratives -- to name and shape their lived worlds. I am suggesting that the same thing can happen with the other arts if we notice what is there to be noticed -- if we can feed our energies in and lend them our lives.

One of the remarkable things that can happen is setting free the capacity called imagination. Wallace Stevens' metaphor for it was a "blue guitar . . . that does not play things as they are" (1964, p. 165). Imagination is what allows us to perceive alternatives, to look at things as if they could be otherwise. "The Possible's slow fuse," wrote Emily Dickinson, "is lit/By the Imagination" (1960, p. 689). For all that, imagination has been terribly ignored in the multiple education reports of the past decade, even in the talk of curriculum frameworks and school restructuring. And yet there have been so many clues and hints for those of us fascinated with the emergence of new curricula. Think, for one instance, of Ken Burns' rendering of the Civil War on PBS -- the weaving of photographs, letters, and documentary accounts. Think of the musing and the sometimes heartbroken voices and songs and music that transmuted the material being used and often made it into what we experienced as art.

There were, of course, official paintings, portraits of generals, commemorative paintings; but there were also paintings like Winslow Homer's *Prisoners of War* or *Letters from Home* that offer an entirely different perspective, a particular perspective, and they light your imagination until it reaches far beyond and below the textual accounts of the Civil War, even the revised accounts. It reaches beyond literalism, beyond conventionality; most importantly, it brings you *in* as a person, as an American, as a member of a community. Some of you may have seen the film *Glory* -- that remarkable, ironic film about the first black regiment raised in part through the work of abolitionists in New England, led by a young white man, sacrificed in a futile, bitterly courageous battle that again makes you participant. And pondering what such a changing perspective can mean, what imagination can open up, I remembered a poem by Robert Lowell called "For the Union Dead" (1964), about St. Gaudens' Civil War relief on the Boston Common: "Two months after marching through Boston, half the regiment was dead; at the dedication, William James could almost hear the bronze Negroes breathe." He writes about the taut, lean young colonel leading his

black soldiers to death -- the young man named Shaw whose father wanted no monument "except the ditch" where his son's body was thrown and lost with his men. And then he says:

There are no statues for the last war here; on Boylston Street, a commercial photograph
shows Hiroshima boiling
over a Mosler Safe, the "Rock of Ages" that survived the blast.
Space is nearer. When I crouch to my television set, the drained faces of Negro
school-children rise like balloons. (pp. 70-72)

It is not only that imagination engages us with a rendering of aspects of the Civil War, transmuted by being presented as works of art; it opens new vistas, enables us to make new connections -- between that war and Hiroshima and the children of the civil rights movements -- and I would say we have gone beyond knowing *about* to a participatory understanding, a being inside of Civil War events -- and it is this mode of engagement and expansion and deepening that we hope to achieve here at Lincoln Center, in such a fashion that we really do play a part in the transformation of the schools where we hope to see young people as active learners, with a sense of agency, a sense of being part of what they are studying -- of making what they study their own.

Whether it is through an engagement with baroque music or through *Orpheus* or through engaging with a clown (perceptively again, physically, imaginatively, intuitively), you are being urged to break with the ordinary, the anesthetic, the banal, and to summon up alternative ways of being in the world. I always like Sartre's idea of a piece of fiction appealing to our freedom -- and think it is often true with the other arts. He meant appealing to us on some level of our consciousness where we are ready to transform ourselves, to choose ourselves, to commit ourselves, to go beyond what *is*. Yes, it very often brings us into a realm of the unexpected, of the unpredictable; because in the present moment, our approach to the arts is so oriented to experience -- to open-ended transactions with an unpredictable world. Again, our concerns have to do with the ways in which art works in our experience -- how paintings enable us to see the world anew, how *Hamlet* or *The Age of Innocence*, or the utterly remarkable *Angels in America* and *Perestroika* enable us to look through quite surprising perspectives on the all-too-familiar world. I was reading to my workshop from the end of *Perestroika* yesterday, finding something no one could anticipate in that rendering of a world gone so sour, so corrupt, so sick, so piteous. Tony Kushner calls his two plays, you remember, a fantasia on national themes. At the end, his characters are sitting under the angel on the Bethesda Fountain in the park -- talking about Palestinians and the Gaza Strip and then about the frozen fountain and what it is like in the summer, and about the way in which AIDS will be the end of many, but not all, and the dead will struggle on with the living but they won't die secret deaths anymore. The world only spins forward, says Walter Prior, who is dying of AIDS. "We will be citizens. The time has come. Bye now. You are fabulous creatures, each and every one. And I bless you: More Life. The Great Work begins" (1994, p. 148). There are many themes, obviously; but this notion of being citizens in a fabric of care, this notion of a beginning and of the fabulous creatures we

all may be and, yes our children may be if we give them an opportunity to find their own voices, to think, to imagine, to be active learners, to be actively in the world, seems relevant to what we are trying to do here as we work to make aesthetic experiences more likely and the arts more central in our lives.

I want to urge you to keep reflecting on your experiences, to keep asking the questions, to keep wondering what it is and what it should be about the arts, and about the differences among us -- differences we can applaud -- and connections between us, webs of relationship that weave some of us together, that are beginning to do so here. Art is emergent, I am suggesting, from experience. Attending with authenticity and awareness and a sense of presentness, you will (and you will try to find out why) -- if you are lucky and awake -- find your world transformed.

Lecture II

My themes have to do with opening new pathways in lived experience, breaking with the taken-for-granted, setting aside the crusts of mere conformity. It takes work, as we know, as so many have reminded us, work on the part of those of us who are perceivers lending some of our lives to the works before us as we attend to and gather together the particulars, the details that are there for us. "The one who is too lazy, idle, or indurated in convention," wrote John Dewey, "will not see or hear" (1934, p. 54). Jean-Paul Sartre, describing the mutual interdependence of artist and perceiver, talked about how we have to create what the artist discloses to us, to work along with the artist in bringing into being the universe of *Hamlet*, let us say, or Doctorow's *The Waterworks*, or *The Wind as a Knife*. If, Sartre (1949) said, we are "inattentive, tired, stupid, or thoughtless," most of the relations will escape us; we will never manage to "catch on" to what is before us (in the text, on the stage, on the wall) in the sense that fire catches or does not catch (p. 42). Both Dewey and Sartre were paying tribute to the potential of those who come, through their own free choosing, to make certain works objects of their experience -- to attend to them with the particular kind of effort that allows them to become works of art. It is, as you already recognize, the concern of the aesthetic educator to enable persons to exert that effort in whatever way they can, to break with the automatic or with purely conventional norms, to awaken themselves from passivity so they do not simply wait to absorb.

We have shared a number of experiences that make some of this particularly clear. Friday afternoon, as those who were here recall, we saw the sky darken outside the windows, the clouds gather, and a storm begin. Watching the light change, the rain pour down for a few minutes, remembering what I said the other day about having aesthetic experiences with nature, I asked myself about the difference between what I was seeing outside the window and what, say, the painter Turner made me see when it came to storms, steam, mist -- or the Hudson River painter rendering clouds gathering over the Catskills. And I thought about the haze in the hours before the rain here in the city and about Monet's painting of mist in that work called *Impression: Mist*. If Monet or Turner had been here on Friday and had been moved to make the look of the city the subject of a painting, we might have waited for a rendering of the storm as Turner or Monet saw it, but neither one would have captured it at the moment, as we do when we take a snapshot; he would have kept looking, trying to see it in terms of oil paint, pondering later what he had seen, finding new possibilities of color, of vaguely emergent form, transfiguring (what?) the storm we saw on Sixty-fifth Street into a concretion, something called formed content, something -- at last -- that never existed in the world before. And if we reached out to understand, to engage with its shapes and colors and relationships, we would discover a wholly new storm-on-Sixty-fifth-Street, something we could not conceivably have anticipated, and perhaps something new about storminess and the meaning of sudden darkening, curtaining, storming in our experience, which might have changed that experience in some fashion even as it altered our perceiving of city storms in time to come and offered us different perceptions of the city

itself, perceptions that might play against one another -- as they do when we read novels about the city (Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, Doctorow's work) making us ask ourselves what do we (here in the first person) really see.

I hope you think about the wonder of multiple perspectives in your own experience. I hope you think about what happens to you -- and, we would all hope, to our students -- when it becomes possible to abandon one-dimensional viewing, to look from many vantage points and, in doing so, to construct meanings scarcely suspected before. That makes me think of another experience many of us shared: telling the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, moving us to actualize one of the most familiar tales there are in multiple and unfamiliar ways (Gonzalez, 1994). Again, we had to be there with the storyteller, letting our imaginations work so that, in collaboration with him, we could make visible and palpable the musician Orpheus and the lost wife he goes in search of underground. We had to be personally participant, imaginatively participant when he tried not to look back until he and Eurydice were back on earth; we had ourselves to be drawn to look back, to assure ourselves that the as/if Eurydice was really there -- even though we knew. What we shared was an enactment of art-making -- someone raising up a world before our eyes through movement and the sound of his voice and the expressions of his face. It reminded me of a Rilke poem called "Initiation" (1959) that begins with going out into the evening and lifting one's eyes from the worn-out door-stone, and then

slowly you raise a shadowy black tree
and fix it on the sky: slender, alone.
And you have made the world (and it shall grow
and ripen as a word, unspoken, still).
When you have grasped its meaning with your will,
then tenderly your eyes will let it go (p. 21).

It reminded me of it because it seemed to ask of me the same effort -- to raise something against the sky by means of my imagination -- and then choosing it in some way meaningful, making it my own.

None of this signifies that you are required to *like* these works or that you are bound to discover openings within them. I am pointing to, suggesting to you the possibilities opened by imagination -- possibilities that something may happen in your experience, that something may open to a new way of seeing or feeling or coping with the world. I want -- to extend the point I am trying to make about perceiving and imagining and opening -- to refer to another experience some shared: listening to the Mendelssohn octet, which I realize well sounds different to different individuals, which may well be heard differently -- phase by phase, phrase by phrase. I could not but recall an essay that has always meant a good deal to me. It is called *Making Music Together* and was written by a philosopher named Alfred Schutz. He looked at a performance like the one we heard as a particular kind of "web of social relationships," a mutual "tuning-in relationship" by which, he wrote, the "I" and the 'Thou' are experienced by the participants as a 'We' in a vivid present" (1964, p.

173). He spoke of listeners coming into communication with a composer through the mediation of the performers, and he also spoke of the relation among the performers and "the flux of tones unrolling in inner time an arrangement meaningful" to composer and listener and performers "because and in so far as it evokes in the stream of consciousness participating in it an interplay of recollections, retentions, protentions and anticipations which interrelate the successive elements." He saw this as one of the best examples of persons communicating, becoming mutually concerned with one another, creating a relationship founded on a common experience of living simultaneously in both inner and outer time. There are other ways of explaining the musical experience; but this is one that, at least for me, relates it to the other participatory experiences we are having here and, at once, suggests what can happen in situations here and in our classrooms when, by means of a performance, an enactment, a reading, or an exhibition, a "We" can emerge in a vivid present -- something crucial to our lives.

Now I know, as all of us now concerned about cultural diversity know, that there are other kinds of music than the Mendelssohn, other kinds of arrangement in inner time than the one Schutz had in mind. I know, for example, that the experience of listening to Indian music is different from the experience of listening to Mendelssohn; I know that the Indian aesthetic is different from ours -- with its emphasis on an intuitive grasp of what is happening in an art form and a move outward from that art form to a transcendence of the sensory world and an escape to a state of superior pleasure, practical betterment, and spiritual bliss. We will be in some way participant in Indian dance this week and, to some extent, the sounds that accompany it; and I would like to believe that, for all the difference in aesthetic theory, we can somehow experience the "I-Thou" moment Schutz described when listening to Indian music. It is interesting to read that dance and music are thought to outrank sculpture and painting in Indian culture, because of the Indian belief that art should have a dimension of time. While paintings, for instance, freeze the action of the subject in a single instant, music and dance unfold in time. Without sharing the religious resonances, I think many of us have experienced the moments of "vivid presence" in, say, the music of Ravi Shankar.

There has been considerable talk about the religious incompatibilities and the conflicts in world views as evidenced in the cultures, for instance, of the east and west. Some believe it may be that the new multiculturalist rhetoric in the art world signifies a new way of misreading or ignoring religious meanings and other signal differences. We are only now beginning to realize that western art history and theories of art are but one version of the right or the correct. Instead of imposing our ideas upon other cultures and histories, we may eventually learn to project ourselves into other worlds.

Our object, where public school children and young people are concerned, is to provide increasing numbers of opportunities for tapping into long unheard frequencies, for opening new perspectives on a world increasingly shared. It seems to me that we can only do so with regard for the situated lives of diverse children and respect for the differences in their experience. But this need not mean shutting the doors to the possibility of making

music together -- not always the same music, not music governed by the same norms. The point seems to me to be experiential, not theoretical. My own experience opened when I first heard Ravi Shankar (who helped me, as time went on, to listen to Philip Glass, to attend to the Maharabata and other works, to push back my horizons, to realize there were multiple musics and multiple ways of making music together -- but that I was entitled to listen to the musics of other cultures against my own lived situation, on my own ground). It may be that some day we will find our studies revealing what some scholars call a "single Calliope" (Anderson, 1990) (Calliope, the daughter of the goddess of memory and of Zeus, Calliope who gave us the gift of art). It may be that some day we will find a common unity shared by art around the world as more as more disparate artists work to imbue sensuous media with potential meanings. We have not yet found it; but we have found the wonders of difference, the wonders of diversity, and the possibility of experiencing the "I" and "Thou" in particular cases and with regard to specific art works as an emergent "We."

I believe that this is more likely to happen if the participatory engagements we are involved with here become more likely in the schools around the country. Working together to discover Indian dance movements, learning something about the importance of styles, young people will open themselves to the language of Indian dance -- on the basis of who *they* are and what they are willing to explore. Some of us have had this experience with African dance, some with Mayan symbols and images in literature as well as visual art. We have not become African or adopted Mayan creeds; but some of us, along with the young strangers in our classrooms, have reached out as reflective knowers in a world changing daily in the light of views from what used to be the margins, in the light of new eyes looking, new voices speaking. We all have to look out as persons somehow in pursuit, somehow leaning toward a future of possibility. Empathy is required, the kind of empathy that imagination, of all human capacities, makes possible. An imaginative reaching out and toward is needed, as we learn -- all of us, old and young -- to look through more and more perspectives at what we hold in common, and as, using our imagination, we become able to imagine what Cynthia Ozick describes as "the familiar heart of the stranger" (1989, p. 283).

Opening ourselves, putting aside one-dimensionality and shallow conventions, we can nurture a desire for *communitas* by means of art experiences while preserving differences. We need to affirm ourselves and touch our own horizons as we work to fuse with others, as we offer more and more pathways out of the fixed and the ordinary, pathways toward what might be. I like what Sartre wrote about pathways, after writing that we all perceive things against the background of our world:

If the painter presents us with a field or a vase of flowers, his paintings are windows which are open on the whole world. We follow the red path which is buried among the wheat much farther than Van Gogh painted it, among other wheat fields, under other clouds, to the river which empties into the sea, and we extend to infinity, to the other end of the world, the deep finality which supports the existence of the field and the earth. So that, through the various objects which it produces . . . the creative act aims at a total renewal of the world (1949, p. 57).

And now forgive me. I need to end with a woman's words, words written by a woman poet, Muriel Rukeyser (1992), writing (yes) about Orpheus, writing about things coming together with "their own music." In "The Poem as Mask", first she tells of writing about dancing wild women, singing; and she says it was a mask when she wrote of Orpheus, exiled, it was really herself, "unable to speak, in exile from myself."

And, wonderfully:

There is no mountain, there is no god, there is memory
of my torn life, myself split open in sleep,
the rescued child

beside me among the doctors, and a word
of rescue from the great eyes.

No more masks! No more mythologies!

Now, for the first time, the god lifts his hand,
The fragments join in me with their own music (p. 122).

It is not only renewal. It is a wholeness for each of us, for ourselves.

Lecture III

We began with questions -- questions about art and the aesthetic experience, questions about reality and illusion, about traditions and diversity. You were asked to reflect on some of your own encounters with works of art -- to try to understand them and, in doing so, to discover why the arts are important in your life. Surely it is clear that, if they were not important to you (attending in "the first person"), you would not be able to communicate to those you teach the wonder, the challenge, the surprises waiting for them in the domains of the arts. And, yes, the mystery, that which goes beyond explanation. I think of the writer Denis Donoghue, objecting to talk of art as a commodity with all the mystery removed. He wants to reinstate mystery and distinguish it from mere bewilderment or mystification. He turns to Gabriel Marcel, who said, "A problem is something met which bars my passage. It is before me in its entirety. A mystery, on the other hand, is something in which I find myself caught up, and whose essence is therefore not to be before me in its entirety" (1949, pp. 100-101). The point is that the artistic vision (whether Shakespearean or Mayan or French impressionist or southern Indian) deflects every attempt, as Donoghue says, "to pin it down by knowledge or define it in speech" (1983, p. 13). And then I recall Wallace Stevens writing "Throw away the lights and the definitions, and say what you see in the dark" (1964, p. 183). Yes, there are adventures in meaning into which you want to usher those you teach -- adventures in movement, sound, dialogue; but they are not adventures that come to comfortable ends. There is always, always more.

One of the questions you will carry with you has to do with how you can embody that kind of awareness in such a way as to enable the young to feel it, to yearn toward it. How, by being in your classroom as a person, can you translate into your own authentic practice some of what you have felt, explored, perceived, imagined, learned? Many of you have said how enlightening it is to recapture the experience of learning, of finding yourself in a place where you are a stranger, where -- for a while -- even the language in use is unknown. I hope you try to hold in mind what happened as you gradually came to know, how you learned to learn the language of Alvin Ailey, say, of the pre-Columbian myth-maker, of the dance called *Bharata Natyam*, of the dances from the commedia dell'arte, of American jazz, which you may have thought you knew until you were allowed to move inside. And I hope as well you recall the ways in which that learning affected your seeing and your listening -- your noticing what was there to be noticed when the works were presented on the stage.

There are no recipes, as you well know, for translating all this into classroom practice; there are no generalized formulations that can be applied to the situation-specific occasions with which we deal as teachers. There are intuitions on which we try to rely, moments of improvisation, moments of tuning in to this student or that. There are conversations, instances of dialogue, collaborations with fellow-teachers and teaching artists. There is the singling out of particular children or young people to help in the creation of an atmosphere. There is the effort to invent a situation in which there can be spaces for doing, spaces for attending, spaces for becoming.

And spaces for action. I think of Hannah Arendt, making the point that action, in contrast to behavior, means taking an initiative, beginning, setting something in motion. It is, she wrote, "in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before. This character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginning" (1961, p. 369). Look back again on your experiences this summer, even the casual and the unfinished ones, and you may recognize what Arendt had in mind. Think of the dance movements in which you participated, the myths you have enacted, the scripts you have written, the texts and subtexts you have explored, the visual shapes you have made, the perspectives you have looked through (even when examining a cut-out of your own silhouette on the floor), the boxes you have emptied and tilled and foraged in, the voices that have taken you by surprise. As a teacher, I want to find out more and more about creating occasions for such experiences -- and, I must say, not in the arts alone. I like to talk about moving from the predictable to the possible. The predictable is what is seen and measured from the outside (from the lab, or the administrative office, or the visiting observer); the possible is what is seen from the vantage point of the actor, the one with a sense of agency, the beginner. I like to believe (and I suspect many of you will agree) that our summer institute, viewed from the perspective of the participants, is a realm of possibility. Think what it would mean if our classrooms, too, became such realms.

I think I have quoted Emily Dickinson before, writing that the possible lights "the slow fuse of imagination." All we need to do is to summon up the capacity called imagination -- the cognitive capacity, mind you, called imagination -- to remind ourselves that experience always holds more than can be predicted. When I think of the youngsters I have met and heard about who view their futures in terms of roadblocks, closed doors, even early death, I become obsessive about communicating this idea -- this sense of something beyond the actual, this consciousness of alternative possibility. In the midst of institutions too often governed by images of linearity, by calculative symbols, by talk of measurement, the young are made to feel that this is what the world is; this is objective reality, defined by authoritative others, excluding the vantage points of the young. Again, for some reason, I think of Wallace Stevens and a poem called "The Motive for Metaphor" (1964). He is describing what may be viewed as the objective world, the world set over against us -- against people like many of the young in schools.

Desiring the exhilarations of changes:
The motive for metaphor, shrinking from
The weight of primary noon,
The A B C of being,

The ruddy temper, the hammer
of red and blue, the hard sound--
Steel against intimation--the sharp flash,
The vital, arrogant, fatal, dominant X (p. 288).

Yes, somehow, they, like us, desire "the exhilarations of changes" and we would like to help them give that desire voice. And perhaps articulate for them that it *is* indeed a "motive for metaphor," for making new connections, for identifying with a world that seems so alien, for looking at things as if they could be otherwise. Again it is a matter of enabling them to open themselves to vistas of possibility -- and to summon up visions of human agency, their own agency, that transcend correctness and the passing grade or the mere mastery of skills.

To have a feeling of agency is to recognize that the living being -- the perceiver, the reader, the listener -- has an active part in achieving a work of art as meaningful. When the school reformers talk, as they do, of active learning and of people telling their stories and of the sense of agency, I want to remind them of the ways in which the kinds of experiences we have here and may make possible in our classrooms may well be paradigmatic for the new schools we say we want to build. We have learned here repeatedly that it is never enough to take a look, to label a particular work or simply to recognize it as something by Ailey, something by Cezanne, something by Shakespeare. It is never enough to attend to it as something *out there*, defined by official others, to be perceived, read, or heard as those others decide. At once, it is not enough to deal with it as impulse would have it -- conventionally, as Dewey would say; stupidly, as Sartre would say. We want the works at hand, remember, to become objects of experience for those who come to them, and that takes a going out of energy and a care, even a solicitude in noticing, in paying heed to nuance and to detail, and then ordering the parts perceived into a whole within experience -- that is, at once, true to the work and something that never happened in the world before. In *Hamlet*, as we discovered once again, there are a thousand elements that have to be heeded -- in the poetry, in the text and the subtext, in the enactments, in the play within the play, in the relationships, in the nature of the court, in the impinging war, in the presence of England across the water, in the human condition as rendered in this work. We as teachers are obligated to enable our students to attend well, to pay heed, to notice what might not be noticed in a careless reading or inattentive watching. But then we have to open the spaces I tried to talk about before -- the spaces for their meaning-making, for their interpretations, which are bound to be manifold. They must decide what Hamlet's relation to Gertrude is and was, whether Hamlet is really mad or a good play actor himself, whether Rosencrantz and Guildenstern honestly know what is happening, what friendship signifies -- and betrayal -- and the thought of suicide, what is actually rotten in the state of Denmark, how the state of Denmark is like the American state today. No, there are not as many Hamlets as there are spectators; but there are vast possibilities for interpretation, multiple adventures of meaning (depending on who is undertaking the adventure, and what risks he or she is willing to take).

Also, there is the community. One of the significant aspects of our adventure here is, I believe, our gradual consciousness of ourselves as members of a community. We come to share values here, and norms, and a sense of craft, and a feeling of what excellence is. We share all this as we somehow share our stories with one another, as we begin to recognize each other -- in ways we all hope will happen in classrooms. I think of Ralph Ellison's narrator at the start of *Invisible Man* who says his invisibility is due to "a peculiar disposition of the eyes with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their *inner* eyes,

those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality" (1954, p. 7). We know enough about the racism and classism that impose invisibility on so many and make the weaving of community so difficult. We know, too, that an absence of imagination is involved when that happens, the absence of an ability to see Ellison's narrator as a living human being, a "paragon of animals" and, at once, "a quintessence of dust." The seriousness of the existing condition in the eyes of those who look is shown when Ellison's narrator says it makes him doubt *if* he exists. "You wonder whether you aren't simply a phantom in other people's minds. Say a figure in a nightmare which a sleeper tries with all his strength to destroy. It's when you feel like this, out of resentment, you begin to bump people back. And, let me confess, you feel that way most of the time. You ache with the need to convince yourself you really do exist in the real world, that you're part of all the sound and anguish." And he speaks desperately of how hard the effort is to get others to recognize you and how, without recognition, you can hardly be held responsible. Think what it would mean in our increasingly diverse classrooms for teachers to be enabled through Ellison's art to imagine what it signifies to be "invisible" and to realize at the same time that that invisible person is kin to them. And to realize as well how such invisibility stands in the way of community, and how the arts enable persons to create their own visibility, to change their lives.

Think, too, what it would mean to enter Toni Morrison's character in *Beloved* (1989), remembered for his struggle to describe how he felt about a particular woman. "She is a friend of my mind. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me all in the right order. It's good, you know, when you got a woman who is a friend of your mind" (pp. 272-273). This may be another mode of imagining: becoming a friend of someone else's mind, with the wonderful power to return to that person a sense of wholeness. That may be because the imagination has the capacity, as Virginia Woolf said, "to bring the severed parts together" (1976, p. 172), to integrate into the right order, to create wholes. Released as it is by encounters with works of art, it may well begin weaving the webs of relationship essential for the existence of community. Some of you may, even now, think back to your workshops and to the ways in which diverse people, people who were strangers a little while before, became -- through their explorations of an artwork -- friends of each other's minds.

It is through imagination, another writer has said, or "the realm of pure possibility that we freely make ourselves to be who or what we are, that we creatively and imaginatively become who we are" (Kearney, 1988, pp. 370-371). The becoming described is very much dependent on membership in a community of recognition and regard. Those who are labeled, fixed like butterflies in amber as deficient or alien, have little chance to feel they can "be yet otherwise" unless they are encouraged to seek their images, find their voices, inscribe their losses and their pain and their desires in journals, on canvas boards held up for others to see. Or, again, to be ushered into the spaces of art where, using eye and mind, they can be enabled to bring new visibility to the physical world, new melodies and resonances to the sounding world, new recognitions to the human world. Community cannot be produced through rational formulation or by edict. Like freedom, it has to be

achieved by persons offered a space in which to discover what they recognize together, appreciate in common, make intersubjective sense. It must be the space infused by the kind of imaginative awareness that enables those involved to imagine alternative possibilities for their own becoming, and their group's becoming -- to refuse always the state of being complete.

I choose to end by reminding you that, from my point of view, that is the primary function of the Lincoln Center Institute: to open spaces in which teachers can choose themselves, can pursue untapped possibility. Such a teacher -- ardent and in pursuit, impatient to see the Picasso show at the Metropolitan, the David Salle show (and to read the interview with Salle in the *New Yorker*), to get a ticket for Pilobolus or Twyla Tharp, to read Doctorow's new book or Toni Morrison's Nobel address, to experience Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, to taste the Renaissance at the Frick, and, perhaps, to try sketching herself or himself, to try a dance movement, to recite passages from Shakespeare's sonnets aloud, to take up the violin again, to connect his or her being and becoming with adventures he or she chooses for himself or herself in this domain of many windows -- such a teacher is the kind who enters the classroom after an experience like this. And my belief is that the teacher open to the mystery, open to the wonder, open to the questions, is the one who can light the slow fuse of possibility even for the defeated ones, the bored ones, the deserted ones. There is room for them; we can make room for them in our community of recognition, wide-awakeness, caring, and regard.

Also, I hope -- as I think many of you do -- that you will become articulate about the meaning of all this for school restructuring and reform. Again, remember the language now in use for this new era of reform: active learning, critical questioning, narrative, meaning-making, authentic assessment, collaboration, community. We can give each term, each phrase a new and palpitant content by recalling what we have found for ourselves about activity and questioning and story and meaning and community. It is a matter of participation in the works at hand; it is a matter of engagement in the first person; it is a matter of reflectiveness and self-discovery and surprise. And, yes, it is a matter of sensitivity to diverse ways of being and knowing, and art-making, to new ways of creating visibility. You will argue, I am sure, for more and more opportunities for school people to join the forever unfinished dialogue to which works of art give rise in their wonderful incompleteness, in their opening to indefinable possibilities. Again it is a matter of awakening imaginative capacities and of appealing to people's freedom. Free human beings can choose, can move beyond where they are, can ascend to places of which, in their ordinariness, they could have had no idea.

I am moved to end with some lines I used at the conclusion of another piece -- lines worth repeating at an end that carries within it a new beginning. They come from "Furious Versions" by Li-young Lee (1990), who wrote a lovely book of poetry called *the city in which I love you*.

I wait for shapeliness
limned, or dissolution.
Is paradise due or narrowly missed
until another thousand years?
I wait
in a blue hour
and faraway noise of hammering,
and on a page a poem begun, something
about to be dispersed,
something about to come into being (pp. 14-15).

He is making something; he is turned to the possible -- as we are in this dislocating time.
These may be blue hours for us as well. Something indeed is about to begin.

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