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In search of the blue note: un/folding imagination in adolescent literacy

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IN SEARCH OF THE BLUE NOTE: UN/FOLDING IMAGINATION IN ADOLESCENT LITERACY

by

Wendy Lee Caszatt-Allen

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Teaching and Learning
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2012

Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Carolyn Colvin

ABSTRACT

Adolescent literacy learning centered in processes of imagination is marginalized and neglected within the saturated climate of standardized assessment. This arts-based qualitative study uncovers imagination as an active presence central to making meaning in a middle school language arts class involved in a writing experience inspired by the history of jazz. Learning filtered through the creative processes of writing reveals imagination as an interiorized action in adolescent literacy development.

I ground this research in sociocultural perspectives of literacy (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986) engaged in aesthetic paradigms of learning. From this perspective, I investigate how middle school student writers participating in individual and collaborative activities internalize the experience to create new understandings of the world in which they live. Through the lens of theory, I explore the imagination as a higher psychological and cultural function involved in the mediated development of language. This study describes the powerful ways in which students craft writing and concurrently develop strong, critical and creative thinking capacities. I discard false perspectives that assume the inefficacy of learning in expressive modes and endorse pedagogies that place imagination at the center of processes of literacy teaching and learning.

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Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

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has been approved by the Examining Committee
for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy
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John Rapson

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Anne DiPardo

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Amanda Thein

To my brother, Brendan

"When you're in the stream," continued Toddwilly, "it's never boring. It's just the opposite. It's filled with real people and events. Even the people from the past are there, all moving along. And if you think about it – all of us together – moving toward some hidden, mysterious end of the stream … it's kind of like--"

"An adventure," said Harriet, her voice ringing out clearly.

Terry Caszatt
Brass Monkeys

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I am deeply inspired and often left in wonder by the work of the 8th grade writers, poets, and thinkers who have participated in the jazz and writing unit over the years. Their work inspires me to think about my work as a teacher. Their words enrich and enlighten us all reminding us why we put words to paper in the first place.

During the journey of my doctoral study I have been fortunate to study under the supervision of exceptional people of scholarship. I am indebted to the ever gracious inspiration of Anne DiPardo without whom this journey would never have begun. She encouraged me to look closely at the efficacy of emotion in learning and teaching and helped me define the pathways into my initial research. I'm ever grateful to Rachel Williams for the joy and sense of possibility that explodes around her like super novas. She introduced me to ideas of arts-based research and always generated keen interest in the stories of my students and their work. She was the audience beyond to which we owe much of the applause and encouragement that came our way. I appreciate the exemplary leading by example of Kathy Whitmore. Not only does she make research and collaboration in investigation look fun, she contributed much to my thinking in how students express themselves through art and writing.

In the old song, seventy-six trombones caught the morning sun, but John Rapson only needs one trombone to do the job and his brilliance at illumining possibilities offered to my study by the world of jazz and philosophy is boundless. I am thankful to him for bringing his trombone into my classroom in the very beginning and for sticking around, lending support and enticing suggestions, to see how it all progressed. His recommendations, beginning with bringing George Steiner to my attention, extended my inquiry into the realms of philosophy and jazz. One of the best combinations of subjects anyone has ever set out to explore.

I owe a very special thank you to my advisor Carolyn Colvin who not only always supported my work, but rolled up her sleeves to help me in the most work intensive, editing regions of this research. Her patience, expertise, impressive scholarly knowledge and advice are beyond measure. Without her unfailing support and the generous sacrifices of her time and energy to see me through, I'm sure the finish line would never have been crossed.

Scholarship of this extent does not happen in silence or solitude. Friends and family sustained me through the years it took to bring this work into being. I am grateful for the active and constant support of my husband, Shawn, who made sure I had food and technology that worked among the millions of other small, but not insignificant, things great husbands do that make the world seem good to be in. Terry and Marlene Caszatt, my dad and mom, supported me with love, their highly developed listening skills, and in myriad other ways that simply inspire my life always. And, importantly, I owe much of the advancement of my thinking to the conversational brilliance of my brother, Brendan. The debates and discussions we had were of extreme value and inspiration in provoking and encouraging my thinking ahead.

I am the grandchild and daughter and niece of educators and artists. I am proud of this influence as I stand on the shoulders of people who embrace the importance of imagination and have dedicated a significant portion of their professional lives in bringing these convictions into the world of teaching and learning. From their examples, from their support and influences, I define my own pathway honoring all their achievements that have gone before.

ABSTRACT

Adolescent literacy learning centered in processes of imagination is marginalized and neglected within the saturated climate of standardized assessment. This arts-based qualitative study uncovers imagination as an active presence central to making meaning in a middle school language arts class involved in a writing experience inspired by the history of jazz. Learning filtered through the creative processes of writing reveals imagination as an interiorized action in adolescent literacy development.

I ground this research in sociocultural perspectives of literacy (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986) engaged in aesthetic paradigms of learning. From this perspective, I investigate how middle school student writers participating in individual and collaborative activities internalize the experience to create new understandings of the world in which they live. Through the lens of theory, I explore the imagination as a higher psychological and cultural function involved in the mediated development of language. This study describes the powerful ways in which students craft writing and concurrently develop strong, critical and creative thinking capacities. I discard false perspectives that assume the inefficacy of learning in expressive modes and endorse pedagogies that place imagination at the center of processes of literacy teaching and learning.

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CHAPTER I

AN ACTION IN THE WORLD: CHASING IMAGINATION THROUGH JAZZ

> *"Being disinterested and so often entirely unexpected – the painting seen suddenly on a wall or in a gallery, the memory unbidden, the poem or novel or play which, as it were, lay in ambush – the meeting, the collision between awareness and signifying form, between perception and the aesthetic, is among the most powerful. It can transmute us."*
>
> George Steiner, *Errata*

Introduction

As the strains of Duke Ellington's *Tourist Point of View* slide into the restless air of my classroom, pencils begin to jig up and down on knees, a few eyes close in concentration, and heads bend over paper as words and pictures begin to appear at a faster and faster pace. The work seems to build in an intensity of concentration as the smoky, sinuous tenor saxophone of Paul Gonsalves snakes into the air, punctuated by the nimble staccato *pings* of drummer Rufus Jones on cymbals. In my rural, eighth grade language arts classroom, on this springtime afternoon, music was causing collisions.

The nature of these collisions appeared idiosyncratic. This was a writing class, yet the students were doodling, drawing rough little sketches, as well as listening to jazz. Fragments of writing scrawled on the backs of the doodled work and sometimes barely legible, betrayed the rush of the students in getting them written. It was as if they were chasing images, both in drawing and in words. Ideas generated by the music, quickly captured before they disappeared. Something of this chase caught my attention as I read over the bent shoulders of my students – a nascent power of expression I had never before encountered in their day-to-day school writing.

With the blue moon shifting beneath opera white clouds, writes Kayla[1], *I linger between back alleys with only the clunky of my black-eyed boots and a code red scarf around my under face.*[2]

It's like being chased by a spy through the city streets, writes another boy and then he begins to draw that very drama – a night sky dropping like a black cloak between blocky city skyscrapers, a shadowy figure lurking, the glint of a knife, a gruesome drip of blood at its tip (Work Journal, 2003).

Master wordsmith George Steiner (1997) uses the word *collision* in the above quote advisedly. *Collision* connotes an unavoidable, sudden, perhaps violent, but certainly forceful, encounter and, as used here, between the aesthetic and perception. In such a powerful encounter, emotion must be inevitable and whatever it is that follows on the heels of realized emotions usually seeks a way for tangible expression (Dewey, 1934; Micciche, 2007; Lewis & Tierney, 2011). What if it were possible, as an educator, to create and utilize such moments of energy? How would such moments create meaning and conversation, and strengthen the classroom community? How would individual strengths grow? How would such energy enable minds to experience "the imaginings of self in worlds of action" (Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, and Cain, 1998, p.5)? What would that look like? These are the questions motivating my research into an investigation of imagination as discovered within the teaching and learning of my rural middle school classroom.

Imagination is not a forgotten relic from Romantic thinkers (Frein, 1997; Egan, 1990a; Eagleton, 1983). It is a contemporary element of critical discussion and debate. Imagination

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[1] All student names are pseudonyms.

[2] All pieces of student writing within this dissertation are presented without editing. Spelling and punctuation appear as originally written.

haunts the intersection of policy and American schooling. Viewed from one perspective it is the quintessential element of learning design (Eisner, 2002; Dewey, 1934; Vygotsky, 2004) and from another, it is the foundation necessary for the creation of unique items having value in a democratic society (Greene, 2002; Egan and Nadaner, 1988; Warnock, 1976; Dewey, 1934; Vygotsky, 2004). In my rural middle school classroom events of the imagination quietly happen and in the bigger world discussions erupt in contentious fervor around the value of imagination. A look at some of these current conversations provides a global snapshot to position my research study within the context of policy and schooling. These debates highlight for me the importance of my research topic.

Central to the findings of the *9/11 Commission Report* (2004) is the topic of imagination. In the opinion of some of the authors of this report, it was a "failure of imagination" and a "mind-set that dismissed possibilities" (p.336) that was to blame for America's failure to defend against the attack on the Twin Towers. The Report goes on to suggest the crucial need to "institutionalize imagination" (p.346). This, the authors argue, is necessary to address "policy challenges [that are] linked to the problem of imagination" (p.349). Imagination, as problematized in the Commission Report becomes the critical element for not merely imagining possibilities, but also for formulating a response and carrying out that response. If it does not do all this, the Report suggests, imagination fails. In other words, imagination, beginning in an interiorized form, fails unless it becomes an action in the world.

Challenging such a failure, President Obama in his January, 2011 State of the Union address declared, "The first step in winning the future is encouraging American innovation." President Obama continues, "What we can do – what America does better than anyone else -- is spark the creativity and imagination of our people. We're the nation that put cars in driveways

and computers in offices; the nation of Edison and the Wright brothers; Google and Facebook. In America innovation doesn't just change our lives. It is how we make our living." Imagination is thus declared the missing link to economic power in the United States.

Highlighting a response to this Presidential challenge, the Lincoln Center Institute (LCI), the educational arm of the Lincoln Center of Performing Arts in New York City, points to its publication *Findings of the Imagination Conversations: The Lessons of a Two Year National Initiative* (Noppe-Brandon, Deasy, & Gitter, 2011). Begun in 2009, these conversations took place as a series of public panel discussions with leaders from diverse professional backgrounds. The results of these discussions, argue the authors, show that people from multiple professions clearly view imagination, creativity, and innovation central, if not crucial, to their work. LCI argues "imagination, creativity, and innovation constitute a progression … in which *imagination* is the foundation that prompts, and is continuously engaged in, creative and innovative activity" (p.5, italics original). Thus, imagination is an essential ingredient to successful work becoming relevant to educational policy influenced by job market demands.

On the New York Times Opinion page, Martha Nussbaum (2010) wonders if innovation and imagination are so critical to the global advancement of our culture and our economy, why is the United States moving away from the humanities? Especially, she argues, when "nations such as China and Singapore, which previously ignored the humanities, are now aggressively promoting them, because they have concluded that the cultivation of the imagination through the study of literature, film, and other arts is essential to fostering creativity and innovation." Following on this observation, Disney (2012) announces it will donate $1.6 million to support the United Nations Children Fund and China's Ministry of Education for a project aimed at " improving the quality of children's education and creativity in remote areas of the country"

(Zhuoqiong, 2012). Jay Rasula, senior executive vice-president and chief financial officer of the Walt Disney Co. states, "We at Disney believe it is critical to harness the power of creativity to help children and families improve their communities and create the future they imagine" (Noppe-Brandon, 2012). In America at the same time as the humanities are shunted aside imagination becomes a globally sought commodity.

Taking imagination and schooling into global conversations is the Imaginative Education Research Group (IERG) founded in 2001 by the faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, Canada. They claim international membership for their efforts in defining, researching and defending what they term *Imaginative Education* (IE). On their website they claim, "The change we want to bring about [in the way schooling is conceived worldwide] may be broadly summarized as a transition from an industrial age school system to a post-industrial system: from a system that attempts to squeeze people and thoughts into standardized boxes, often to the detriment of originality and adaptability, to a system that enables the unusual and effective to flourish whenever possible" (IERG, 2012). Little is written about imagination, they warn, and very little research has been conducted on the topic as it emerges into schooling practices.

In this new international arena calling for more attention to imagination where do we teach it? On his blog *Applied Imagination* Steven Dahlberg (2008) writes, "The imagination is not merely the domain of arts classrooms and artists. It is a fundamental human urge that taps into our capacity to create and our desire to express ourselves". The authors of the Newsweek Magazine article "Creativity Crisis," agree. "Researchers," they write, "say creativity should be taken out of the artroom and put into the homeroom" (Bronson and Merryman, 2010). How will such an agenda become possible within the current standardized learning environments?

Professionals gathered at Teachers College, Columbia University for a symposium entitled "Creativity, Imagination and Innovation in Education" set out to discuss and debate the importance of what they termed "ubiquitous creativity" (2011). In other words, the architects of this symposium, following tenets described by both Dewey and Greene, believe creativity to exist in the realm of all people, not refined exclusively in the practice of artists. A declaration on the poster advertising the event asserts "creativity to be a democratic imperative of exceptional importance to knowledge-oriented societies and to all disciplines" (2011). Margaret Crocco, one of the symposium leaders, stated in an interview," While the accountability movement has brought some measure of equity to schools… it also has produced a climate in schools inimical to divergent thinking and creativity" (Wilson, 2010, p.58). Imagination is encouraged to come out of the art rooms, but there is no guarantee, because of the strictures of standardized climates in schools, that it will find a home in other classrooms.

Within these conversations I discern several important, conflicted themes being championed. Imagination, in these snapshots, is viewed as an important economic commodity in the world and a vital personal asset in work. Its growth, many believe, should be addressed in schools where curriculum is currently exclusionary to such pursuits. I find these themes reflect an instinct toward valuing imagination, but remain conflicted in just how to go about it. The research I present here uncovers the centrality of imagination at work in adolescent literacy events. I want to call attention to imagination as possibility -- an action in the world. In this work, I will identify imagination as something central to processes of teaching and learning because somewhere, outside these contexts of debate and discussion, an eighth grade girl sits at her classroom desk creating spontaneous images like the "clunky" of "black-eyed boots" and "code red scarf." Is she writing about a heart attack? The scarf goes around the poet's "under

face" -- lies? a disguise? an outlaw? – does it matter? Yes it does. It matters because this is an example of imagination attempting to become an action in the world. Kayla composes to make palpable the images she feels in the way she interprets them (Berthoff, 1982; DiPardo, 1990; Fleckenstein, 1991, 2004). Never in my classroom has any worksheet or textbook informing a student about metaphor or connotation ever produced such vivid language. "Strength lies in improvisation," Walter Benjamin (1968, p. 65) tells us and my eighth graders were proving their improvisational strengths before my very eyes as they created their response to Duke Ellington -- music all of them were hearing for the very first time in their lives.

Background

Forming the context for my investigation into imagination is the jazz and writing unit I taught for seven years in my eighth grade language arts classroom. In Chapter III, I discuss in greater detail the progression and history of this unit. Here I set down only an outline of some events in order to pinpoint pivotal decisions that would come to influence major insights into my study.

In 2002 I began to prepare a unique unit that I decided to call Jazz Biographies[3]. As I began to put together the material, it quickly became apparent to me that if my students only studied the people of jazz on a one dimensional white page of black written words, they would only be getting half the story -- and maybe not even the best half. I strongly felt that the rest of the story could only be found in listening to the music itself and making a connection with it. We had to do it. It wouldn't be a full picture unless we did. I decided to use the music itself as

[3] Later this title changes into the *jazz and writing unit* becoming the most common way I identify this unit in my research.

an organizational force in designing the unit. We would travel the jazz timeline from the sounds of the roots of jazz to Fusion. We would do both: story and sound.

In looking back on this decision I see it as pivotal. From a pencil and paper, text conforming study, the music ignited the process I would come to investigate. The decision to use the music meant that I would be accommodating another dimension to the learning experience, one aesthetic in nature and very unfamiliar to my students. We could no longer be passive observers because we would have to engage with the music. It would be there in the learning space with us, a palpable, audible presence. In the parlance of Louis Armstrong we would be *struttin' with some barbecue*. The real revelation of what was in store, however, did not happen until we actually began listening to the first lessons. I recorded what happened in my reflection journal:

> *This unit has the potential to spark writing in the kids. We listened to Blind Lemon Jefferson today and [Katie] remarked how his voice sounded thin as though he were singing from far away. The poor quality of the recording sounded to her like a "snowstorm" (October, 2002, all student names pseudomonas).*

Later, Katie wrote this poem about Blind Lemon Jefferson:

They loved to hear you sing.
In person your voice was big
not thin and far away
the way I hear it on the record.
The mystery is why
you went out into the snow storm
and why
the night froze
your voice
forever.[4]

[4] See Appendix A for samples of handwritten student work.

Georgia Heard (1999) reminds us that poetry can "help our students open their eyes to the beauty of the earth, restore a belief in the power of language, and help them begin to understand the truths inside them" (p. xviii). Before listening to his music I told the students a story about Blind Lemon Jefferson. My story revolved around a few dramatic biographical details of the musician's life. I described him as the most popular male blues singer of the 1920's. In hushed tones I described his mysterious death in a snowstorm in Chicago at the height of his career. I ended my story with the image of his disappearance from public memory. No one today knows who he is (or at least you don't unless you are a jazz/blues aficionado). The storytelling component of each lesson became signature in this unit. I found the delight of telling a story to my students out weighing the drudgery of reading scripted paragraphs of details. Other reasons for maintaining the story telling component eventually surfaced, but I would come to regard this decision as the second pivotal choice. The storytelling introduced an element of live performance, a drama providing yet another aesthetic avenue for learning (Egan, 1989; Dyson and Genishi, 1994; Roney, 1996). Did Katie's powerful poem about Blind Lemon Jefferson happen because she was intrigued by the story of his mysterious death and created the analogy in her imagination of the recording sounding like a snowstorm? To me it was an interesting possibility.

This is the only piece of writing I have from that first year of the jazz and writing unit, but the writing continued in the following years as I built on and developed this study. From discussions and responses to listening to the jazz, I began to develop little fragmentary writing assignments I called *riff writing*. I borrow the term *riff* from the musical concept of a short, repeated figure that creates a strong rhythm setting the foundation for improvisation (Clark, 2001, p. 134). Like musical riffs these fragments of writing seemed produced from equally

elusive moments of connection with story and music. At first the riff writing happened spontaneously and off the cuff and then later I began to deliberately set about framing them within the context of the study, creating a specific space for them to happen, leading up to a moment when they could become. The students continued to write the riff pieces as well as longer pieces, which incorporated language or ideas from the riffs. Their writing was inventive, metaphorical, meanings were layered, and, above all, I began to see how their writing contained a high element of feeling (Langer, 1953; Reichling, 2004), where feeling is considered to be a broader consideration under which emotion, as mediated, embodied response (Micciche, 2007; Fleckenstein, 2003) may follow. Interpreting Langer's notion of feeling, Reichling (2004) writes, "What is expressed [in form] is not always an emotion, but may be a feeling of vitality, energy, quietness, or a feeling of spaciousness, expansiveness, peace, solitude or a sense of humor" (p.21).

Blind Lemon Jefferson continued to take his place on stage, only I began to be more deliberate in my storytelling in bringing out the circumstances of his life and the students listened to more of his songs. He continued to inspire poetry. Here is a Blind Lemon poem written by a student in 2004:

Blind Lemon Jefferson

You walk along
Chicago's bickering, neon streets
but know tropical beaches
in early mornings
as the sun rises over the Pacific

lost in thought
your memories haunted by musical dust
horns; splashing, crunching, cracking
drums; barking, beating, pouncing

is it the waves or a distant memory

clouds overhead play tricks
stirring magical memories
of warm tropical evenings

when guitar notes zing and zap and swish
as you picked and picked and picked

fans cheer
in the warm tropics of night

remembering the taste of salt
from the ocean
and the hot sand burning your feet

trying to remember any warm thoughts
as the cold wind blows off the Lake
and the snow swirls in the air
and the ice collects under your nose

thinking warm, as you try to stay warm
as you huddle in a corner away from the wind.

Illustrating moments of feeling we take the perspective of Blind Lemon and experience the busy, conflicted, peaceful, and desolate spaces of big city, tropical paradise, snowstorm and sound. This poem reveals empathy and connection as the poet directly addresses Blind Lemon as though he were present in conversation.

Eventually, the study of jazz and writing transformed into something where composition, like the music itself, pushed traditional modes of written expression into invention and seemed to resonate with strong emotion. This inspired me to formalize an investigation into what might be going on in this unit conducive of imaginative work. With six years of experience with the jazz and writing unit influencing my thinking, in the spring semester of 2009, I applied for IRB approval to gather the writing of my current students in preparation for a closer examination of this event. Approval was given allowing me to collect writings in the jazz unit from the final three weeks of the 2009 school year.

Purpose

2009, the last year in which I taught the jazz and writing unit, my students created the metaphor of the *blue note*. We spontaneously discovered the blue note one day listening to Blind Lemon. We identified a blue note as a characteristic sound in jazz and as being the presence of a note that didn't really exist. Like the non-presence of a ghost, the blue note captivated the interest of my students. As we continued to explore its use in jazz music we came to understand the blue note as a specialized sound that did not own a specific place on diatonic scales of music. As a conceptual metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) the blue note came to encompass various elements for us. For the students it was the thing they might craft in a piece of writing that created emotional resonance, or a uniqueness, or spontaneous, unplanned effect. Sometimes the blue note was surprise, other times it was cultivated. For me, the blue note metaphor came to signify the search for the imagination, the wandering and bricolage techniques I would come to employ to find and mark my way through this research.

The blue note then, is a manifestation in this study of how a concept of imagination percolates into *an* Experience (Dewey, 1934), an "individualizing quality and self-sufficiency" transformative in nature (p.37). My investigation into this becomes a story of teaching as well as learning when, impossibly, such action in the world as this unit generated, infiltrated a regimented, 42-minute, standardized tests-next-week public school classroom. "Teach students to be … adventurers… to develop an inner journey that is engaged, educative, and leads out to an intellectual life" is the message sent to us by Gatto (quoted by Gitlin, 2005, p. 22). Gitlin calls for a "deep politic" -- an action within teaching and learning paradigms placing imagination as central to a quest to "redefine normative categories, traditional images, and forms of socialization" (p. 16). My research as presented here explores such action and seeks to

illuminate notions of adventurous teaching and learning (Cohen, 1988) as I encountered them. I peer through a lens of aesthetic experience (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002; Greene, 2001) in order to see how imagination requires engagement and active participation (Vygotsky,2004) attendant within the dynamic of situated literacy (Gee, 2004; Street, 1995, Barton,Hamilton, & Ivanic 2000).

This dissertation uses writing as a process of discovery, a creative analytic practice (Richardson, 1994) and through collaboration, a "mutual storytelling and restorying" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). I tap into the search for an understanding of imagination within the complex processes of literacy involved in both teaching and learning in my middle school language arts classroom. My study is based primarily upon writings and drawings produced by my rural, eighth-grade students as they engaged with a unit on jazz and writing. Dewey's theories of aesthetic experience (1934), Vygotsky's notions of imagination (1931, 1978, 2004), and Langer's scholarship on the symbolic mind (1953, 1970) provide the pool of theoretical resources from which I selectively draw to ignite my thinking. My initial research into the nature of imagination as it links with literacy was formulated into three broad areas of investigation:

1) Expressive responses -- primarily constructed through poetry-- to unfamiliar territory (i.e. jazz, historical background and culture different from the modern Midwestern experience of adolescents, using music to create the structures of composition) became primary artifacts and touchstones of the experience.

2) Feeling (Langer, 1953) mediated through aesthetic experiences (Dewey, 1934) is the dynamic powering participation, production, and transformation.
3) Improvisation as it relates to a concept of adventurous teaching and learning (Cohen, 1988) provides a platform for participation.

My research is grounded in sociocultural perspectives of literacy (Barton and Hamilton, 2000) engaged in aesthetic paradigms of learning because both arenas foreground the dynamic of imagination central to my investigation. From this perspective, I take of note my students as they participate in collaborative activities characteristic of the jazz and writing unit I am investigating and pay attention to the ways they internalize the experience of working together to create new understandings of the world in which they live. I argue that it is the dynamic of imagination that transform those understandings into powerful presences and action in the world in the form of their writing.

Another aspect of Vygotsky's thinking central in my study is his understanding that the potentials of what students bring to the experience of learning, as well as the broader cultural and historical contexts shaping the interaction are influential to the achievement of learning (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003). This view allows me to see the interstices between teacher and student, and teacher, student, and curriculum. I take the notion of affinity spaces of learning (Gee, 2004, 2005) understood as common spaces of interaction allowing for unique individual movement in a shared social journey to collapse the traditional restrictive dichotomies of teacher/ student and student/curriculum. In this theme, Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development traditionally understood as an less informed student tutored by a more knowledgeable other,

becomes a zone of possibilities characterized instead by shifting roles of engagement and participation as collaboration (John-Steiner, 2000).

Paring the theoretical perspectives of Vygotsky with Dewey's work in aesthetic experience has been instrumental in helping me to understand how thinking is the internalization of processes of social interaction. Dewey's discussion of the aesthetic dimension of learning in *Art as Experience* (1934) provoked me into shaking the notion of imagination as a static concept and mere umbrella to other concepts of creativity and innovation, into regarding imagination as an operational mode of participatory experience.

My research uncovers unique spaces of possibility forming within the normative or traditional schooling structures. Specifically, a unit of study centering on the music of jazz to influence writing both structurally and poetically, becomes the space of possibility pushing aside the traditional curriculum of short answer worksheets or five paragraph essays. I will show how dimensions of engagement and participation within this new space of possibility operate differently than those in a traditional experience where knowledge travels a linear trajectory from teacher to student and understanding is solidified in prepackaged chunks. I discover this new space of possibility as porous and flexible. Here learning dissolves and reforms, generating transformations of understanding. Therefore, I take the notion of *folding* as a conceptual metaphor indicating that the interiority of the imagination is only a fold of the exteriority of imaginative action. I will develop this notion further in my discussion of methodology in Chapter III.

It is within this context that my pursuit of imagination as a dynamic of active engagement takes form. As I dig deeper into the stories of the jazz and writing unit I will begin to shape a

specific insight into adolescent literacy that is dependent on an understanding of imagination as an emotionally textured, experientially complex dynamic crucial to both teaching and learning.

Research Questions

For Eisner (2002) outcomes of arts-based learning experiences dealing with increases in self-esteem or enjoyment of self-expression, while important, are not the primary justifications for engagement in the arts. He argues there are distinctive outcomes such as "the communication of distinctive forms of meaning … development of distinctive forms of thinking… and the provision of aesthetic experience" (p.234), taking precedent in evaluations of importance. Eisner argues that when pursuing arts-based learning experiences, the "setting is filled with opportunities for learning that are not necessarily a part of the formal agenda of the field but are nevertheless important" (p.235). It is the nature of that setting and those opportunities I set out to explore in this dissertation. Conflicting ideas, as to the value and purpose of the imagination and its place within school as illustrated earlier in the global snapshots, attend this investigation. They give rise to the critical edge defining my research. It is my intention to explore the relationship of classroom literacy practices in an arts-based writing experience with the interiorized imagination of adolescent student writers. These goals helped to define my initial research questions:

- How does aesthetic experience influence approaches to writing and thinking?
- In what way is the writing produced in this class used, manipulated, or appropriated to create personalized spaces of expression?
    - How do students move in and out of those spaces?
    - How are we changed within these spaces and what changes us?

My investigation deepens in the following chapters. Chapter II is a review of literature exploring defining qualities of imagination and American schooling. Chapter III is a presentation of methodology followed by data Chapters IV –VII. My dissertation concludes in Chapter VIII with final thoughts and questions in the continuing evolution of my own understanding on the nature of imagination in my teaching practice.

CHAPTER II
INVESTIGATIVE FOUNDATIONS: IMAGINATION AND SCHOOLING
A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature defines a territory of imagination applicable to the research presented in this dissertation. While I do not search for a concrete definition of what the imagination is, I discover in this review characteristics of the imagination emerging from 19th century Romantic thinkers. These characteristics are taken up within contemporary discourse of teaching and learning valuing imagination. In this review I encounter three broad characteristics: experience, emotion, and possibility. Consideration of these defining qualities of imagination provides an investigative foundation for my data.

This is a highly personalized search through an extremely broad topic. What I pay attention to here are those ideas that seem to directly impact my experiences with imagination within the jazz and writing unit and what influences my interpretive perspective in my examination of data later in this dissertation. In pursuing these goals I examine a specific concept of imagination rising from the roots of Romantic idealism and how that is sometimes reflected within contemporary schooling discourse. In the following sections I provide an overview of the characteristics of imagination inherited from Romantic scholars and poets, followed by a discussion of imagination derived from these definitions interpreted in public schooling discourse, and a final section on emotion and imagination as defined in the aesthetic philosophy of Susanne Langer.

Characteristics of the Imagination from Romantic Idealism

I find an interesting place to begin my investigation of imagination in the intellectual turning point between mechanized Enlightenment ideas and evolutionary processes of Romantic idealism (Mead, 1936). Mead writes: “Passing … over to the

Romantic idealists, we proceed from a conception of static forms which are originally given … to an idea of the development of the forms through a process…" (p. 153). There are key words here that I find relevant to my study of imagination: *development*, *process* and *forms*. Once I understand how these key words relate within the definitions of imagination as viewed by the Romantics, I begin to understand defining qualities of imagination I discover within my research. Studying this quote changed my understanding of imagination completely. Originally viewing imagination as a capability of invention, I now begin to view imagination as an operational mode of participation engaged in a process of shaping self and reality through interaction with both. I discover as I continue to unpack this quote, important connections to Vygotsky's (2004) theories of adolescent imagination and Langer's (1953) aesthetic theory unifying form and feeling. This is complex territory and a comprehensive understanding extends well beyond the scope of what is beneficial to achieve here. I confine my discussion to main points and attempt to connect each section with my study as I summarize.

Of myriad concepts of the imagination, one has found its way into the mainstream discourses of public schooling and claims a legacy from the Romanic idealism of 19th century poets and philosophers such as Coleridge, Wordsworth, Emerson, and Schelling (Frein, 1997; Egan, 1990b; Willinsky, 1990, Eagleton, 1983). Romantic idealism came to value imagination as associated with the sublime and a sense of awe (Richards, 1936), experiences of beauty, creativity, (Frein,1996) and as a powerful force organizing reality. As indicated in Mead's quote above, Romanic idealism recognized a dynamic concept of mind in relationship to the world that was participatory, not dualistic as proposed in Cartesian models of the rational Enlightenment (Mead, 1936). In turn, this concept of mind supported the notion of imagination as a capacity to organize experience into forms – such as the forms of time, space, reason or understanding. For the Romantic idealists "forms arose in the very process of experience" (p. 154).

Experience is a cornerstone for Romantic idealism and becomes an important characteristic of imagination implicated in my study. This characteristic can be found in contemporary discussions of imagination as well, specifically those connected to education (Dewey, 1934; Greene, 1985; Eisner, 2002; Vygotsky, 2004). Following the point made by Mead, imagination as viewed by the Romantics is strengthened through experiences. This is how imagination becomes a participatory process. Maxine Greene (1985), echoing this notion writes, "… imagination is the capacity to create new orders of experience … open new possibilities … disclose alternative realities" (p.167). John Dewey (1934) puts it this way:

> *"For while the roots of every experience are found in the interaction of a live creature with its environment, that experience becomes conscious, a matter of perception, only when meanings enter it that are derived from prior experiences. Imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings can find their way into a present interaction…" (p. 272).*

The notion of experience being foundational to the processes of imagination is important to Vygotsky's (2004) theory of imagination as well. He writes:

"…the creative activity of the imagination depends directly on the richness and variety of a person's previous experience because this experience provides the material from which the products of fantasy are constructed. The richer a person's experience, the richer is the material his imagination has access to. This is why a child has a less rich imagination than an adult, because his experience has not been as rich" (p.15).

Emotion as a dynamic of experience becomes a second distinct characteristic of imagination. Mary Warnock (1978), British philosopher of education, morality, and mind, identifies the significant importance in the emergence of the imagination as it is connected with emotion. Emotion becomes part of the creation of experience in a critical and specific way. Warnock writes: "If we create the idea vividly, then *in so doing* we

experience the imaginative emotion" (p. 206, italics in original). In arguing merits of Wordsworth's poetry in connection with notions of imagination, John Stuart Mills writes that imaginative emotion as "'an idea, when vividly conceived, excites in us not an illusion but a fact, as real as any other qualities of objects'" (quoted in Warnock p. 206). Imaginative emotion has "intrinsic value" to endure long after the encounter itself fades.

For the Romantics the imagination becomes a creative faculty shaping the perceived world and relies on emotion to accomplish this (Schenk, 1969). This is the process most employed by artists especially the poets of the Romantic era such as Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Emerson. This is experience of a specialized nature, which results from encounters with the arts. Eisner (2002), Langer (1953), Vygotsky (1971), Dewey (1934) and others argue that such encounters begin to create a resonance of feeling within both the audience and the artist as creator, indicative and evocative of a concept of the mind embracing imagination as an active function in the process of making meaning.

Eisner (2002) and Gardner (1993) advocate a way into this understanding through consideration of the acts and processes of artists as they pursue their craft. If we step into this territory and consider the practice of artists, much as we discuss the processes of scientists in teaching students how to *do science*, we find arguments legitimizing the role of art, and by extension, employing a concept of the imagination that supports the processes of artistic creation. An interesting example of this thinking is demonstrated by Herbert Read. He believed that education at its best should be conceptualized as the preparation of artists, (Miller, 1973). His early theorizing in aesthetics came about when he unexpectedly became involved with the paintings of children as he collected them for an exhibition during WWII. Read was unexpectedly moved by the expressive power of these pieces and their emotional content. He was also intrigued to discover what he identified an archetypal content of many of the paintings.

Already known for his breadth of understanding in the world of avant-garde art, Read began to see a connection between the unconscious creating of the children and the more difficult and often emotionally devastating working of the adult avant-garde artists he wrote about. His encounters led him to speculate that images originate in collective experiences and create correspondences in shared realities. Similarly, the Romantics endeavored to "reconstruct in imagination the distinctive inner life of people remote in time or space or cultural condition" (Lovejoy, p.293). As Mead explains (1936), the turn was toward the experience of self, the reflexive experience whereby an individual "realizes himself in so far as, in some sense, he sees himself, hears himself" (p.163). This self experience is dynamic and is inherently a process of a subject-object relationship. Read formulated a central premise in his writings on archetypal images produced by children that supported the view of education serving the purpose of fostering the growth of what is individual in each student while at the same time harmonizing that individuality with the social group to which the individual was part. This is the operational mode of participation of imagination.

Eagleton (1983) identifies the facet of the Romantic imagination connected to aesthetics as educationally important. Imagination, he points out, is nurtured and developed by beauty and the creation of things of beauty. Literature and poetry is a direct legacy from Romantic thinking. In this way, argues Egan (1992), imagination has come to belong to the arts when considered within schooling discourse.

A sense of possibility, a breaking away from formalism and opposition to standardized thinking, becomes a third characteristic of imagination. In addition to the turn away from stasis and form preceding experience and towards a process of experience creating its own forms, Romantics took another turn away from Enlightenment thinking. According to Lovejoy (1936) the Enlightenment was "an age devoted ... to the simplification and standardization of thought and life" (p.292). From the Romantics we get a different view. Romantics, with a focus on art saw the aesthetic as antithetical to

standardization. Romantic thinkers placed a high valuation on originality, the peculiarities of individuals and diversity, the grotesque, and heroic individualism (Lovejoy, 1936).

Mead (1936) describes the mechanical, scientific concept of the world – from Newton and his descriptions of mass and motion – as limited to identifying forms but unable to give any explanation of the forms or relationship between them. For the Romantics, however, the imagination enabled the ability to perceive the universal in the particular, to see objects as symbols "which have power to embody meaning and feeling and point to some meaning beyond" (Harpur, 2007).

Willinsky (1990) notes Romanticism can be understood as a cultural movement transpiring in the historically troubled time in European history during the last decades of the eighteenth century and the opening decades of the nineteenth century. Romanticism spanned the time between Enlightenment's "cult of reason" and the "brutal triumph" of industrialization, the American and French Revolutions and the Napoleonic wars. Willinsky argues that Romanticism is "a child of social ferment and reaction born of a revolutionary age" (p.1). Frein (1996) traces the legacy of the Romantics and shows how they came to position the imagination within revolutionary moral, aesthetic, and political practices.

This attitude is taken up by the Romantic poets. For writers such as Coleridge (Richards, 1965) imagination was an active faculty of mind. Frein (1996) argues, as an ideological tool imagination could be used against neo-classical poetics and aesthetics. It challenged the status of *reason* as a primary intellectual virtue, and the tyrannical governmental and religious traditions. This concept of the imagination is found within the landscape of public schooling today as a transfigured remnant from the imagination of Romantic idealism. Frein argues this revolutionary aspect of the imagination was utilized by twentieth century educational scholars and reformers who were looking for a "powerful weapon in the war against traditional education" (p.5). In this vein imagination

was conceived as a key to morality and creativity and was the argument for the inclusion of the arts and literature in the classroom.

I have discovered three broad characteristics of imagination as handed down from Romantic idealism viewing imagination as a process of experience creating forms in operational modes of participation. First, imagination depends on and is enriched by experience. Second, strong emotion is a source of aesthetic experience. And third, imagination is the dynamic of possibility working in opposition to standardized modes of thinking. These characteristics are complicated and deeply embedded in complex ways within the philosophy, writing, and art of the European and German Romantic traditions. How will I be able to discover them within the jazz and writing unit? In order to answer that question, I turn to discussions relating these characteristics of the imagination specifically to schooling practices.

Imagination and Schooling

In my experience in conversations with education colleagues, imagination is readily assumed to be a talent or skill that should potentially be cultivated within the learning area. I regarded it in much the same way prior to my investigation of Mead's writings. As I said before, once we understand imagination as a process that develops through interaction with the world, it changes much of our thinking.

I turn to Vygotsky to illuminate this topic. His work, *Imagination and Creativity in Childhood* appeared in English translation in 2004 in the Journal of Russian and East European Psychology. *Imagination and Creativity of the Adolescent* appeared as Chapter 12 of Vygotsky's *Adolescent Pedagogy* in 1931. This chapter had been heavily abridged and the English translation created from that abridged version. Gajdamaschko (2006) provides a summary and research focus on Vygotsky's theories concerning the development of imagination based on her readings of the original work.

Foundational to Vygotsky's stance on imagination is an understanding of his view of the development of imagination and how it differed from others such as Piaget (Gajdamaschko, 2006; Armstrong, 2000; Bruner, 1986). Theorists such as Piaget stress the "unconscious, or semi conscious, autistic, spontaneous characteristics of imagination that play out in childhood conflict" (Gajdamaschko, 2006, p.36). Imagination in this view is a stable capacity that does not change over time and is unconnected to intellectual development. Vygotsky considered the imagination to be an active, conscious process of meaning making.

Imagination in Vygotsky's view is not separate from a child's cultural development or from their intellectual abilities (Gajdamaschko, 2006). He also described a "link between the development of imagination and the processes of learning-teaching" (p.34). Imagination in Vygotsky's theory is closely connected to language development. Vygotsky, viewing language as "an agent for altering the powers of thought" (Bruner, 1986, p.143), stresses the importance of the connection between imagination and conceptual thought. Vygotsky (1998) wrote, "the imagination of an adolescent enters a close connection with thinking in concepts; it is intellectualized and included in the system of intellectual activity and begins to fulfill a completely new function in the new structure of the adolescent's personality" (quoted in Gajdamaschko, 2006, p. 36).

Vygotsky (2004) makes four main points about the imagination. First is the notion that imagination has a combinatorial nature. Second is his point that the processes of imagination are different in adolescence then in childhood. Third, as I have already mentioned, creative activity of the imagination depends on rich and varied experiences. And fourth, imagination must seek a way to become active in the world. Vygotsky terms this "crystallized" imagination and it is, in his estimate, one of the important factors to allow for in adolescent imagination. These were the four main points I drew from as I progressed through my research. I will elaborate on them more specifically in the chapters of data where I describe the context in which they become applicable.

As we can begin to see, imagination in Vygotsky's view is a critical, complex process of experience, not just a talent or skill. This, however, does not appear to be the imagination we encounter in the public school classroom. In reading Frein (1997) I discover the notion that placing the imagination in an educational domain that views imagination "as a kind of mental skill" is the taking of a last step away from the "revolutionary vision of the Romantics toward an imagination that is ideologically neutral and de-polarized" (120). This is an important insight in that it can explain how concepts of the imagination have become diffused and confused and why attitudes toward such a concept are ambivalent.

The *skilling* of the imagination is the result of early experimental psychology and psychoanalysis endowing the concept of the imagination with empirical status (Frein, 1996). No longer the imagination of the Romantics, what we now encounter is an imagination of "mental 'constructs,' abstract and 'horizontal' thinking, a meaning found in the relationships between the developing mind and the environment" (126). Frein argues that it is in this way that empirical psychology has reduced the pedagogy of imagination to "questions of *how* – how to build, engage, expand. Questions of *why* and *for what purpose* are largely left unraised and unanswered" (127).

In this paradigm of education, make-believe activities, those instances of learning where children are exhorted to *use your imagination* or *be creative*, represent our schooled efforts to include the ideologically neutral and de-politicized version of the imagination (Frein, 1996). Frein claims, "Educators are fairly comfortable praising, encouraging, and accepting the display of imagination in younger children" and notes the relative absence of talk about the imagination in the school setting circulating around adolescents and young adults where there manifests dangers of imagining behaviors labeled deviant or at least socially unacceptable. "On one level the imagination poses a threat to moral and ethical boundaries drawn by previous generations. It also poses a threat to political and economic boundaries" (p.198).

Imagination as a foundational concept of making meaning has become firmly embedded in arts curriculum and pedagogies sustained by theories of arts based education. While much has been written in the philosophies and research domains of aesthetic education, I focus on the work of two major proponents and voices. Maxine Green and Elliot Eisner discuss aspects of the aesthetic as it functions within paradigms of learning.

In numerous books and articles, philosopher and educational theorist Maxine Greene, calls for a type of aesthetic education containing a transformative quality leading to understandings of moral responsibility (1988, 1995, 2000). Greene maintains that the goals of education should be to assist students to develop a deep empathetic understanding of their connection to the world and their responsibility not only for their individual experiences but also for those of other human beings in the world (2001). For Greene imagination, connected specifically to emotional processes, is the key.

Greene -- following Dewey (1934) and later echoed by Eisner (2002) --points to a distinction between *aesthetic* education and *anesthetic* experience. *Aesthetic* education is characterized by a transformative consciousness requiring a consummatory experience (Eisner, 2002). *An Anesthetic* experience is one characterized by a void of critical thinking, a situation believed both by Greene and Eisner to exist indigenously in the standardized environments of rote learning.

For Greene, the process that will be responsible for sustaining human freedom and democratic forms of education, is the one in which is found "the capacity to surpass the given and look at things as if they could be otherwise" (1988, p.3). This notion seems to be an echo of Romantic notions of imagination as explored by the Romantic poets such as Coleridge in his poem *Kubla Khan* working to make the familiar strange through the use of metaphor in order to create new meaning. Egan (1992) argues there is a "prevailing rather diffuse support for developing imagination in education [that is] largely restricted to the arts, with an anemic support for novelty in some other curriculum

areas" (45). Novelty in this sense is understood as being the something strange, which emerges into the learning environment as a catalyst for learning. Greene takes up this aspect of unfamiliarity with a slightly more complex understanding. In Greene, we discover this concept working within a moral framework utilizing a process of libratory imagination.

Britzman (1998), demonstrating a close kinship with Greene and the notion of a libratory imagination, wants us to agree with Greene in seeing a concept of the imagination as "a method, one that insists that neither the structure and dreams of schooling nor the desires of those who live there can be exhumed from their cultural arguments" (56). In her discussion, Britzman extends an "invitation to think, the invitation to imagine" as she links acts of schooling and imagination with emotion in a "theory of love and hate in learning" (10).

Britzman's exploration here adds a counterpoint to Greene's (1988) assertion to educators to "see more beyond the classroom spaces where they do their work" into spaces where educators can enable "the young to summon up (or invent, or imagine) alternative possibilities for themselves" and to ponder their "being in the world." Britzman's notion of the role of teachers and learners encompasses notions of individuals not only living within larger social contexts, but also realizing that those contexts are often conflictive as is the internal self. Britzman's claim is that education should be considered a "frontier concept" (4); that is, a place on the horizon of possibility and also a space of lawlessness, conflicted ideologies, and internal tensions governing the actions of every individual. I will find this notion tying in to concepts of adventurous teaching I explore later in this dissertation.

Eisner (2002) also positions the arts within schools and discusses the manner in which they can contribute to the "growth of mind" (p.22). Eisner claims that meaningful work in creating images – visually, choreographically, musically, poetically, or with literary texts – requires the engagement of complex and subtle forms of thinking

(xii). Importantly, and vitally, these forms must also connect to feeling if they are going to be of cognitive significance. "To be able to create a form of experience that can be regarded as aesthetic requires a mind that animates our imaginative capacities and that promotes our ability to undergo emotionally pervaded experience" (xii).

Eisner (2002) argues for the notion of connoisseurship. During important times when the narrowing of concerns into instrumental outcomes threatens to overtake us what is required, he argues, is an insightful ability to replace complacent labeling and categorizing. Eisner suggests the fostering of an ability to place our experiences and understandings in a wider context, to connect with our values and commitment. Connoisseurship, he suggests, involves the ability to see not just look, to appreciate different dimensions in situations and experiences and to understand the ways they relate. This sort of approach, according to Eisner, involves artistry not a technical service. He argues that in all areas of curricular design distinctive forms of thinking are relevant. Eisner wants to discuss how a conception of educational practice – thinking and doing -- rooted in the arts differs in fundamental ways from the current climate favoring forms of standardization. Eisner (2002) argues for a reframing of the accomplishments of education with the realization that "minds are a form of cultural achievement."

Greene and Eisner both argue for a learning paradigm that infuses arts-based practices within the general education classroom. These scholars advocate for a shift in thinking that view aesthetic attributes as part of the processes of teaching and learning. Teaching and learning *are* forms of art. In this view, Art is not something you bring into the classroom as a topic of study or an extra activity. Arts-based education means that the pedagogy itself is aesthetic as a mode of thinking, response and action embedded in transaction with teaching and learning. Greene calls us to the transformative power of engagement with the arts. She emphasizes the moral capacity of art that is the capacity to change lives. Greene is a philosopher and she champions the transcendent power of

imagination. She is opposed to codifying aesthetic education, which is where her thinking and that of Egan and his followers subtly part company.

Mary Warnock (1978) makes the argument that imagination helps us understand what is outside ourselves. Warnock traces the historical background of this idea from Hume and discusses its development by Kant. Imagination, in this perspective, can lead us beyond our immediate experience and that is why it is educationally important. Imaginatively, Warnock summarizes, we stretch out to what the imagination cannot comprehend (p.58). The mode by which this can be achieved is through feeling in a cognitive dimension (Langer, 1953).

Before concluding this review of literature I want to journey briefly into the domain of philosophy to consider the role of emotion and imagination emerging from an arts-based learning experience. As I discussed earlier, emotion as a source of aesthetic experience is one of the characteristics of imagination described in Romantic idealism. It is, however, a problematic dimension in the public school classrooms of today dominated by standardized forms of measurement. The role of emotion in teaching and learning (Micciche,2007; Fleckenstein, 2003; Ahmed, 2004; DiPardo and Schnack, 2004) has begun to garner attention and I will take up aspects of it within this study. Because this study focuses on the music of jazz and because I looked to aesthetic theory to illuminate a possible understanding of emotion in an arts-based learning experience, I found the thinking of Susanne Langer of value.

Feeling and Imagination

A view of feeling taken from the thinking of the American philosopher of mind and art, Susanne Langer, influenced the way I began to formulate connections between imagination, thinking and emotion. In the winter of 1950, Langer wrote: “Music ‘expresses’ feeling as words express emotion; it is a *symbol* whereby we understood the characteristic forms of sentience, because the symbolic structure of sound articulates with

great precision the structure of the feeling in the passage…" (p.515). Langer articulated two concepts I find interesting. First, she argued for a specific movement away from feeling as inhabiting modes of the irrational. Langer (1966) wrote, "I believe the life of feeling is not irrational; its logical forms are merely very different from the structures of discourse" (p. 10). Feeling inhabits logical form. The second notion Langer expresses, as evidenced in this quote, is that the logical forms of feeling differ from the logical forms of language. For Langer, the dynamic forms of art are the natural symbols for feeling and are a key factor in human cognition.

In this study, I am on a quest to discover imagination as an active presence in the processes of making meaning. Langer's philosophy helps me to find language expressive of this idea. Because, for Langer, music is the quintessential, touchstone art in which an example for everything she theorizes about art can be found, the music of jazz placed at the heart of my research provided a similar touchstone for me. Complex, sometimes reaching too broadly and too deeply into philosophy, fragments of Langer's thought on aesthetic philosophy would nevertheless provoke considerations helping me to make connections between my data and my thinking. The most significant idea I follow here is Langer's notion of feeling as modes of making meaning emerging from the processes of imagination.

Vygotsky (1983) wrote, "Somehow our society has formed a one sided view of the human personality, and for some reason everyone understood giftedness and talent only as it applied to the intellect. But it is possible not only to be talented in one's thoughts but also talented in one's feelings as well" (quoted in Gajdamaschko, 2006). Agreeing with Vygotsky's evaluation of feeling, I wanted to find a way to understand how feeling could move from being the unconscious result of experience to a mediated process of knowing. A reading of Langer gave me an insight into this process.

I began with *Philosophy in a New Key* (1942) and came away encouraged by Langer's vindication of art as a crucial dimension to human cognition, but was little

clearer on how I could practically translate her ideas into my own research. I had to read deeper into her work, helped along by others who interpreted her thinking (Innis, 2009; Reichling, 2004, 1995; Warnock, 1996; Gardner, 1982), or argued the philosophical inconsistencies of her thinking (Morawski, 1984, Addis, 1999) until, over time, certain aspects of her ideas began to gel in my own thoughts.

For Langer, feeling is another mode of knowing and imagination is the highest conceptual power of the human mind (1953). It is the source of insight and belief and the oldest faculty unique to humans. It is also the power that generates art (1957). Image, argues Langer, is not a replica of a sense impression. Images are symbolic. Art is forms of symbolic human feeling (1953, p.40). The content of art's form is emotive, therefore Langer assigns feeling a cognitive dimension. Or as Ricoeur (1978) describes it, feelings are "interiorized thoughts" (p.156).

I was attracted to Langer in this study because she writes extensively on music as the image of a feeling, music as metaphor, and music as the quintessential symbolic form of feeling. That seemed to provide deep connects to the aspect of my research utilizing the music of jazz. So I stuck with Langer, and the first understanding that became most beneficial to me was Langer's definition of feeling. Feeling is not limited to feeling as a subjective point of view (Danto, 1984). For Langer, feelings were not something you possessed, items or entities, feeling was a process, an action. Langer writes, "To feel is an activity, not a product" (from *Mind,* quoted in Reichling, p.21, 2004). Throughout her writings on mind, Langer argues that mentality in humans is a complex dynamism resulting from the development of feeling.

Langer (1967) asserts that feeling is the process responsible for "the starting-point of a philosophy of mind" (p. 32). As I initially assumed, feeling is not synonymous with emotion or emotional attitudes. Although she sometimes uses the two terms interchangeably, Langer is clear that feeling is the umbrella term. In her thinking, feeling is created from experience, it is the basis of human cognition and it comes in forms.

Gardner (1982) writes, "I was particularly struck by Langer's analysis of music as concerned not with feelings per se but with 'forms of feelings' – with the tensions, dynamics and contrasts that permeate our emotional existence …" (p.41).

Langer has specific qualities in mind when discussing form. Reichling (2004) nicely summarizes these characteristics. First, form is dynamic and living. Within Langer's descriptions this means form implies performance, realized or perceived. Art is a living form because it creates a semblance of vital processes; an analogue of life. Second, form is not a static container; it is created by motion. "From what we call 'motion' in art," Langer (1953) writes, "is not necessarily change of place, but is *change made perceivable*, i.e. imaginable …" (p.66). And finally, forms in art are abstractions that exist through imaginative perceptions. Through acts of the imagination, art can effect a transformation from inner to outer life – from feelings to image as a perceptible object or event.

For Langer, forms of feeling break the mind/body duality. She argues that the developmental process of feeling is predicated on an element of personal agency. Specifically Langer believes this agency is accommodated within experience in the form of making and experiencing art. *Virtuality* is Langer's description of "the self-sufficient microcosm of any artwork that does not appeal to mere sensuous response or merely offer occasion for the expression of the artist's feelings or simply reproduce outer reality" (Morawski, 1984, p. 657).

Langer (1957) wrote that every good work of art "formulates the appearance of feeling, of subjective experience, the character of so-called 'inner life' which discourse – the normal use of words – is peculiarly unable to articulate…", (p. 132-33). As I was on the track of an interiorized experience, an *inner life*, this assertion opened exciting possibilities in my thinking. Later, when Langer discusses her ideas of how we make meaning through a power to see or interpret one thing in terms of another, I would begin to evaluate the writing produced by my students from listening to jazz music

as not indicative of the 'normal use of words,' but rather as an interpretive mode of feeling. The making and experiencing of art are not passive activities. Both require the representation of ideas of feeling.

Music, specifically jazz, was central to the experience of my students in the event I chose to investigate and so, following a keen felt sense that jazz, as we were encountering it, much more than merely the topic or background accompaniment to our study, I was particularly eager to discover a way to think about music as something integral to processes of thinking and imagination. Langer again proved central to this issue because she identifies music as the prototype of the arts and uses it to illuminate her arguments. I found her examples useful in light of the fact that jazz music was so centrally embedded in the experience I was to research and write about. Langer (1942) asserts that as humans we have a need to symbolize and invent meanings. We invest these meanings in our world and experience them most acutely though works of art. "All art is the creation of forms expressive of human feeling," writes Langer (1950, p.219). I would find Langer's philosophy trending deep into my own investigation of the interiorized world of adolescent imagination.

Conclusion

There were many interesting byways I discovered as I carved out this discussion on imagination. I could not follow them all, nor articulate them here. I leave them for another time acknowledging the potential fruitfulness of those other paths of investigation. Tracing the journey of imagination into the idealism of Romantic thinkers, however, allows me to identify the characteristics that become evidence of imagination as an active presence within the research I present here. I will specifically return to notions of experience, emotion and imagination as "new possibilities" (Greene, 1983, p. 167). In the following chapters I continue to draw on the theories of both Vygotsky and Langer.

Langer allows me to see how to recapture some of the emotionally textured intensity lost in standardized learning paradigms. Vygotsky provides a theory of interiorized imagination in adolescent experience and provides a theoretical frame from which to base my observations and analysis that comprise the rest of this dissertation.

CHAPTER III

THE THIN LINE OF WORDS

Overview of Methods

I borrow the title of this chapter on my research methods from a phrase by Charles Bazerman (2002). Bazerman reminds those of us struggling with investigations of texts that writing, in all its diverse modes, is a process of deep engagement with meaning. It brings us into new relations with others, by "putting new selves on the line, of drawing on all that others have said" (p.16). Because I am a writer, as well as a teacher of writing, and the researcher composing this dissertation, I find Bazerman's description of writing apropos. In the methods of my research I employ writing processes to broaden my understanding as well as to communicate my findings. I compose a "thin line of words" (p.16) in search of significant connections.

This work is informed by aesthetic dimensions of understanding in a search to explore imagination as an active presence in the literacy learning of adolescents. To facilitate this search, I designed my study so that I could better understand the specific research context of my rural eighth grade language arts class during a unit on jazz and writing. I use arts based research practices (Leavy, 2009; Barone & Eisner, 2011) to craft the processes of my research inquiry and interpretation. As I detail in this chapter, I borrow from the research practices of a/r/tography (Irwin & deCosson, 2004; Springgay & Irwin, 2005), bricolage (Kincheloe, 2001; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Levi-Strauss, 1966), and narrative configurations (Polkinghorne, 1995; Barone, 2007), to formulate my inquiry, analyze my data, and share my interpretations.

In this endeavor I stand with other scholars advocating arts in educational inquiry: Greene (2007), Barone (2008), Eisner (2002), Slattery (2003), Diamond and Mullen (1999), Sullivan (2010), Cahnmann (2003), Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997). Barone and Eisner (2011) write, "Instead of contributing to the stability of prevailing assumptions about [cultural and social] phenomena by … reinforcing the conventional way of viewing them, the arts based researcher may *persuade* readers … to revisit the world from a different direction, seeing it through fresh eyes…" (p. 16, italics in original). This is what I try to do here in my investigation of imagination and literacy by un/folding one specific research context of the jazz and writing unit. My research takes place within continuing, critical conversations from the margins of rural schooling (Strange, Johnson, Showalter, and Klein, 2012), the issues confronting 21st century adolescent literacy (Moje, Dillon, and O'Brien, 2000), and the crucial use of imagination in knowledge work (Vygotsky, 2004; Gajdamaschko, 2005; Egan, 1992). To facilitate looking "through fresh eyes," I formulate my investigation using three conceptual motifs underlying the theme of imagination as an active presence in this experience: the conceptual metaphor of un/folding, the artistic processes of collage and juxtaposition, and improvisation appropriated from the heart of jazz.

First I describe a process of aesthetic inquiry where the un/folding of stories, music, and images help me explore what it means to learn with and through imagination. I rely on the metaphor of un/folding to describe how I conceptualize the experiences of imagination. Later I will specifically identify these experiences through the metaphors of *dissonance, vibrance, resonance,* and *reverberance.* I employ this process of aesthetic inquiry to document a unique and transient opportunity, which allowed adolescent writers

a breakout moment from the "crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness" (Dewey, quoted in Greene, 2001, p.162). In other words, in this experience students produced emotionally textured, image-laden artifacts of writing exemplifying what Vygotsky (2004) terms "crystallized imagination" characteristic of a maturing productive imagination.

A second conceptual motif in describing my analyses is the way I use collage and juxtaposition in the interpretive process to inform my thinking. If, as I believe, teaching is an art (Eisner, 2002), then the experience of teaching is aesthetic (Dewey, 1934). In this view it is consistent for me to employ arts-based research methods. Juxtaposition and collage as artistic practices encourage the placing of disparate ideas, images, or objects side by side to generate an effect. The generative effect I cultivate by using this method in my interpretive processes disrupts the obvious and helps me interrogate assumptions.

At the heart of my study is the music of jazz. Berliner (1994) writes, "Contributing to the mystique surrounding jazz is the transient and unique nature of jazz creations: each performance's evolving ideas, sustained momentarily by the air waves, vanish as new developments overtake them, seemingly never to be repeated" (p.1). Within the sounds, stories, and history of jazz, I derive the third conceptual motif -- improvisation. The improvisational playing of a jazz musician is more than communication. Improvisation is a specialized mode of participation that intersects generatively with others in collective and inventive ways. Eisner (2002), drawing on a concept set forth by Dewey (1938) in his work *Experience and Education*, identifies this specialized mode of participation as "flexible purposing" (p.206). What he means by this (and even using jazz improvisation as his example) is that a specific characteristic of an

arts-based inquiry process is the strength created by a kind of flexibility that recognizes and exploits "unanticipated emerging qualities" (p. 206). My research design works to reflect this collaborative and improvisational nature of jazz to encourage the appearance of unanticipated elements as well as the purposing of such elements into deeper understandings.

Context

The site of my study is Midview Middle School located in a rural, Midwestern state. Midview is part of a community school district, which covers 215 square miles with school sites in two different communities and one elementary school near a third, unincorporated community. Comprised of grades 6 through 8, approximately 325 students attend Midview pooled from three elementary schools. Midview's community school district serves several small communities, the largest of which has an approximate population of 2, 516 people, of whom 93% are European-American. The three larger communities, several smaller towns and farmland that comprise the territory of the Midview school district include the three elementary schools, the middle school and the high school of the Midview system. Situated in close proximity to a larger city, the Midview community supports mostly working class and farm families, well-educated families with employment in professional occupations and small business, and a smaller portion of working class immigrant families amidst the influence of a large conservative religious community.

Every year the mission statement of the Midview district is reviewed by the staff of the district through district meetings and reads: *Preparing today's students for tomorrow's world in a caring learning environment*. This mission statement is displayed in the student center of Midview Middle School and for a time, laminated copies of it could be found posted in every

classroom. Our mission statement is a referential declaration to which we point when asserting our forward movement into the complexities of the 21st century. Our school and community leadership aggressively pursues initiatives they believe to be the cutting edge in educational efforts.

This is evidenced in the high school's restructuring of its offered curriculum to encompass dual credit course offerings for college bound students, and job shadowing and internship opportunities for students directly entering the workforce. The leadership in all district schools promotes common goals for current technology tools and staff development opportunities.

Midview Middle School reflects the diversity of the communities it serves. Ninety-three percent of the student population is Euro-American. Seventeen percent of the students at Midview Middle School are on free lunch and eleven percent are on reduced lunches. The eighth grade class during the year of data collection for this dissertation consisted of ninety-four students – forty-nine girls and forty-five boys. While the majority of my students were European-American, one Latino, two Asian, one African-American, and one Native American were also members of this class. My assignment as the eighth grade language arts teacher encompassed four sections of classes of approximately twenty-five to twenty-eight students in each section. The mix of gender was fairly even in these classes as was the number of students in the Special Education program. Midview adheres to an Inclusion Model of special education, which encourages the special education students to participate within the regular classroom assisted as needed by associates in collaboration with the Special Education teacher. During the year of this study, there were sixteen students served in the special education program, three to

five of these students were enrolled in each of my language arts sections and were participants in the jazz and writing unit.

The curriculum I chose to teach followed a conventional format infused with arts-based experiences. I taught the areas of reading and writing expected of eighth grade students in the Midview district. As I write this dissertation, these areas have become tightly aligned to Common Core and State Core standards. At the time of my data gathering, however, the curricular alignment of my content area was internalized within our district so that I had ultimate choice of what skills to focus on and the topics I would use. In 2009 the State was one of few with no adopted state standards.

As I taught my subject area during the years that included the jazz and writing study as part of the curriculum, I drew heavily on my personal understandings of writing craft and my aesthetic experiences as a writer. My inclination was to focus on ways to experiment with language even within the context of traditional skill work such as essay writing and the study of grammar. For example, we might explore the formal structure of writing paragraphs within the framework of a research paper, but disrupt the formal structures of it by considering expressive effects of genre. By turning a traditional research paper into a multigenre research project, we could break out into new writing territory in unexpected ways. Ultimately, I came to design the jazz and writing unit along similar lines of thinking.

This study takes place on the cusp of change in district mandates. In the years encompassing the jazz and writing study I was able to employ methods that were exploratory in nature. I included high levels of arts-based elements such as drawing, music, drama, and poetry. Units of study were student centered with differentiation to the degree that all students could find

their way through the material at whatever academic level they needed to operate on. We were collectively engaged on the same journey.

At the time I write this dissertation, curricular units of study outside of narrowly focused skills based learning – units such as the jazz and writing study for example – have become increasingly difficult to pursue. Classroom content is almost exclusively driven and constrained by results of standardized tests. In response, students are ability grouped and alignment through computerized, district-wide curriculum mapping dictates both subject and content to be covered. Teaching paradigms departmentalize music and art as "exploratories" – something to be pursued outside regular academic subjects and computer technology has become the ubiquitous creative tool.

Marcus Roberts Jazz Trio

The jazz and writing unit began in 2002 when I was called on to design a language arts unit for my eighth grade students that would incorporate the music of jazz with writing. This was the culminating event of a three-year, Arts Across the Curriculum, grant opportunity involving the University and my school district as participants. Knowing my personal background with the arts, the principal had invited me to become the contact person for the University organizers of the grant and the visiting artists, as well as the teacher incorporating the art form into the classroom. The vision of the Arts Across the Curriculum project was based on the premise of bringing practicing artists into contact with students at a more personal and participatory level. But another important aspect was the idea of bringing the arts into the academic classroom and infusing them across the curriculum. In my case, my objective was to take the art forms offered – over the three years this included dance, drama, and music – and incorporate them into the study of language arts by making them an authentic extension of the curriculum.

Each event with the visiting artists followed the same pattern. First, the artists visited the school for day long small group workshops. During these workshops, the students and the artists collaborated in producing an evening performance for the community. The culmination of each visit was a field trip a few days later to the University performing center to give the students the experience of viewing the artists in a formal performance venue. The visits happened once a year so that each time artists visited our school they met with a different group of eighth graders.

The genesis of the research presented in this dissertation arose from the challenges inherent in the events of the final group of visiting artists in the fall of 2002, the nationally recognized Marcus Roberts Jazz Trio. Marcus Roberts, an acclaimed American jazz pianist, blind since the age of five, was a dynamic personality for the students to encounter. Widely known and celebrated for his innovative and original piano style and extensive discography, as well as his distinctive approach to jazz trios, Roberts is also known for his commitment to jazz education and arts outreach programs. Accompanied by the trio's drummer, Jason Marsalis, and bassist Roland Guerin, Marcus Roberts, with infectious enthusiasm, nevertheless intended to bring a lecture discussion format into our classroom along with the music his trio played.

Thus my challenge was defined. Jazz is a complicated art form and not one readily familiar to my rural adolescent students. How would I make this music not only accessible, but also relevant? How would I get my students to engage with it? During the summer workshop one of the Roberts Trio musicians remarked to me that in his opinion teenagers were "unsophisticated and too immature in their musical tastes" to fully understand or appreciate jazz. Was he right? Would we be going through the motions of viewing this art form just to say we did? And how was I going to fit this into my language arts curriculum? What did jazz have to do with reading and writing anyway?

The Marcus Roberts Jazz Trio made their visit as planned during the fall of 2002. By this time my students had been studying jazz for several weeks in a manner that allowed them to appropriate jazz musical techniques and incorporate them into pieces of writing. For example such musical structures as syncopation, the AAB pattern of blues or call and response found ways to manifest in students' manipulation of syllables or the use of repetition of words or phrases within their writing. Using this exploration of musical structures interpreted into text, the students composed a story/poem. The jazz musicians, upon their visit to us, responded by collaborating with the students in the creation of the evening community performance of the story/poem and jazz music improvised to accompany it.

This, of course, is just the outline of events as they originally transpired. The elements that led me deeper and deeper into something revealing itself as processes of imagination relevant in the teaching and learning practices surrounding these events, is the investigation of this research. From my perspective, the important event was not the culminating performance of rural eighth grade storytellers with well-known jazz musicians as wonderful as that was. For me, the most interesting part had occurred during the two months prior to the visit from the Jazz Trio and would become the pursuit of this jazz and writing unit as I repeated it over and over again with variations through the next seven years. How I came to frame this unit of study, how the elements of the jazz and writing project un/fold into significant encounters with imagination and literacy practices is the center of the research presented here.

In thinking about these beginnings I recall a black and white photograph of Billie Holiday I used as a visual on my classroom bulletin board. This is a famous photograph of her -- a head shot -- and she is singing, her head tilted to the side so the long line of her throat is exposed and she is wearing her signature white gardenia in her hair. Knowing the general, tragic details of

her life, the memory of the photograph in my mind created a poignant empathy with her story. In each encounter with the jazz and writing unit, my students would come to cultivate this same sense of empathy. Our focus was not only jazz as music, but jazz as story. Our study would encompass the sad genius and powerful biography of the people who created and played it during specific times in special geographic places.

This was where I started. Where we ended up, however, was someplace quite different. Through the course of this dissertation I will describe the changes I made that resulted in the shortened three week version of this unit, years after the Marcus Roberts event, that has provided the bulk of data for this research. I would come to see the changes I made in the study, the response of the students, the paths of focus I chose to discard or follow, as part of the improvisational aspect that infiltrated this experience on multiple levels. I view this project as engagement with a type of aesthetic-influenced narrative expression – storytelling and poetry. This notion, central to my current definitions of imagination and understandings of this experience, is investigated throughout chapters IV –VII presenting my data.

The Participants and Data Sources

Data for my research study is drawn not just from one year, but from multiple years of teaching the same unit (2002 – 2009). I sought IRB approval to collect and examine writing produced by my eighth grade students in conjunction with the jazz and writing unit as well as permission to examine my own notes and researcher field journal. The Human Subjects Office granted permission to undertake this collection and examination. Thus, my data reflects the work of students from a seven-year time span, but my primary focus is on the writing experience of students from 2009 as being not only the most recent, but also the most targeted for purposes of this study. To select the specific pieces of data I analyzed, I identified key events within the

teaching and learning experiences of the jazz and writing unit and found student examples that illuminate the themes I want to discuss. As there were many such examples, I chose from male and female students and mixed ability levels to maximize the experience perspectives.

My data primarily consist of work and writing from 2009, with selected pieces of poetry from previous years. Here is a list of data sources followed by additional explanation:

- Student writing in the form of finished pieces (2009 and previous years)
- Rough draft writing (2009)
- *Riff Writing* -- quick, spontaneous phrases of writing often incomplete, rough and fragmented (2009)
- Student-made doodles and sketches (2009 and previous years)
- *Thinking Cards* -- student written reflections on their writing and thinking (undertaken in 2009 only)
- Researcher field journal (2009)
- Work Journal – Curricular notes and personal reflections, jots and memos (all unit years)

The Doodles

Doodles, rough quick sketches, were the first form of response the students produced. Examples of these sketches appear in the data chapters along with a more detailed account of how and why they were produced. These doodles served as the basis for the riff writing. After listening to the music and doodling as an interpretation of the sound, students crafted brief interpretive images of their doodles in writing. I call these pieces of data riff writing because, like a musical riff, they were short fragmented pieces of writing -- rapidly produced, energetic,

improvised variation on the drawing and the music itself. I devised a pattern through the Scott Joplin and the Louis Armstrong encounters where students listened to selected pieces of music and doodled patterns or sketches on regular pieces of blank paper as response. A short discussion of what the doodles might represent followed with students composing the riff writing. Here are two examples of the riff writing produced in 2009 during the first class listening to Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag." I include them exactly as they were written. No editing.

This music was like joyful kinds having fun at the amusement park. The music is joyful and fun. Just like the kids. -- Jenni

This music is like mountains. This music is also like a dark day -- Josh

The Thinking Cards

During the year of data collection, students produced responses to specific prompts designed to clarify perspective and elaborate thoughts. I called these pieces of writing Thinking Cards. As if conducting an interview, I designed the prompts to be open-ended, flexible and exploratory, asking for opinion, examples and elaboration whenever possible. For example, on the first Thinking Card I focused on just one aspect. I wanted to know what, if anything, students were feeling or identifying about this experience with writing and jazz. I asked: *What do you think about the writing you produced here?* While focusing on the product of the writing itself, my question was intended to elicit a range of responses from description of the writing, the experience with the music, interpretation and abstraction into images in the writing, levels of comfort and discomfort, ease and difficulty.

As we moved deeper into the unit, the questions I asked became more numerous as well as complex asking for evaluation as well as description, comparison as well as discussion, and elaboration. Students completed Thinking Cards at the end of each music genre/musician event, approximately two to three times a week. Invited and named as co-researchers to look with me at what we were doing, these cards were not graded and students seemed to complete them as if an explication of their processes were important. At any rate, no student refused to write them or seemed reluctant or slow to complete one.

The Work Journal

My work journal is a collection of reflective writing maintained through each incarnation of the jazz and writing unit. Maintained primarily as a teacher tool, my work journal records the nuts and bolts of curricular design as well as descriptions of what "went wrong." My work journal is an eclectic collection of memos and reflective writing, lists of skills, timetables, notes to self and indecipherable scribbles. Sometimes events would transpire that took my breath away. As a writer I am compelled to record such transcendent moments and many of them found a resting place in my work journal. These transcendent moments collected within the totality of the history of this unit over time would inform my identification of the key or critical events within the research year.

I look to my work journal as a collection of thinking over time, a collection of ideas that were not originally intended to become data for a dissertation research study, but were nevertheless part of the storied experience. While loosely chronological in nature, my work journal for the jazz and writing unit is a collection of multiple texts and as such, represents the bricolage of my work as a teacher. As I will discuss later, the bricolage within my research design plays a critical role in uncovering new thinking by dislocating the familiar. Such a

loosely grouped collection of notes and unit ephemera offered a highly fertile, creative ground for juxtaposition and collage to function.

The Field Notes

My researcher field notes comprise the final pool of data for this study. This journal was maintained throughout the three-week unit comprising the focus study year 2009. It is a narrative record of thick description, observations, transcripts of conversations, and analytical memos. Maintained deliberately as a data source for this investigation it represents the scholarly, organized palette of my research design.

Data Organization

Following each encounter with a jazz musician, I collected and organized individual pieces of student data into bundles. For example the Scott Joplin writings for each student participating consisted of an example of a doodle, a piece of riff writing, a piece of biographical writing, a rough draft combination writing fragment, and a Thinking Card. Thus in one class, each student produced five pieces of data. There were 23 students in that class so there were 23 individual bundles with a total of 138 individual pieces of data. The total of the Scott Joplin data bundle across all classes was approximately 552 pieces of data. As each bundle of data was collected, I dated it and inventoried it with descriptive memos identifying content and any circumstance worth noting such as extreme interruption (fire drill, majority of class leaving for track meet etc) or any substantive differences between classes. To preserve confidentiality in alignment with IRB instructions, individual names were removed and identification numbers substituted.

Jazz and Writing Unit, 2009

I taught the jazz and writing unit as part of my regular curriculum to all 94 students in my four sections of eighth grade language arts in May of 2009. Students had the opportunity to participate or opt out of the study by not submitting their writing at the end of the unit. Only one student's parent formally requested that I not use the work of that student. I was able to gather a collection of different types of writing including many riff pieces, poetry, and response writing.

We followed the outlines of the original unit in that we began with the roots of jazz in primitive blues and ragtime. In 2009 I had only three weeks (with a proliferation of interruptions that further reduced class time) in which to teach a unit previously spanning six weeks. Thus, the timeline of the history of jazz was abandoned out of necessity for time and I focused on major personalities of jazz instead. As a whole class we covered the stories of Scott Joplin, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, and Bessie Smith. To conclude the unit, students with student chosen partners, randomly drew the name of a jazz musician and listened to a piece of music designated as signature of the musician. The final poetry projects were created from this exploration.

The Nature of the Experience

In each iteration of this unit, I made decisions as to which musicians, which music, and what writing should be explored. As I will discuss in the data chapters, I made these decisions based on the original unit, which was formatted against an historical timeline of jazz. But choice and decision-making became an extremely fluid dynamic as the unit unfolded. I often found I would make the initial decisions on which musician and what music to focus on, but student interest or sudden passion or difficulty, or a truncating of time or circumstances beyond my

control, would take the study in a different direction. Thus, I chose the stories of the artists to share in response to a complexity of considerations and presented them in a storytelling format.

In the same manner, I chose the music representative of each artist based on accessibility as well as anticipating student responses. The writing exercises emerged based on a complexity of influences and no strict tracing of my rationale for implementation is possible. As the teacher, I always had in mind some sort of writing outcome. For example, I may have targeted working with active verbs. In the hands of the students, however, the writing often became improvisational in nature and what started out as a look at active verbs might have ended up in the creation of metaphor due to a direction instigated by student response or suggestion. Generally, we followed similar formats from class section to class section, but occasionally students in one section would bring to the forefront an issue in their discussion that would highly influence the writing produced in that exercise.

Classes were both improvisational and collaborative in action. As such, these two concepts become deeply influential in my interpretations of the data. The classes were improvisational in the manner described above. In a later chapter I take a closer look at this concept and explore the multiple levels as manifested within this experience. The experience was collaborative as students wrote, shared their writing and opinions in small and large group discussion formats, and conferenced with me as they explored the idea of using the forms of jazz music to influence their writing techniques. After providing a foundation in a guided manner for approximately two weeks, students took the remaining week in explorations of their own choosing.

Students divided into small groups of their choosing. Together they focused on a specific jazz musician and listened to their music. Students were experienced in PowerPoint presentations

and I sought to expand that understanding with a multimedia platform in a Jazz Scrapbook assignment that required the students to compile music, biography or historical information, visuals, and writing on the MovieMaker software available on the PC computers in our computer lab. Students created the multimedia presentations on computers in the lab during four, forty-two minute class periods. Some groups chose to make their presentations more elaborate and worked outside of class time during study hall or before school. The last formal language arts class of the school year was spent in viewing the multimedia presentations and responding to them in written and verbal reviews.

I do not analyze these final projects because they are pieces of work hurriedly constructed and were less organized than other pieces of data. The wealth of data precludes the necessity. Students, however, referred to this assignment in some of the final thinking cards and in this way this final project merges into the analyzed pieces of data not as a product, but as part of the experience.

Data Analysis

I employ arts based practices because I am on a quest for possibilities. My goal is not to arrest uncertainty but to encourage "enhancement of perspectives" (Barone and Eisner, 1997). Thus I borrow from three practices of arts based research: bricolage, a/r/tography, and narrative configurations. To clarify the processes involved in my data analysis, I share my rationale for these particular choices.

Bricolage

Bricolage, as Levi-Strauss (1966) brings it into use, is understood as the use of those materials that happen to be floating about in one's vicinity to facilitate a project at hand. This can be utilized both in practical as well as intellectual terms. I am most familiar with the idea of bricolage as one of the techniques employed in the games of the Surrealists of the 1920's. Through the notions of play and games, techniques of surprise and what Gooding (1991) calls "methodologies of the fantastic" (p.10), the Surrealists inspire for me a certain, less intellectually lofty way into creating understanding and possibility. I want to use the technique of bricolage in my research in the same manner the Surrealists would use it in their invented techniques borrowed from children's games which were "intended to free words and images from the constraints of rational and discursive order" (p.10). I draw on my background as an artist to inform and compose my work as both teacher and researcher. Part of that background is experience in composing found poems and poetry collages, as well as choreographing chance dances (from my work as dancer and choreographer with a repertory dance company), all of which employ acts of bricolage.

Levi-Strauss (1966) wrote that the bicoleur "speaks not only *with* things…but through the medium of things" (p.21, italics original.) I use bricolage with the codes I generate to keep me out of easy assumptions and to suggest alternative ways of looking at my data. In this way, bricolage generates fresh perspectives in familiar territory. And I use bricolage through the medium of the metaphors I chose to explain to generate layering of perspective.

Kincheloe (2001) writes, "The bricolage understands that the frontiers of knowledge work rest in the liminal zones where disciplines collide" (p.689). Teaching, from my personal experience, is an act of bricolage. My praxis is always multidisciplinary. I sometimes combine history with language, or poetry with science, or philosophy with popular culture to bring the phenomena and ephemera, or people and ideas of the curriculum to life in multiple modalities (text, film, music, technology), for students with multiple and disparate learning needs and abilities. I see bricolage as the dwelling space of teachers practicing teaching and learning in active, constructivist modes. It is an in-between space of diverse experiences and interests, conflicts of desires, and capacities, cultural and ethical concerns. Teaching, from this perspective, is professional bricolage (Reilly, 2009).

I use bricolage as part of my research design because I draw on a diversity of scholarly disciplines to illuminate understanding of my work. I draw from the disciplines of music, education, sociology, anthropology, and philosophy. I also use bricolage in the form of multiple approaches and juxtaposition in my data analysis because I want a process of defamiliarization to guard against retreading the well-worn path. A constant danger I face as a researcher embodied in multiple roles within the context of my own study is a tendency to romanticize the work of imagination within the writing of my students. Kincheloe (2001) writes, "bricolage is concerned not only with multiple methods of inquiry but with diverse theoretical and philosophical notions

of the various elements encountered in the research act" (p. 682). The use of bricolage in this way produces a synergy of cultivating differences within my research.

A final reason for tapping into the practice of bricolage as part of my research design lies in the fact that it is connected in an organic, authentic, even rhizomatic manner to the theme of improvisation. Bricolage and improvisation have characteristics in common. Both encourage seemingly disconnected ideas to come together in inventive, sometimes, provocative or subversive ways. Both are evolving practices utilizing material at hand within the environment of action – one in performance, the other in processes of teaching and learning. "Everything," writes Geertz (1995), "is a matter of one thing leading to another, that to a third, and that to one hardly knows what" (p.20). That is expressive of both improvisation and bricolage.

Bricolage then, plays a role in the design of my research as it encourages multiple perspectives from multiple sources and utilizes juxtaposition to set those perspectives in tension. Bricolage allows me to interrogate my assumptions through the rearrangement of related fragments to create the texture of ideas. In my research analysis, I focus on the ways we (my students and I) engaged with – or were engaged by – the jazz and writing study. As I follow these engagements, I pay attention to the ever-changing dynamics associated with the workings of the imagination. I describe processes that alter the lived experiences of the participants in this unit, and concurrently, I examine the ways in which we, the participants, operated to influence and change the processes of learning.

A/r/tography

In my research design, I was looking for a way, as Slattery (2003) suggests, to be "effective and competent as an artist, researcher, and educator [by] holistically integrating all

three dimensions" (p.195) of my life. In my search, I discovered notions connected with the arts based research practice of a/r/tography would allow for this.

Specifically an arts and education based research methodology (Sullivan, 2004), A/r/tography emerges in academic literature in 2003 and represents a unique methodology with an education and arts-based focus dedicated to acts of inquiry through the arts and writing (Irwin and de Cosson, 2004; Springgay, Irwin, and Wilson Kind, 2005). The slashes in the name illustrate the doubling of identities: **a**rtist, **r**esearcher, **t**eacher in contiguous relations. A/r/tography is not exclusive to definitions of multiple roles because a/r/tographers are connected in rhizomatic ways to the research, the teaching, and the art making (Irwin et al, 2006). This relationality affects how the a/r/tographer understands theory as no longer abstract concepts but "embodied living inquiry" (Irwin, et al, 2006). Learning, creating, teaching, researching are in a constant state of becoming (Britzman, 2003).

If bricolage is a way to uncover liminal spaces, a/r/tography presents a way to explore them. A/r/tography is the investigation of the in-between spaces, the interstices of teacher, artist, and researcher. These are not separate roles blended together, but are rather understood to unfold as movements of the in-between. Here "meanings reside in the simultaneous use of language, images, materials, situations, space and time … [and create] the circumstances that produce knowledge and understanding through artistic and educational inquiry" (Irwin and Springgay, 2008, p. xix).

Because the focus of a/r/tography is process "meaning is alive – always moving, always growing. A/r/tographers view construction of knowledge as infinite and in-progress" (Winters, Bellieavu, Sherritt-Fleming, 2009, p.8). This practice is reflective of Dewey's (1934) notions of aesthetic experience as embodied inquiry. I use this notion of living inquiry as a process of

un/folding perspectives and text in and through each other. I interpret this notion as a way to encounter text (in this case the student writings) not as static representations of ideas (or static expressions of emotions) sealed and finite, but rather as an interactive medium of opportunity or invitation. Writing becomes a relational act; a way into lived experience overlapping perspective, and creating new spaces for further action. This was the process my students engaged with in the jazz and writing unit. It is appropriate that I do so too in seeking to illuminate the experience.

Narrative Configuration

> *"The truth of art lies in its power to break the monopoly of established reality (i.e. of those who establish it) to define what is real. In this rupture, which is the achievement of the aesthetic form, the fictitious world of art appears true as reality."*
> *Herbert Marcuse, quoted in The Rough Guide to Jazz, 2004, p. iii*

In this dissertation I maintain a literary orientation within the design of my methodology. Iser (1993) writes, "The literary text is a mixture of reality and fictions, and as such it brings about an interaction between the given and the imagined"(p.1). I cultivate such an interaction within the writing of the key events in my data chapters by utilizing a narrative configuration (Polkinghorne, 1995) as a process to unify events and ideas spread through time. I strive to provide a lens through which to peer at the storied experiences within the jazz and writing unit, render layered multiple points of view visible, and place them in juxtaposition with discourse and ideas.

To accomplish this, I pull from the techniques of narrative nonfiction. Robert Vare, senior editor for the Atlantic Monthly, defines narrative nonfiction as "essentially a hybrid form … a sophisticated form of nonfiction writing … that harnesses the power of facts to the techniques of fiction (quoted in Rubie, 2009, p.3). Thus, I subjectively use descriptive language

and employ metaphor in a conscious attempt to enhance or complicate narrated perspectives (Barone and Eisner, 2011). I attempt to define emerging themes from complex lived experiences represented by disconnected research data. To do this I settle into story.

This method makes sense to me in my own response to experience. I am innately a storyteller. I enjoy a good story and I enjoy captivating an audience with one as well. I hold story as the macrocosm surrounding the whole of this experience from the learning events, to student response, to the representation of my own multiple roles and perspectives as teacher, artist, researcher, to the continuing journey itself of the creation of this dissertation. Within my data analysis, however, I narrow the focus of story to narrative nonfiction.

In my data analysis I use narrative nonfiction to present the key events of the data chapters. E.M. Forester (1927/1966) defined story as a "narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence" and a good story turns on plot, which is narrative emphasizing cause and effect. A plot, with its inherent understanding of a mystery or a secret revealed suspends the time-sequence enticing human curiosity for further exploration. By emphasizing mystery, by searching for the hidden, I suspend the time-sequence of the key events without distortion to factual reality, to allow me space to ask *why.* I am less interested in mere description, the *and then* aspect of story, and more concerned with promotion of empathetic understanding within a contextualized, virtual reality. In the stories framed by the key events, I retain the factual content of the events, but create the plot of its unfolding.

Themes and Coding

Early on in this study I had adopted a specific stance toward the writings of my students. I strongly felt that if I viewed their work only as pieces of self-expression I would fail to consider how meaning is interconnected with experience and imagination. Therefore, I view all of the

pieces of student writing I examine in this research as pieces of theory themselves. These pieces of writing represent interior, embodied experiences, which produce and transform thinking and response. I understand them as pieces of crystallized imagination (Vygotsky, 2004) from processes of collaboration and invention. They are not embalmed artifacts of institutionalized knowledge. As embodied work, the student writings question the understandings of self and other. They represent ways of knowing.

I made multiple passes through these data, examining these artifacts and then analyzing the data for each student. I began with specific investigation of the final Thinking Cards hoping to discover in the final student thoughts a way into the wilderness of my data. I made five or six initial passes through these cards looking for connections, phrases, themes, or understandings to emerge. Eventually I was able to formulate tentative codes and themes as I returned to move more deeply into the data.

I spent three months carefully culling through the data seeing each fragmented piece as part of a larger conversation into the territory of imagination. I created a database of transcribed writing and began to distinguish themes, which I used to code the pieces of student writing. Initially I had 18 themes:

Challenge: Characterized by phrases expressing a level of difficulty experienced with the material, the word "challenge" itself is evidence in most of these.

Failure: Expressions of noting failure at accomplishing the task, "I did not do as well as I could have," "I did not get this at all."

Blue Note: Use of this term explicitly in discussion, any phrase or sentence dealing with use of specific techniques to either connect a reader with the writer's work or as an expression of the writer connecting to their own work.

Process: Any expression discussing process of the writing, what a student did in the experience of composing or revising work, or in thinking about how to formulate a response to the prompt.

Collaboration: Discussion both pro and con about the experience of working with peers to create or respond to the writing projects.

Juxtaposition: Word used specifically by student in description of technique, phrases that indicated a student was attempting to combine two or more materials to create a specified effect.

Experience: Any expression indicating a response to how this learning felt – "it was hard," it was different from other kinds of writing."

Synesthesia: Use of color to identify an emotional response.

Independence (Self-efficiency): Expressions of confidence gained through progress of the study.

Perception: Phrases denoting a perspective or specific point of view or awareness of a changing point of view.

Influence: Direct use of the word, discussion of how pursuit of an idea or specific technique influenced a student's approach.

Emotion/**Empathy**: Any mention of an emotional connection or response to the material being studied, the pieces of writing being produced, or the experience itself.

Perspective: Use of point of view to identify a conclusion about something.

Catch Phrases: Unusual, poetic sounding phrases that I wasn't sure where to put but didn't want to lose.

Memory: Any discussion referring to remembering or using past memories to interpret present work.

Positive Evaluation: Simple identification of feeling good about the experience, writing, music, or processes involved.

New Experiences: Explicit identification of doing something different then experienced before.

I worked in a recursive process moving from themes to searching for evidence and from evidence back to themes. I grouped and regrouped these themes looking for connections as well as dissonance. Suspicious of easy connections I tried to privilege the pieces of data that did not seem to fit. In this way, I found my way into the metaphors that I use as both illumination and investigation for this material.

The Metaphors

The use of metaphor to assist my understanding was an obvious tool for me. As a writer, metaphor works for me within my artistic processes as a vehicle for elliptical materializations. I am attracted as a thinker to the ambiguous, the veiled, mystic, or poetic possibilities inherent in metaphor. Metaphors are important because they allow me to be surprised; they defamiliarize my space of thinking and create possibility.

Metaphor and its link to image is deeply embedded within my study in other ways as well. Following Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), metaphors encapsulate the essential nature of experience. Metaphor is understood as an active process, a matter of thought, a vehicle by which it is possible to understand and experience "one kind of thing in terms of another" (1980, p.5). Deeper into the analysis of my material I explore the critical linkage of image with language and

its connection to imagination. It is through metaphor that this understanding not only operates, but can also be apprehended.

In the process of my analysis I discovered three main metaphors that operate within my research: the *blue note*, un/folding, and the more complex *suite of dynamic experiences*. As detailed in this section, these metaphors emerged over time in different contexts. The blue note emerged from classroom interactions; the suite of dynamic experiences evolved through the writing of this dissertation as I searched for expressive language descriptive of the process of imagination I observed; and the concept of un/folding emerged most recently as a result of theory coming into contact with method. These metaphors, sometimes elusive, sometimes abrasive in their demand to be considered, became the guides for my thinking and analysis as well as the language I employ to describe my understanding. They did not cohese at once and it was only over time, and after multiple passes through my data, that I was able to employ them in the structure of my analysis.

The Blue Note

The first metaphor to suggest itself came spontaneously from the students – the blue note. As discussed in chapter one, the discovery of the blue note as an element of jazz happened by accident as we listened to the music of Blind Lemon Jefferson. Being a distortion of other notes comprising a tone, the blue note as a note does not really exist. Therefore, it is not the thing itself that is important or that really creates an effect, but rather a context from which it emerges. “It is the melodic context which highlights the impact of these notes, and historically they are not so much an exact note as audible bent or slurred” (Carr et al, 2004, p. 897). In the final writings, my students spoke of finding the “blue note” -- individual experiences -- in this experience. I was captivated by the expression and the individualized way students had come to define this

metaphor. In our study, the blue note was understood as that ineffable something that made a piece of writing unique or specifically resonant with feeling. The blue note became our metaphor for the search for the imagination as we, a group of learners, were searching for it. I utilized this metaphor as a specific code in my data as well as the touchstone of illumination for my own understanding.

Un/Folding

The overall design of my data analysis depends on another metaphor: un/folding. My research is not predicated on uncovering explanations. Instead I attend to disruptions rippling across the preconceived patterns of institutionalized forms of writing and normative notions of teaching and learning literacy for adolescent writers. I appropriate this metaphor through descriptions of the operation of a/r/tography (Springgay, 2005) via Deleuze and Guattari's (1993) notion of folding.

As in imagining the undulations of a piece of cloth, or the moving landscape of gently rolling water, processes of un/folding deny the dualism of interior and exterior. The outside is never fully integrated with the inside because the process results in folds appearing elsewhere; sometimes eclipsing, sometimes revealing, always emerging. Such a dynamic uncovers the spaces between and allows for an investigation into the interstices of imagination and literacy learning. New folds become new experiences with the potential for new understanding. I employ the slash mark between the prefix and the word to signify the relational nature of this metaphor, a marker signifying a process of movement into, next to, through, and beyond demarcated space.

Marsha Meskimmon (2003) writes, "Folding holds out the potential to diversify endlessly without falling into logic of binary oppositions. This sense of the fold thinks matter as doubling back on itself to make endless new points of connection between diverse elements" (p. 167).

This metaphor helps me to understand the nature of teaching and learning in concert with imagination. The boundaries existing between the students, myself, and the curriculum in normalized classroom expectations are blurred and flexible. This investigation then becomes an un/folding of stories, music and images, as well as identities, culture and place, to explore what it means to teach and learn through active processes of imagination.

Dynamic Suite of Experiences

More than mere accompaniment, the music of jazz can be viewed as a protagonist in this story. Of critical importance to my understanding of what was happening in the realm of aesthetic experience, and already lending its structures to our writing explorations, jazz became the territory to mine for the overarching metaphors of my research. As the themes emerged from my data, I developed the *dynamic suite of experiences* as the umbrella metaphor to describe the nature of the process I was investigating. Mining musical terminology inspired by jazz, I settled on the descriptive terms *dissonance, vibrance, resonance, and reverberance* to comprise the suite. Working with these metaphors in juxtaposition with my data, and allowing data to continually inform and define the operation of these metaphors, I came to understand the recursive, generative, transformative dynamic of the process I was studying. My thinking moved away from the constraint of linear lines and points of operations to tones and folds better accommodating shifting perspectives and layered interpretations. *Dissonance* represents the encounter with the mysterious and will be investigated within the un/fold of captivation. *Vibrance* characterizes the playfulness of shaking back and forth, freedom, fun, play, experimentation, and fearlessness as we broke rules to discover new ways of working with words. I investigate vibrance in the un/fold of ignition. *Resonance* becomes the experience of deliberate production with audience in mind. Within this dynamic are the potentials for

transformation of consciousness, empowerment, and the specialized connection of young writer to the topics being explored. Here is the un/fold of imagination realizing its full cycle by becoming action in the world. And finally, in the experience of *reverberance* I am able to describe the haunting, the echo, the un/fold of anticipation as the liminal space – our personalized zone of possibilities – dissolves back to the line of reception marking uneventful travel in a learning landscape.

I name these four experiences as the *dynamic suite of experiences.* Dynamic describes the un/folding, the movement rippling between, recursive in nature, generative in effect. In music a suite is understood as a collection of like pieces of music, separate but connected in multiple ways. These experiences act in concert, they are demarcated in time but not in hierarchy, they are separate but interdependent and move in and back and between. And finally, they are experiences as Dewey (1934) defines aesthetic experiences – critically important in the action that is teaching and learning.

My Position Within this Research

"I want you to meet David," said my principal.

It was a week before the start of school my first year of teaching. I was hanging posters in my classroom. I was also standing on one of the desks to do it. I should have been on a ladder appropriately requested from the custodian, but I wasn't. I looked down at the scruffy boy standing beside the principal -- the torn jeans, the broken shoes, dirty face, hair like a used mop.

"Um…"

"I'll leave you to get acquainted."

"You can get around any child," my teacher grandmother had advised me, "by figuring out their strengths." She was, by every account I ever heard, extremely effective with the physically unruly students, the bored or bullying student, the frequently kicked out of class kid.

When my grandmother began her teaching career in 1944 she took over mid-year from the teacher who had been run out of the schoolhouse by the unruly farm kids that were her students. My grandmother told me how nerve wracking her first day was – it wasn't so much the students as it was the fact that she had raised the American flag upside down on the flagpole and the superintendent had to be the one who noticed and corrected it.

David was like my upside down flag. Considered a sort of misfit by other teachers, he just didn't seem to like school or want to get along. He had problems reading. The principal had brought him in to meet me because as a first year teacher there was a worry I might not be able to handle someone like David. Of course I didn't know that at the time. I'm glad I didn't.

My other grandmother had been a teacher too. She also knew her way into the experiences of children having difficulty learning, especially in the areas of reading and math. She helped pull them into the mainstream of her class by using various strategies that had at the heart of them some element about what validated the disruptive child as other than "bad." Both my grandmothers built their pedagogies on finding a child's strengths and building on them – not identifying their deficits and attempting to fix their weaknesses. My grandmothers moved within roughneck areas, one rural and one urban, and I do well to pay attention to their experiences.

From the mid 1940's into the late 1970's, my grandmothers practiced child centered, hands-on explorations of teaching. Providing richness and variety of experiences was as ubiquitous in their classrooms as pencil and paper. I never heard them mention John Dewey, but the stories they told me were more than illustrative of their practices of teaching reflecting

Dewey's notions against authoritarian knowledge and solidly in line with his philosophy of understanding the lived experiences of students.

I knew how each of them would handle a David. They would put him to work.

"Do you know how to hang posters?"

After admitting I didn't particularly like heights and indicating that if standing on a school desk was okay for me, it would be okay for him, David spent the next hour arranging and rearranging the posters on my walls. When we finished, it was as much his classroom as it was mine.

David had spent much of his time being pulled from his classrooms for extra help with reading and writing. When I suggested that he be allowed to remain in my classroom during language arts he was allowed to do so more because the special education teacher was happy not to have to fight with him for a space of the day than for any reason that it might benefit David. For a language arts assignment, David wrote this poem:

I am the last boss
last boss of all bosses
beside me
behind me
in front of me
people smoke and drink
but I don't care
I shamble
creamed
cracked
shorkled up
It was all just a feeble.

David wore his baseball cap turned backwards on his head when he read his poem out loud in class. Wearing hats inside school was strictly forbidden unless under special circumstances. David claimed wearing his hat helped his reading. He also liked to stand on a chair sometimes.

"You know," he said to me once, "sometimes I feel like a poet. Maybe someday I'll be one, but there's no guarantee."

I thought he sounded wise and I told him so. David and I both liked this stage we found ourselves performing on. I wasn't about to discourage him with the reality of how poets made their living. In fact, it never entered my thinking that David could be banned from such a pursuit should he so choose to go after it.

My dad, the writer who taught junior high and high school students about literature would have agreed. "Sometimes students become something unexpected in your classroom," he said. "You have to be ready for that moment if it happens."

In my dad's classroom he had a hat rack on which perched a real pith helmet, a motorcycle beret -- not a helmet but a biker's hat like something worn by Marlon Brando in *The Wild Ones* -- a black fedora, a coonskin hat, and a WWII German helmet. He had an old drugstore, Pocketbooks paperback book turnstile crammed with paperbacks – O'Hara, Hemingway, Faulkner, Steinbeck along with Len Deighton, Ian Fleming, Ray Bradbury, and TAB paperbacks -- a black theatre stool to perch on while reading at the front of the room, posters of Hemingway and the rock group the Ventures on the walls, and a real fencing sword propped in the corner just in case someone needed to interpret Shakespeare or Robin Hood. He owned a baritone ukulele given to him by one of his former students just before she lost her life in a drug overdose in the 1960's. He played music for his students, organized a folk singing group, led his students on long hikes for various social causes, directed school plays, and performed his role as teacher through some of the most turbulent times in American education – the race riots of the 1960's.

I am the last boss, wrote David in his poem. *It was all just a feeble.* I wonder what he meant. For David, was being a boss a feeble attempt at having some control for himself? Were the drinkers and smokers in his poem, drinkers and smokers in his life? Why was he the *last* boss?

In my lesson plans I wrote that the educational objective for that lesson would be *to expand the concept of words as materials, like paint or musical instruments, from which art is*

created. I designated the skills to be practiced as: *expansion of creative thinking, awareness of figures of speech and comparisons, use of nonsense words to convey a meaning.* At the bottom of my notes I wrote: *Words, even if they are nonsense words, can convey a feeling.*

What I think I meant to say was: *poets, even if they are only 11 years old, can convey feeling in the words that they choose, and write into a place a sense of themselves in a context of universal understanding (especially if they are allowed to wear a backwards ball cap and stand on a chair.)*

One week after David wrote his poem, the principal came to get him from my classroom. His mother was pulling him out of school that very afternoon – unannounced to everyone including David – and was taking him to live with relatives in another state. David never said goodbye to us and we didn't get the chance to say goodbye to him. I did not find out why he had been summoned from my room until many hours after he had gone. For years I hung onto the battered notebook he never had the chance to take with him. His poem is the only artifact remaining.

Over the years I've met many students like David. Eccentric, rebellious, they are the hidden poets in my classroom. They emerge, and their talents with them, when conditions are right and they leave behind traces in the form of wildly creative artifacts – poems, collages, essays. The jazz and writing unit provided such compatible conditions and these were the students I noticed at first compelling me to this research. It was their experience with imagination I wanted to describe. Now, I have discovered how we were all implicated in the jazz and writing journey, how we were all risk takers –rebellious and daring -- and how poetic language and aesthetic experience fed our living inquiry. This has become a story not about a few rising to an occasion, but about many adventuring together.

As Cohen (1998) reminds us, Dewey himself believed that "schools could foster adventure and build on idiosyncrasy" (p.2). Cohen writes: "This vision implied an extraordinary new conception of teaching. Teachers would have to be knowledgeable about experience, academic knowledge, and learning, knowing these territories as well as mountain guides knew theirs. Teachers would then be able to devise ways for children to adventure their way to real knowledge" (p.3). I was ready to be that mountain guide.

I had read deeply into jazz scholarship, I had taken a university class on jazz, in years past we had traveled through this unit and I felt I understood as well as I could the territory we would

travel. I was bringing along my knowledge of writing and my sixteen years of professional experience as a classroom teacher. And, with the help of my students, I would be investigating the whole journey through the lens of a researcher. I was operating on the assumption that if I took the first steps into this unfamiliar landscape of learning, my students, as co-researchers and co-learners, would follow. I assumed that, like me, my students would be intrigued by new learning territory and would be infused with a sense of exploration and adventure that would carry them through the apparent eccentricity of a study of writing craft through a lens of the history of jazz.

This is the backdrop for understanding the culture that influences my teaching practice today. I am the product of not just teachers, but reflexive teachers, teachers whose ideologies embraced ideas of the imagination, identity and agency of marginalized populations, and were rooted in the fertile soil of place. I am also the product of encounters with students like David. I am confronted by the restricted dimensions of standardization, assessments identifying student deficits, and mechanized teaching practices that inhabit my professional realm today. I am haunted by the spaces they have displaced in my curriculum and the fragile drift of poetic artifacts like the poem from David's notebook.

Sometimes I am confused. Sometimes I don't know if I am a teacher who writes or a writer who teaches. I am like David and a hundred other students I've known since, who think that maybe, in a specialized moment in time, we could be the one thing we always wanted to be.

But there are never any guarantees.

CHAPTER IV

UN/FOLDING PLACE: DISSONANCE AND ENCOUNTERS WITH THE MYSTERIOUS

Within the key event of the Scott Joplin writing I investigate an encounter with the unfamiliar. My analysis of student responses associated with this encounter revealed the emergence of the theme of *dissonance* and mark the un/folding of a new space of learning. Vygotsky (1998) wrote, "… everything that is connected with interpretation and construction of something new, requires the indispensable participation of imagination" (p.153). Our turn into dissonance was a turn into the mysterious where evidence of interpretation and construction of new knowledge emerged. As I analyze data set forth in this chapter, I draw from a constellation of ideas including those of aesthetic experience and the mysterious (Langer, 1953; Eisner, 2002; Egan, 1992), and an understanding of movement into a liminal space (Sheehy, 2004; Gee, 2004) to investigate dissonance as part of the suite of dynamic experiences within an active presence of imagination (Vygotsky, 2004).

First, I will present a definition of the theme of dissonance as it emerged from my data, followed by further investigation within the key event of the Scott Joplin writing which covered two days of learning in 2009. I conclude with a deeper discussion of the connection of dissonance with imagination informed more specifically by theory.

Dissonance

The first lesson of the jazz and writing unit covered two, forty-one minute class periods. I presented this lesson in each section of my classes so that an approximate total of eighty-four students participated during these two days of instruction. During this time, students listened to the music (unfamiliar to the majority of them) of Scott Joplin's ragtime and created images inspired by the sound of the music both in writing and visually in rough sketches or doodles. They then participated in a final exercise that combined fact writing with the writing generated from the sketching. These are the data that comprise the investigation presented in this chapter. The metaphor of the suite of dynamic experiences as I described earlier, first becomes evident in the analysis in these data of the experience of dissonance.

If I visualize a teaching and learning trajectory as a linear pathway of reception to the production of normative material, the intersection of the jazz and writing unit created a reorientation to a different trajectory. It established a generative un/folding of possibility, but, as we shall see, it does so through a dynamic of instability – of dissonance. I label the moment of this encounter the un/fold of *captivation.* It became the movement into, next to, through and beyond the space of the new trajectory that captivated a commitment, or willingness, to pursue learning in an unfamiliar space. This is where we encountered the (for us) new idea that jazz was something becoming relational to writing. At this un/fold of captivation the students and I not only encountered the experience of dissonance, but also, importantly, utilized dissonance as the dynamic to propel us forward, deeper into the study.

"*This writing makes you think,"* wrote one of my students on his Thinking Card. "*Its not black and white. Its a mystery.*" The word "mystery" is written in capitals and has a square drawn around it for emphasis. "*I'm sorry but I just don't get it*," wrote another student. *"This was really hard but it was fun to,"* asserted a third.

These comments underline the spectrum of feelings expressed by the students as we began our unit and first signaled to me the turn into the new trajectory. The students identified their work as unfamiliar and mysterious, something that was challenging them. The majority of these expressions were positive. Only a few students wrote a similar assertion as the student who didn't "get it." Feelings were definite one way or the other. A distinct sense of mystery, of being in unfamiliar learning territory characterized this new turn and no one wrote they felt ambivalent about it.

Encountering the mysterious has direct connections with notions of the imagination in learning contexts. In describing the mechanism of the creative imagination Vygotsky (2004) notes that a very complex process of reworking the accumulation of everyday material occurs out of which an adolescent constructs his fantasies. Vygotsky writes, "The most important components of this process are dissociation and association of the impressions acquired through perception" (p.25). What he means by dissociation is part of the process of creativity whereby elements as initially perceived through experience are broken up into isolated pieces and the natural associations between them broken. In other words, it is a process of making the familiar mysterious necessary to create new understandings and connections through recombination. This process has a very important and specific function. It is absolutely necessary, Vygotsky argues, if the imagination is going to operate further. To effect a recombination of the dissociated

elements is, he concludes, "the foundation of abstract thinking, the basis of concept formation" (2004, p.26). Thus, if students are learning in wholly predictable and familiar contexts, the furthering of possibility – of creating new knowledge – becomes truncated.

"In order to subsequently join together the various elements, a person must first break the natural association of elements in which they were initially perceived," writes Vygotsky (2004, p.25). Something is required to create that breakup. My data suggests dissonance, a collision with the mysterious, is one way to effect such a breakup. Dissonance in our experience disrupted the commonalty and familiarity of tasks associated with traditional schooling in order to move forward in new directions and open new possibilities. I find evidence of this in the evaluations of difficulty that continued in the student writing indicating encounters with dissonance. In their writing, students were clear about identifying characteristics setting this writing experience apart from previous experiences. One student wrote, *The writing I just did was very different, but I liked it. It was a challenge. It is a completely different art form. It isn't bad, but it is very abstract.* Another student observed, *I noticed that it is not as boring as normal… it makes sense in its own way, it gets you interested.* And one of the special education students wrote, *its really good I've Never wrote something so cool I like it* --

Students were challenged, but at the same time they were captivated. The encounter with jazz in our language arts class caused a ripple in the traditional trajectory, un/folding us into the interstices of a different space of teaching and learning. "*This writing isn't the same*," observes another student on her Thinking Card. "*It's different in so many ways."* I don't wonder what this student means by "this writing" but I do wonder what she means to compare it to. This writing isn't the same as what? Does she

mean the writing she accomplished was different from institutional forms of academic writing such as worksheet response or essay writing? The student concludes, *"You have to go beyond to find the true meaning that gives you goose bumps."* Thus, whatever writing it is different from, this form clearly challenges and ultimately connects with feeling.

Many of the students seemed intrigued, captivated by the possibilities of what they were doing in class. "*This writing is very unique and makes a thrilling journey,"* wrote a student and then goes on to compare the music of Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" to a "*good olden bar fight."* Another student writes about her experience, *"I think it's good … because it creates… words that you wouldn't normally get. It makes you read them in a way that you wouldn't even have thought to read them."* The un/fold of captivation created the possibility for something else to occur. Here was evidence suggesting that something out of the ordinary created new understanding and new capability.

Comments such as these began to define the emerging theme of dissonance. As the characteristics of this theme emerged from our encounter with jazz, I looked to musical terminology to help me name it. Within those definitions, dissonance is placed in opposition to consonance and is the implication of tension and disequilibrium (Hoffer, 2009). As remarked upon by the students, the experience they engaged with had to do with writing differing from types of traditional, academic writing. Breaking out of familiar pathways created opposition. This opposition would emerge with more clarity as I will discuss later when I investigate student comments about notions of correctness and incorrectness in the new forms of writing.

In his investigations into jazz improvisation, Berliner (1994) notes how some jazz musicians variously characterize dissonance as "outside harmonic invention" (p.319). In jazz improvisation as Berliner documents it, "playing outside" has the capability of generating interesting and inventive sounds, but if too far outside it runs the risk of alienating to the point of becoming unacceptable or inaccessible for others improvising in the same group. "I'm sorry but I just don't get it," is the student comment I take to illustrate this point. Dissonance has the capability of adding dynamism, but too much of it can create an anarchistic musical environment difficult to negotiate. Fortunately, discomfort or alienation in this respect was limited as we began our study, outweighed by the intriguing sense of possibility because mystery can be fun as well as confusing or uncomfortable. *"I don't know what's going on but it is so cool,"* wrote a student.

Rinzler (2008) writes that dissonance can be considered a metaphor for freedom, "implying freedom from the rules of harmony, or through randomly chosen sounds" (p.58). I interpret from the student comments that "being different" indicates a movement away – freedom -- from the rules of grammar and writing mechanics. Within our new space of learning, this opens the dimension of breaking the rules or of rebellion.

"Before I came to 8th grade we could think everything as regular," wrote a student later in the study. *"I think it is a lot more interesting than just a normal sentence,"* adds another describing the writing she did that accompanied her doodle. Does thinking everything as "regular" or writing "normal" mean expressing and learning in rule driven forms of writing? What I mean by rule driven forms of writing encompasses the idea of teacher response to student writing primarily encapsulated in corrections of spelling, grammar and writing mechanics. Rule driven forms of writing

are predicated on correctness, not expressiveness or exploration. Remember Vygotsky (2004) believes imagination to be an active process closely connected with language development. In the jazz and writing unit we were breaking away from scripted response territory and moving into experimentation with language connecting to feeling and invention.

Vygotsky (2004) theorized that for adolescents, imagination is an interiorized form of childhood play. He argued that the foundations of this developing form remained concrete but were becoming progressively abstract in nature. And, importantly for this research, Vygotsky (2004) described imagination in adolescence as characterized by a drive to creative expression through language -- specifically through literary productions such as keeping diaries or writing poetry. The experience of dissonance, the disruption of the orderly approaches to familiar modes of writing and learning, foregrounds the experience of new knowledge and new ways of seeing engaging the participation of the imagination through creative expression.

Three characteristics of dissonance -- encountering the mysterious, inventiveness, and the notion of freedom – emerge from the un/fold of captivation. Throughout the following data chapters, the theme of dissonance will develop as one experience within a dynamic suite of experiences. From the writing of my students I began to think of the experience of dissonance as a condition for growth if we could tolerate the instability it created. I argue that without the experience of dissonance we would never have come to engage the imagination in active participation in our learning. In the next section I take up the key event of the Scott Joplin lesson to further investigate how this experience of

dissonance took shape. I begin the story at the beginning, the very first day of the encounter…

Key Event: Scott Joplin and the Experience of Ragtime

"…and as they came in I handed each of them a blank piece of paper and a handful of colored pencils as a small voice hammered distantly in my head, 'Can this possibly, possibly work again?'"

Field Notes reflection May 4, 2009

My students crowd noisily into my classroom as always. They seem to be as excited as I am to begin the jazz and writing unit. We have already discussed the project in broad terms -- the experimental nature of the unit, the idea of using creative writing to explore style and expressive writing techniques -- but I think their deepest anticipation centers on the idea that we will be listening to jazz. I am not suspicious that anyone has as their central feeling of excitement the possible writing that will be produced – except for me and that is only because I have seen the kind of writing that can happen and I am hopeful of it again even in this abbreviated time period we have been allotted.

"What are we going to listen to?" one student eagerly asks me as he discovers the stereo set up at the front of the classroom. Has he forgotten already that today is the day we are starting our jazz and writing unit? It's possible, it is Monday after all and the first class of the morning. The heads of my students are mostly filled with sleep and the memories of weekend activities.

"Do we take notes with colored pencils?" another student questions. Nudging his seat partner he demands to trade his green pencil for her red one.

Eventually we settle in and I explain the first activity. We were going to listen to a famous piece of ragtime entitled *Maple Leaf Rag* by the composer Scott Joplin. No one had really heard of him. A few of the band students seemed to have a vague memory of something, but no one volunteered that they were familiar with his music.

"As you listen to the music," I tell the class, "draw some simple doodles on your paper. Draw what you hear in the music."

After clarifying that doodles were rough sketches, not finished pieces of drawing and that they could be representational or abstract, I was confronted by a group of expressions ranging from the frowning impossibility of drawing on the faces of some, to the apparent glee of "drawing whatever comes to mind" creasing the faces of others.

I start the music.

For the most part hesitation fills the room. Tapping feet – yes -- drumming fingers – yes -- nodding heads and smiles – yes and yes. Actual doodling – very little.

"Go!" I encourage. "Draw! Draw whatever the music suggests to you."

Vygotsky (2004) theorizes that a turn away from drawing in adolescence marks a critical juncture in the development of the imagination. Adolescents stop drawing because they come to view their efforts too critically. For Vygotsky, this sense of critique signals a strong increase in subjective experience along with "a growth and deepening of interior life" (p.35). As adolescents begin to lose interest in the naïve games of childhood, Vygotsky claims the imagination "undergoes a revolution, a destruction of equilibrium and a search for a new equilibrium" (p.35). He theorizes this is a crucial step in the circular path of imagination from childhood play to interiorized adolescent fantasy to the productive imagination of the adult.

My purpose in having the students draw in response to listening to the music was an attempt to connect them to the music through image without using the medium of text. I was simply looking for a novel way into connection. By having the students doodle I sought to broaden the experience with the music to something beyond just hearing it. Fleckenstein (2003) in her notion of "imageword" views the notion of *image* as a personal perception based on real or imagined experiences influenced by bodies, cultures, places and time. Some evidence of this type of personal perception is seen in the combinatorial process the students experienced later when they came to put together the doodles, their writing, and facts. Fleckenstein writes: "Images tend to nest a range of senses, resulting in meanings that are collaborative products of sound, sight, and touch, providing full and resonant significance to meaning" (p.20). In having the students doodle, I was attempting to open that nesting.

The collaborative products of this process, when students would combine writing with drawing, were still a little in the future at this point but they would eventually emerge. In the meantime, I strolled around the classroom peeking at the activity of my students, encouraging, smiling, as the unfamiliar sound of the *Maple Leaf Rag* bounced its way into the room. We had not yet spoken about syncopation, a musical sound characteristic of ragtime. I was hoping to get to the term after seeing a visual representation of it emerge in some of the doodles. In past years students might sketch a staircase zigzag or some other type of ragged or jagged line visually mirroring the irregular beat characteristic of syncopation in the music and this would be how we would discover it. Syncopation could then become part of the sound of the words student would

choose to create their compositions. However, if my students wouldn't doodle, there wouldn't be much chance of discovering syncopation in this way.

Though they had the colored pencils and had been invited to use markers, crayons, or other implements, I observed the majority of students choose only one implement, usually a plain, ordinary pencil, and hesitantly begin. Some students, at last, began doodling timidly in the smallest space possible with barely visible, ghost-like markings. Others made bold, impudent sweeps and slashes with – was I imagining it? – one eye on me to see if I would correct this activity as not appropriate "drawing." Then there were the few serious artists who bent concentrated faces over their papers in apparent determination to uphold their artistic reputations. Eventually, in every class, even though there were slow starters and those who continued to look uncomfortable, no one chose not to participate.

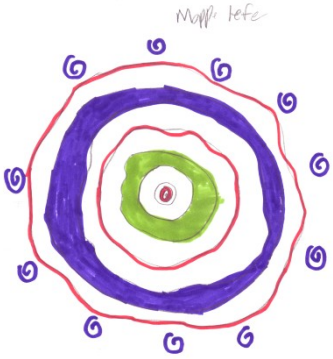
"I can't draw," whispers one boy as I drift by.

"It isn't really drawing," I tell him. "It's doodling. It doesn't have to look like anything."

"Am I doing this right?" another girl asks as I pause by her desk.

"If you're making marks on that paper and listening to the music, you're doing it right," I assure her.

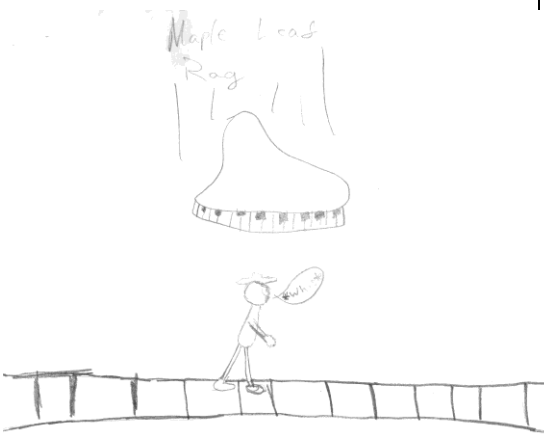
Hannah: There are ragged and pointy lines because the music was choppy. The music couldn't be missed and everyone was having a grand old time



Ely: The malddy was daffon overe go a round

(The melody was deafening over a [merry-go-round])

Ben: They are all happy and fun things. forward moving.



Dan: I was thinking about when an old cartoon character would walk down a street and a piano or gavel would fall on there head.

Figure 1. Maple Leaf Doodles

This is where the notion of "doing it right" first surfaced. I had begun to discover traces of it in the written student comments and had begun coding for it, but it wasn't until I reviewed this narrative in my field notes that I discovered the moment it first

appeared. My data suggests that this notion was clearly evident as we entered the jazz and writing experience, but coding for it in later bundles of data reveals its complete absence. Because of this later disappearance, I identify it as characteristic of the experience of dissonance.

Clearly articulating Vygotsky's assertion of the development in adolescence of personal critique in the turn toward the subjective, one student writes on her Thinking Card, *"I think it was an interesting way of writing. I could have done better with mine."* Another student recorded his thoughts this way: "*Writing this little bit wasn't hard but it wasn't easy because basically it wasn't right or wrong but I would prefer it to be right."* This self critique might be a verbalization of the interiorization of the imagination as identified by Vygotsky, but what were the implications of this to our learning? These comments, especially the statement "I would prefer it to be right," suggested to me that some of my students were expecting to participate in this experience in the roles of students seeking authoritative evaluation from the teacher for validation. The teacher would tell them if they were doing the tasks correctly and if not, the teacher would tell them what they needed to do to correct it.

"I could have done better" indicates a self critique of the work where no critique was encouraged. Instead, I had tried to foster acceptance of the material produced to serve as possibilities in moving forward, not as evaluation of right or wrong. There was no specific correctness in the way to accomplish the tasks in this experience, there was only the doing. Some students were taking issue with this ambiguity. However, my data suggests that something occurred characteristic of the experience of dissonance that allowed us to use this ambiguity as a power to move forward.

Silin (2006), agreeing with Britzman (1998), advocates a pedagogy of teaching that fosters in students "the ability to tolerate ambiguity, complexity, and uncertainty" as opposed to curriculum that instills "false notions of truth, knowledge, and linear paths of learning" (p.233). But it is a great risk to enter into such uncertainty and why would students go with this? What comes into play to help them tolerate ambiguity and feel comfortable enough to explore? My data suggests it has something to do with the subsequent interactions the students experienced. I return to descriptions in my field notes (2009) to uncover this moment.

After the music ends the students turn to each other in chattering excitement. This always happens. Apparent shyness over whatever was created seems to vanish as students share with each other, laughing over their perceived clumsiness in drawing as well as *ohhing* over someone's more artistic rendition. I eavesdrop on their conversations.

"Look what I did," one student declares to his neighbor. "It looks like my little sister did this."

"What's that spiky thing?" asks another of his laughing neighbor.

"It's the sun exploding."

"Are you sure? It looks like my lunch reappearing" (Field Notes, 2009).

In the experience of creating the doodles students manifested a range of capabilities and differing levels of confidence. Contrary to traditional modes of evaluation imposing a hierarchy of correctness toward improvement, in the Scott Joplin event a range of collective, peer generated responses developed. Some of the students had a high level of ability to draw. This was recognized and validated by the others as

something to admire. Some students composed humor through their doodled responses and this too, found appreciation through shared laughter. In consideration of attempts at drawn representations that did not quite fit the self critiques being imposed, others discovered sympathy from peers in the same situation. I view these examples as exemplifying individual instances of empowerment within a shared experience.

Gee (2004) identifies "affinity spaces" as "a place or set of places where people can affiliate with others based primarily on shared activities, interests, and goals" (p. 73). Affinity spaces allow for various routes of participation in an arena where different kinds of knowledge are fostered and leadership is informal. As students interacted with humor and acknowledgement of those individuals with drawing strengths, they began to formulate this affinity space. My data suggests that the social, interactive nature of collaboration within a specialized space of learning is the key ingredient to making dissonance an ally in moving forward.

As I bring the class back together, I look for the opportunity to introduce the idea of syncopation because this, after all, is the specific goal I have in mind for today's class. I want to teach the students that syncopation is the uneven, unexpected rhythm characteristic of the sound of ragtime. I want to suggest to students the notion that they could use this effect in their writing. I begin by asking for identification of the characteristics of the music. Can they, I ask, explain how -- or if – what they listened to appears or is somehow translated into their doodles? Many students quickly identify the "jumpy" or "ragged" sound quality of the music and point to doodles that look like jagged streaks of cartooned lightning or staircases that dot their papers.

This is exactly the response I was hoping for. The introduction of the term syncopation is on the tip of my tongue, but before I can suggest it, a student blurts out her identification of another shape. This is a spiral. Several students scattered around the room have interpreted the music in this way too and they are quick to say so in a cacophony of comments. I try to refocus attention on the zigzags but students are more interested in the spirals. Are these more intriguing to them because, characteristically of an experience with dissonance, they do not conform to what is expected?

I am somewhat at a loss as to how to relate this shape of a spiral to the qualities I personally hear in ragtime, but this is an explanation I will not be required to produce. The students, taking the lead in the improvisational style of learning I would eventually come to expect in this unit, explain that to them, the spiral represents the recurring quality, or repeating quality, they distinguish in the *Maple Leaf Rag*. This makes sense to me, but, again, before I can introduce the topic of syncopation, which is on my mind, other students jump in taking the observations in yet another direction by interpreting whole stories in their more representational doodles. Chase scenes, dancing, and fighting are common.

My data suggests that a characteristic of dissonance is a disruption of thinking in linear, hierarchical evaluations replaced instead with a collective understanding of the experience. This allows for multiple entry points of interpretation. In dissonance the roles of teacher as authority and student as passive receiver begin to break down. In the stories and the identification of the spiral figure, the students determine the interpretation that seemed most relevant to them. Syncopation would have to wait.

Random selections of doodles from my bundle of data illustrate the range of interpretation at work here. One sketch shows a stick figure plummeting headfirst down a line of zigzags representing stairs. At the bottom of the paper two more stick figures seem to be running, one in pursuit of the other. The student writes,

I drew about people getting chased also a guy trying to climb the stars but he just couldn't make it to the top

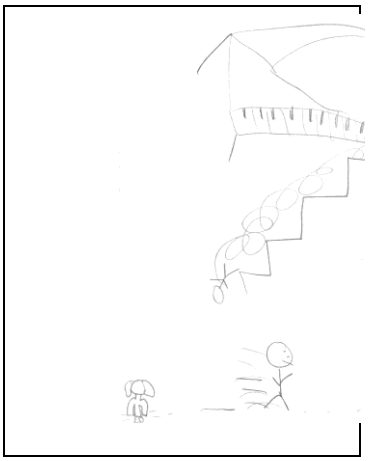


Figure 2. Maple Leaf Doodle

I love the phrase, "I drew about." Usually we write about something, meaning we tell a story, narrate events, fill in details. To "draw about" suggests to me a conflation of two activities – story telling and drawing. The student writes about her stick figure trying to climb "stars." If I look at her sketch I think she means to write "stairs." I prefer the image of climbing stars.

Another student writes, "*There are ragged and pointy lines because the music was choppy."* And that is exactly what he has drawn. And another spiral drawing student writes, "*The music is smooth, but jumps around."*

Images and music have a long history of association. Berliner (1994) notes how jazz vocalist Roberta Baum perceived pieces of music to be illuminating. Berliner writes, " …she remembered the piece's events through visual and emotional imagery so lively that they entered her mind's eye as cartoon dancers stretching and spinning in space, 'doing incredible things'" (p.71). This seems to me to be suggestive of a connection deeper than a mere interpretation of the rhythm of sound. Did the differences in the doodles reflect differences in emotional connection? There certainly seemed to be emotion suggestive in a description of a chase though dark alleys, but how could I evaluate the emotion present in an abstract spiral?

Arnheim (1969) writes, "Any phenomenon experienced by the mind can acquire abstractness if it is seen as a distillate of something more complex. Such a phenomenon can be a highly rarified pattern of forces or it can be an event or object in which the relevant properties of a kind of event or object are strikingly embodied" (p.156). I take this to mean that within an individual's experience of something, their interpretation may take on a form of abstraction, but this does not negate their sense connection to it. In other words, an emotional connection such as fear, is just as likely to be relevant in a spiral connotative of instability as in a pictorial account of a chase through darkness.

With one eye on the clock and the diminishing forty-two minutes of class, I ask the students to compose a sentence or two describing their doodles. I encourage them to create images in their sentences, for example if a jagged doodle reminded them of an

exploding sun, they should write that down. Again within chattering commentary to each other, the students do this, asking for the opinion of their peers as to whether or not their doodles were reflective of their ideas.

"Does this look like a monster to you?"

"What should I say these swirls look like?" (Field Notes, 2009)

In the remaining ten minutes of class I finally describe to the students the musical technique of *syncopation* – many of the band students are familiar with the term, which was helpful – I discuss how the ragged quality of the *Maple Leaf Rag* is a result of this musical technique. The bell rings as we are involved in this final discussion and the students deliver their papers of doodles to me in a flurry of nervous shuffle leaving my room in a whirlwind to be on time to their next class.

At the end of this day I note in my journal, "…classes went so fast I feel out of breath. It's like running in traffic" (Field Notes, 2009). I was expressing the crowded feeling I had in truncating this unit for the sake of time. I was concerned that such swift movement, especially into this unfamiliar territory, would create an insurmountable barrier for student participation. Another concern for me was the displacement of thought of our work as the demands of hurrying into the next classroom took over. Would the students remember the idea of syncopation, but more – would they retain the momentum of their apparent curiosity? One final notation in my journal read: "Kids are hooked though – I think."

Day Two: What the Facts Really Mean

The bundle of data I analyze in this section includes the Scott Joplin doodles and description with the addition of the fact writings from the biography reading, and the riff

writing which combined the facts with written images suggested by the doodles. I also continue to draw from the final student evaluations addressing the experience of the Scott Joplin key event. I accompany these data with the continuing narrative of this first experience in the jazz and writing unit to provide contiguity.

Dissonance occurs when the familiar landscape of learning is eclipsed by an encounter with something unfamiliar. Learners move off the map and encounter the mysterious. There is no right or wrong answer, correctness or incorrectness. Feelings of fear and insecurity may accompany this experience and if overwhelming will send the adventurer home to safety effectively discouraging the movement into new knowledge. In this section as I narrate the conclusion of the Scott Joplin investigation, I pay attention to evidence that shows how dissonance became the tinder for moving us forward.

Tuesday, the day following the first encounters with Scott Joplin and *The Maple Leaf Rag*, saw my students returning into my classroom. As they entered I handed them a large index card and their doodles. With a sinking feeling that my worst fears concerning the deadening of their curiosity were transpiring, I observed some students barely glance at their doodles as I returned them. Others looked curiously at them as though unfamiliar with what they had done only twenty-four hours previously. Others, however, asked cheerfully if we were going to listen to more music and draw again because that had been "fun."

As the class settled I asked, reciting from the ancient script of traditional schooling practices, for the students to record their name and date on the index cards and prepare to listen to something I had to read to them. Introducing the information I was about to present, I explained that in this class we would explore the person who had

composed the *Maple Leaf Rag*. Students were to listen to a biographical story about Scott Joplin and jot down two or three facts about him that they found to be interesting, or that caught their attention for some reason.

Pencils poised in classic note taking attitude, students signaled readiness to receive information. I read aloud a brief biographical story of Scott Joplin that I had composed culling information from several common, encyclopedic sources. I concluded my reading and asked the students to compose their facts into a few sentences and write them on the index card.

The characteristics of these short pieces of fact writing were extraordinarily similar from student to student in every section of my classes. As fact writing it had, unsurprisingly, much the same content. The characteristics I found interesting included the careful scribing of the material. There appeared an attention to detail and a universal quality of neatness of the handwriting in direct contrast to the scribbles from the day before. There also appeared the completeness of sentence structure, the complexity of that structure, and the precise use of punctuation including commas and capitalization. These were skills I felt my eighth graders completely capable of demonstrating, however, they rarely chose to do so in rough draft class work. Clearly they were viewing this work to be formal in some respect.

Carrie writes on her index card: *Started as a Ragtime composer, wanted to be in Opera, unfortunately failed. Died in 1917 at a mental institution, thought he was no good.*

Ryan records*: Scott Joplin was famous for Maple Leaf Rag. Wanted to write opera, but failed and died in a mental hospital.*

Jeremy writes: *Scott Joplin was a child Genius who could play the piano at a young age. Though his mother died he still went for his dream to become a composer.*

These are only three examples out of many but they are typical of the responses produced by my classes. Everything about these pieces of fact writing seems carefully constructed. I had used the term "jot." *Jot down a couple of facts you find interesting,* I had instructed. Nowhere had I indicated that students should write formally or in complete sentences. Yet they did. Even students generally having difficulty with scribing and composing formal sentences wrote legibly and well. Dalton, a student in the special education program whose writing was usually difficult to read carefully and clearly writes: *Scott Joplins Mom Worked as a Maid cleaning houses & get mones for Joplins pino Lesson. Scott JOPLIN died in a mental hospital in 1919.*

During this exercise, I situated myself as the teacher in front of the classroom. I presented a teacher-like request to "jot down facts." I observed that unlike the class periods of the day before, the students were silent as this task of writing was undertaken. Unlike the doodle activity the students did not feel compelled to share their work or to comment on it with their peers. This was serious writing and there was no joking in the class. A few hands rose with requests to me from students to repeat dates or details, followed by careful scribing of this knowledge into the fact writing. Those were the only points of dialogue that occurred between us.

When I asked the students to doodle while listening to the music the day before, I felt we challenged boundaries of normative schooling practices. We began our investigation into jazz not with careful research and outlines of information, but with music and sketches. We moved into uncertain realms of learning informed by aesthetic

theories touching the landscapes of interiorized imagination. This was not the case on the second day as students sat attentively listening and recording facts.

Sheehy (2004) identifies a "thick place" of learning characterized by a flow of ideas and information along a well-known trajectory from teacher to student to teacher. She describes the learning experiences within this space as experienced "passively" by students. Bodies and ideas are "turned inward" and follow a "narrow path" of learning (102) engendering a stifling alienation for some. Sheehy contrasts the thick place with a "thin place" of learning and notes how the thick trajectory of ideas thins out into a distribution along multiple routes both real and imagined. Here literacy practices as she observed them became focused on in other areas rather than exclusively on teacher identified objects of study. In thin places of learning the teacher no longer dominates the trade of ideas. Instead students become competent participants in the learning experience.

At first glance it would seem that the fact writing placed us firmly in a thick place of learning. Information delivery in the form of reading a short biography placed us in a well-established trajectory. Information followed a route from myself as teacher, to my students as learners, and back again to me as the authority for validation or clarification of the work being done. However, I do not see this moment as a stepping away from the mysterious, I view it as part of the balancing act of the whole.

Silin (2003) writes, "Literacy, and by extension the curriculum as text, becomes pleasurable when it exceeds social utility, leaves behind the familiar and the well rehearsed and moves into uncharted territories where loss, discomfort, playfulness – even sexuality – can be fully expressed" (p.228). My data suggests that this is what happens in

the experience of dissonance. It became important to note and understand how the process of making the familiar strange occurred *in order* to travel further into possibility. This movement forward would not be possible if the mysterious became overwhelming.

After the students recorded the fact writing, they returned to a consideration of the doodles they had created the day before and the written description or interpretation of the sketches. Carrie's doodle is comprised mostly of a cluster of scribbles. Amongst the scribbles two grinning cartoon faces appear along with a heart with a ribbon or what might be a road bisecting it. The description Carrie wrote on her sketch reflected her sense of being in an unfamiliar territory: *Crazy, odd, weird, very different. It made no sense, nothing familiar.*

She makes some sense however, when she combines the images from her doodles with her fact writing into her riff writing. In this piece of writing, Carrie is able to thread together the unfamiliar with the more concrete world of the facts she had:

> *Menacing grin*
> *his fingers played upon the lonely piano*
> *waiting for his heart to break*
> *to shatter all alone*

On her Thinking Card, in her final evaluation of her experience with the writing and listening, drawing and composing in the Scott Joplin lesson, Carrie writes:

> *I liked it [her final riff writing on Scott Joplin] a <u>lot</u> more because it was so abstract, emotional, and poetic. It just makes you depressed hearing about it. It had a lot more value then the other one [her facts writing] we did before. You were looking at more in depth rather than the surface.*

In paying attention to how knowledge becomes meaningful in the lives of learners I consider Vygotsky's (2004) assertion that imagination develops through rich

experience. An argument presented by Egan (1992) gains relevancy in this light when he warns against "the assumption that everyday experience must be a *starting point* for engaging the imagination" (p.73). This, he asserts is profoundly misleading. Instead, he advocates for a dialectical process between everyday experience and "knowledge that is most distant and different." Far from creating isolation as a result of encountering the mysterious, Egan argues that a dialectical engagement stimulates the imagination allowing us to see everyday experience in a new light. He argues that for adolescents this form of engagement "seems to be part of an orientation process" (p.73). It is the way we can make sense of the world and our experiences in it.

Other students as well seemed to be negotiating through the experience of dissonance toward new perspectives. Jeremy observes on his Thinking Card:

When I wrote it [the final riff writing] I had a weird feeling. Then when I read it I felt powerful. Full of energy. Just those 15 words can explain a whole career of a piano genius.

This is what Jeremy wrote in his riff writing:

Poor wandering mind
musical memory climbs through his ghost
a tornado whipes away the dream

Several days later, Jeremy chose to return to this writing to revise it into a finished poem:

Haunted Dreams

Haunted dreams
bake in the night

crushed happiness
slides through stars

musical memory
climbs through his ghost

thunder boomed and sparkled
magic was created

On his Thinking Card Jeremy evaluates this poem. He notes the items that he is proud of, the writing that captured his attention. He also points out something he had never before considered:

My poem is about Scott Joplin. I like how I said the thunder boomed and sparkled when magic was created. Also how the musical memory climbs through his ghost. It seems like the music is stuck in his ghost. You never really think of thunder sparkling either.

These were the ways in which the students began to negotiate the experience of dissonance. I believe the normative practice of scribing the transmitted information of the biography served as an anchor. It also became the contrast that enabled us to recognize crossing the boundaries of familiar learning experiences into affinity spaces. We began to view our work in a breakaway context believing that such action would be a valuable or desirable thing to do.

I continued to find evidence in the data suggesting students were willing to tolerate the experience of dissonance and move forward into new trajectories of learning. "*It was a challenge to come up with something so abstract,"* wrote one student adding, "*I think it makes you think really hard and just makes you want to wrack your brain."* Expressions such as this, of finding the experience challenging due to the unique and unfamiliar approach to writing, were numerous. Attendant on many of these views, importantly, was an added sense that the challenge was motivating. It made one *want* to "wrack your brain," or in other words the student felt compelled to rise to the challenge. Because this experience was so specifically predicated on terrain defying right/wrong

assessments, it was important for students to engage in something they felt was worth the pursuit in order to engage in the activity for its own sake (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

In the beginning of the jazz and writing unit the element of the mysterious, as a catalyst, seemed to be propelling us into such a thin place of learning. How were the students expressing this? *"But I liked it,"* wrote some of the students. Here was evidence that some of the students were willing to continue forward. *"It makes me think so hard… and my mind just absorbs it,"* wrote a student. This sounded optimistic to me. Somehow the disruption to the normative role of learning had created the ability to *absorb* the material, an action seemingly more intense than mere *learning*.

Other students elaborated their thinking and began to write about characteristics that seemed to define this experience for them. I began to identify the motif of emotion or feeling trending toward Fleckenstein's territory of *imageword*. I code for this motif throughout my data and discover in the experience of dissonance that it emerges with specific characteristics. Emotion becomes the identified connective quality ultimately uniting the fact writing and doodles within the pieces of riff writing and it allows for the development of point of view.

> *It [the Riff writing] mixes facts and emotions. When you write you feel that you are informing yet somewhat entertaining your readers. It makes you think more to find out what the facts really mean.*

Facts have meaning. They carry information. This student, however, indicates there is something more – something that the facts "really" mean. Is this a suggestion that something beyond information is required for complete understanding? Another student writes, *"The words dance off the page into your mind. It makes an orange-yellow feeling in my brain."* These data suggest that feeling generated through this experience, and

manifested in a communication mode, takes on an additional layer of meaning beyond simple information or even entertainment.

Following the scholarship set forth by Cheville (2005), Sumara (2002), and Fleckenstein (2003), I find an understanding of embodiment that recognizes a complex interweaving of the parts of self – memory, emotions, experiences, and desires – with learning processes and uniting both intellectual and emotional factors within the full developmental cycle of the imagination (Vygotsky, 2004). Fleckenstein specifically argues for "incorporating the corporeal dimension of resistance, accommodation, and enculturation into what has too long been conceived as a predominately linguistic phenomenon" (p. 51-52). All of these thinkers build their understandings from a body of common theory comprised of the thinking of Vygotsky (1978, 1986), Bourdieu (1977), and de Certeau (1984) which are concerned with how thinking has its roots in the everyday experiences and activities of human beings.

This work underscores what Christina Haas (1996) identifies as the "materiality of literacy: - how utterly bound to the physical world of bodies is writing" (p46). *"What I like about this writing,"* observes a student, "*is it shows emotions of one another & feels more relative to me & I can connect my own thoughts with some facts."* Comments such as this and the ones noted above indicate that within the experience of dissonance literacy practices are embodied and mediated through the interiorized imagination of the adolescent writers. This process nurtures agency and forms in resistance to disembodied processes of learning prevalent in such atomized practices as grammar drills and artificially formulated essays.

Another characteristic of the motif of emotion is that it serves to create point of view. One student describes it this way:

I think that this piece is exciting! Because you don't just say a bunch of Information you say it with more high emotion. It shows a point of view.

Whose point of view? This would become an interesting question later in my development of the notion of inhabited identities but for now I read it as the beginnings of reaching toward embodiment and "critical engagement" (Dockter, Haug, & Lewis, 2010). That there is a point of view to be understood indicates there is a point of understanding to be explored.

Other students made the same connections of feeling to modes of communicating information:

It [use of syncopation] also made it [the riff writing] sound more emotional and made the reader think about what was really happening.

[The riff writing] draws the reader in more. [The summary writing of facts] is just plain old facts with almost no energy. [The riff writing] almost talks to you.

I got [Scott Joplin's] life through the writing, not the facts.

Emotion is identified as a form of energy, as tinder, as a spark of inspiration propelling a reader of this material into consideration of a "point of view." In this way, more than just information is achieved through this writing experience. And where had the idea of point of view come from? I had not mentioned it. I was hoping students would make personal connections of a stronger nature than knowledge of the facts of the music and lives of the musicians, but I had never expressed this thinking aloud and had not even considered it as manifesting as a development of point of view. Also interesting to me

was how the identification of a "reader" – someone other than the student who produced the writing – was being created. Here was an assumption that someone other than the student writer would be reading these pieces of riff writing. I wondered if I was "the reader" or if the idea was broader than that, even more cosmopolitan.

There was evidence that the writers themselves were making connections through the conduit of emotions in the form of image:

> *I think it's good … because it creates … words that you wouldn't normally get. It makes you read them in a way that you wouldn't even have thought to read them. It puts a better image in my mind of what I am writing about. It is the best way to make a new point of view with emotion and you really can get a lot out of the writing.*

Is a "better image" one that leaves pictorial representations behind? **"***It* ***makes*** you read**,"** writes the student. It compels you in a special way, a new way, one you didn't know about before the encounter with dissonance.

Data in this section of my research suggests a powerful movement through the experience of dissonance into a liminal space of learning where shifting perspectives and a sense of the mysterious compelled us into forms of critical engagement. Here, the experience of dissonance invites the play of the mysterious to operate in more complexity than merely as a mechanism of novelty or curiosity; more as a provocation forcing redefinitions of what constitutes acceptable forms of writing. The encounter with the mysterious as a catalyst moved us forward into further possibilities for exploration even as points of orientation and disorientation intermingled. Engagement in this way was formulated within modes of personal agency, feeling, and imagination.

It is at this un/folding of liminal space where challenge, insecurity, and fear mix together. In the next chapter, taking a closer look at the riff writings, I will explore the

implications of moving about in this space and discover new challenges inherent in issues of possibility and choice.

CHAPTER V

DANCING FIERCELY INTO THE NIGHT: THE MOVEMENT TO POSSIBILITY

The emergence of the experience of vibrance shows how the suite of dynamic experiences interrelates. Dissonance at first might be viewed as an experience operating separately, but an investigation of the data presented in this chapter suggests it is never wholly severed from the influences of the other experiences described in this research. It is the relationship of the suite of experiences as they move with and against each other that creates the un/folding dynamic. Dissonance opened the possibility for the experience of vibrance.

Moving deeper into my data, the experience of vibrance emerged. As I continued to code for dissonance, I discovered a shift in the characteristics of this theme. While a sense of the unfamiliar remained present and continued to be identified by the students in their response writing, the character of that identification changed. Expressions evaluating the significance of an individual's work shifted from captivation – as a hook to curiosity – to a sense of invention and empowerment. Present within the affinity space of learning were new possibilities of action as we began to move along the un/fold of improvisation.

I use the key event of *Touring with Duke Ellington* to discover the defining characteristics of the experience of vibrance. I then focus my investigation primarily within data gathered in 2009 during the Scott Joplin and Louis Armstrong lessons.

Defining Vibrance: Touring with Duke Ellington

This key event centers around two pieces of writing from the Duke Ellington lesson in 2006. I used portions of one poem in the introduction to this dissertation. Now I present it more fully to illuminate the characteristics of the experience of vibrance. I use this key event only as description to explicate the distinguishing features of vibrance. In the section following this discussion I dig deeply into my data and investigate in specific detail the sometimes subtle and complex nuances of this dynamic as it emerged and as it is associated with processes of the imagination. For now I confine my observations to defining qualities only.

In 2006 I gave a presentation at the *Between the Lakes: Interlochen Symposium for Readers and Writers* at the Interlochen Center for the Arts in Michigan. I delivered my presentation entitled *Alternating Energies: Using Jazz to Empower Adolescent Writers* to an audience of musicians, parents, high school students, and writers. Kayla wrote one of the poems I discussed. She based her writing on the classroom encounter with the music and biography of Duke Ellington, specifically his composition *Tourist Point of View.* Here is her completed poem:

From A Tourist Point of View
With the blue moon slowly shifting,
Beneath the opera white clouds,
I linger quietly between the back alleys,
Only the clunky of my black-eyed boots
A code red scarf around my underface,

I spot only fancy in the streetlights,
A dumpster with cardboard gathered inside,
But beneath is citywonders,

A fellowman comes close, holding a cloth,
Holding a glow of tray,
As Johnny Hodges percolates the air,
A woman wears a long shimmer,
The rompfloor fills with dancers,
"Tricky" Sam growls with danger,
Echoes fiercefully,

But the most wonderful sight,
was the chandelier

After I shared this poem, the audience generated many questions. *Why the unusual wordplay? How did the student create such original, vivid imagery? How could an eighth grader make such a strong connection, be so obviously inspired by a piece of jazz music?* The answers to these questions emerge from the heart of the dynamic experience of vibrance. I choose this poem to begin the discussion set forth in this data chapter because I feel it is highly illustrative of this dynamic. The experience of vibrance is a mode of improvisation and invention within a specialized space of learning where students take risks. Following the path opened by dissonance and the disruption of normative patterns of learning, students in the jazz and writing unit moved into a space where they began to exercise a sense of fearlessness and curiosity over the manipulation

of their material. Evidence of such invention and experimentation can be found in Kayla's poem.

The title of the poem refers to the Duke Ellington composition *Tourist Point of View* and signals to the reader that in some way the imagery of this poem is connected to the Ellington music. As in the Scott Joplin writings described in the previous chapter, Kayla was involved in essentially the same jazz and writing unit in 2006. She listened to the piece of music, created the accompanying doodles and riff writing, listened to a biography and extracted facts of personal interest, and then proceeded to develop her short, fragmented work into a lengthier version. I no longer have Kayla's original doodle, but I include the riff writing she wrote to accompany it:

With the code red flower on top of his hat, Duke wanted to look wealthy. His hat, opera white, was fitting to the right slightly. The railroad styled twigs struck springly. The feather swifting in the soft breeze remind him of the night's blue moon. Him, Duke Ellington, wanted the rich audience to see him as a fancy fellowman.

What I notice in this piece of riff writing is the inventive language. Kayla combines unusual adjective noun combinations such as the *code red flower* and the *opera white* of his hat. She includes invented words such as *springly* and *swifting.* And she creates inventive combinations such as *fellowman*. I note too, that the combination of *fellowman* with the adjective *fancy* creates a spunky alliteration. Invention and experimentation such as this are defining characteristics in the experience of vibrance.

I focused on the qualities of inventiveness and word play in looking for an appropriate term to name this new dynamic. I chose the word *vibrance* from within musical terminology to frame this experience and shape the metaphor emerging from my data. Within musical discourse and the common definition of the word, *vibrance* is an action described as a shaking back and forth or a resounding as in the vibrations created

by the striking of a chord. In this way, vibrance is characterized by a specific kind of action. In the jazz and writing activities, my data suggests that the actions of the experience of vibrance are the actions of engagement, risk taking, and invention.

How is the inventiveness generated and what form does it take? How is it connected to processes of the imagination? Why do students risk using it in their writing? How do student writers express their response to use of invention in this way and what conclusions can I draw from that? These questions create interesting folds in my investigation. I take them up in specific detail in the next section of this chapter as the experience of vibrance continued to emerge from my data in surprising, powerful ways.

In the second draft of Kayla's poem, she attempts to elaborate on the imagery and ideas of her riff writing:

With the blue moon slowly shifting,
Beneath the white opera clouds,
Duke snuck quietly between the back allies,
Only the clunky of his black-eyed boots
A code red scarf around his under face,

Spotting only fancy under the streetlights,
A dumpster with cardboard gathered inside,
But beneath that was the city of wonders,

A fellowman came close, holding a cloth,
Hold a glow of tray fiercefully,
A woman wearing a long slinky dress,
Shimmering in the candlelight,
But the most wonderful sight was
The chandelier.

What I still like about this writing is Kayla's continued use of invention and how she has begun to elaborate it now with a story. Duke "snuck quietly between the back allies" snatching glimpses of "fancy" and a "city of wonder." A sinister "fellowman" comes close and a woman shimmers in candlelight. Within the landscape of the strange

and mysterious that characterizes dissonance, student writers begin a shift into vibrance with this characteristic of play and invention. This is the action that distinguishes the un/fold of improvisation.

My data suggests two understandings of improvisation: improvisation as invention and improvisation as conversation. In the example of Kayla's poem, improvisation as invention is clear in the wordplay and manipulation of word meaning. The idea of improvisation as conversation I am trying to get at is more complex.

Conversation is a common metaphor employed to describe an aspect of improvisation in jazz. This conversation is not chitchat, it is an exchange of ideas on multiple levels of understanding, it can be nuanced and it has a temporal characteristic in that it references past, present and future. Berliner (1994) writes;

"…improvisation is a musical conversation that the improviser enters on many different levels simultaneously. While shaping a part in the underlying composition – conversing with its formal features – the player converses with predecessors within the jazz tradition, creating new ideas in relation to established improvisation conventions and previous interpretations of the composition known to the player" (p.497)

There is a lot going on in such action creating multiple levels of relationships – to the past, the present, and future – among players, sounds, musical invention, and the overall structure of what is being collaboratively created.

I appropriate an aspect of improvisation as conversation viewed in this way to explain interactions and response between students, their texts and what they were discovering they could do with language. On a simple level this type of improvisation was repetition – taking up something and "replaying" it because it is liked. This might

explain, for example, how in one of my classes in 2009 certain words began to surface in the writing of more than one student. The words *ghost* and *dancing* became popular and were picked up by students to include in their pieces of writing multiple times. They weren't copying each other because they were not using the words in the exact same way. They were sharing, as musicians might share a musical phrase and then elaborate on it in the back and forth of musical improvisation.

I view Kayla's revising of her poem as a form of improvisation as conversation. She improvises in and against her own text. She likes some of her expressions, she changes others, she tries effects out, gauges their effectiveness and moves on from there. It isn't a planned type of action.

Elements of improvisation as more than just the topic of study began to surface in my data. After reading Berliner's (1994) book *Thinking in Jazz, the Infinite Art of Improvisation* I came away with a deeper appreciation of the complex, dynamic, and sometimes philosophical nature of jazz improvisation. Improvisation is the quintessential process of recombining musical elements into new and transformed relationships. What if we could do that with the writing in our study?

An improvising jazz musician will tap into past experiences and understandings of her instrument, the music, and the interconnectedness of both to the world to produce something relational of them all. At the same time, horizons of new meaning and original understanding open as possibilities to further action.

An example of the possibilities of complexity involved in un/fold of improvisation is revealed in Dylan's writing *Jazz in the French Quarter.* In 2002, the exploration of Duke Ellington and his music made a big impression on the students. I

don't remember exactly how much time we spent with Duke and his music but I know it was several days. Along with *Tourist Point of View* we listened to *Mood Indigo* and *Echoes of Harlem*. There was something about Duke and his music that seemed to capture the attention of the students. Maybe it was his top hat set at such a jaunty angle on his head. Maybe it was the contrasts we found in his music – the sophisticated smooth sound that reminded us of urban chic and the growly, rough, distortions that we decided to call his "jungle sound."

Whatever it was about Duke, he certainly inspired interesting writing. None, however, as differently interesting as Dylan's *Jazz in the French Quarter*. Dylan was inspired by two ideas when he wrote this piece: 1) the juxtaposition of urban and jungle sounds in Duke Ellington's music and 2) invention. Dylan was trying to do nothing less than "invent a new genre" of writing. Here is his writing:

> Jazz in the French Quarter
>
> Jazz! in-the French. Quarter.
>
> **From the river walk area of New Orleans along the**
>
> From the (river walk) area of New-Orleans! along the
>
> **muddy Mississippi I paid my three quarters and I stepped**
>
> muddy? Mississippi I: paid my "three quarters" and I stepped!
>
> **on board the restored trolley with my mother and father**.
>
> on board the (restored) trolley! with my mother. and father.
>
> **Four stops later we got off the trolley at Jacksons Square,**
>
> Four (stops later) we got off! the trolley: at Jacksons! Square!

the heart of the French Quarter. I saw artist-painting

the-heart of. the. French! Quarter! I saw artist "painting"

pictures, palm readers reading fortunes, white carriages

pictures, palm-readers "reading : fortunes, white. carriages.

attached to flowered horses and musicians. The musicians

attached- to -flowered!! horses? and musicians. The musicians

stuck out the most to me, I remember one musician playing

stuck. (out) the most to "me", I remember one: musician

playing jazz on his trumpet. His trumpet case was open

playing! jazz! on "his" trumpet. (His) trumpet-case was open

filled with dollars and coins. To my untrained ear, I

filled! with? dollars! and coins. To "my" untrained? ear "I"

thought he was good. I also remember a saxophone

thought!? he: was good. "I" also remember; a saxophone

player who was excellent. But there were other people

player who? was excellent! But. there. were. other people?

playing trashcans making more noise then music. Kettle

playing trashcans! making: more noise then (music). Kettle

The best way to read this writing is in conversation with the writer. Dylan uses the techniques of juxtaposition and embedding to create this piece. We decided that there really wasn't any way a person could read this writing out loud. "You have to see-read it," Dylan told me. Dylan experimented with punctuation to alter the meaning of each

sentence in subtle ways. This reminds me of a drama exercise I once participated in where we had to say one sentence out loud three times, each time emphasizing a different word. The sentence was: I am here. So, *I* am here – I *am* here – and I am *here* – all create subtle different meanings solely depending on the emphasis. Dylan's writing does much the same thing.

Take any pair of lines and I find interesting juxtaposition. For example:

stuck out the most to me, I remember one musician playing

and juxtapose that with its embedded twin:

stuck. (out) the most to "me" , I remember one: musician

A period after *stuck* brings the reader to a full stop. A full stop on the word *stuck* can be read with a double meaning. Being stuck also brings one to a stop. The parentheses around *out* signal setting the word outside of the sentence – another double meaning. *Me* in quotation marks signals a voice. Quotation marks are put around words that are part of dialog. Quotation marks also go around words to set them apart from other words in the sentence. The parentheses around the *me* in this writing, the eye of the storyteller, sets the storyteller outside the text and the story for a brief moment. The comma asks us, the reader, to pause and then the storyteller tells us he remembers *one*: -- pausing us again with a colon. In this way both *one* and *musician* become emphasized in the sentence gaining importance.

We read this piece together – much like one might read a picture book – discussing the lines and the punctuation. Sometimes I asked Dylan to read a line and his reading would become a performance. He added gestures and volume emphasis – whispers, loudness – to his reading. For one pair of lines I read the top and he read the

under line. I read with no special empasis other than indicated by commas or periods while Dylan read with full emphasis, gestures, and volume demanded by exclamation points, parentheses, and question marks.

Both Dylan's composition and our experience in reading it demonstrate the qualities of vibrance. Fun, invention, and improvisation characterized this encounter. What meaning could be found in his writing was not important to Dylan. He wasn't really trying to communicate anything specifically. He was more interested in playing and inventing with language.

Vygotsky (2004) might identify such an experience as the process of the combinatorial nature of imagination at work. Describing this aspect of the imagination as the "creative reworking of the impressions [of experience] acquired" as an individual "combines them and uses them to construct new reality" (p.11), Vygotsky saw this ability as the foundational capacity of creation based on imagination.

I consider how Kayla used words in her poem. She took common words – fellow and man – and by joining them together produces the pleasing, eccentric word *fellowman*. Her use of unusual images scattered over a story line is another combinatorial masterstroke. Who can resist the hints and suggestions of a plot? As eighth grade language arts students, both Dylan and Kayla worked with the materials they had on hand, the words, grammar and syntax rules, and techniques of writing craft they learned about in school. In the process of this invention and experimentation, Kayla's understanding of the effects she was able to produce strengthened as becomes evident in tracing her work through the revisions. And Dylan's understandings can be clearly seen in his manipulation of punctuation for effect.

This is what the jazz musicians in our study did as well. “Some of the special sounds in jazz were produced by blowing into the instruments in unorthodox ways, by using old fingering combinations or holding valves or keys halfway down, by humming into the horn while playing, by sliding from one note to another etc. To get the sound they wanted, the musicians sometimes redesigned their equipment” (Crow, 2005). I told the students the story of how Dizzy Gillespie happens to play a horn with a weirdly shaped bell. Someone fell on it. As a result, Gillespie adopted the new style and incorporated it permanently into his horns (Crow, 2005). In the process, Gillespie becomes a master at playing this kind of horn. No one can match his expertise.

Sometimes mishaps provoked invention from necessity. Berliner (1994) describes an incident in which Miles Davis had a valve on his horn stick right in the middle of one of his solos. Deprived of the range of sound otherwise available to him with an unstuck valve, Davis utilized his difficulty as a “compositional restraint” (p. 210) and completed his performance. Another example is a story that would trend deeply into capturing the interests of my students -- the tragedy of Django Reinhardt. An extremely talented musician, Reinhardt turned the mutilation of his hand into a new technique of playing jazz guitar (Dregni, 2010). Berliner argues that jazz musicians use mistakes as “spontaneous , compositional problems” (p.210) to be worked out within the constraints of their musical genre by employing a wide variety of individualized technique, experience, knowledge, and expertise.

My data suggests the students in the jazz and writing unit became involved in similar processes of tapping into past experiences and using the materials of text construction in experimental, inventive ways. Student knowledge of learning writing in

school traditionally covers the notion of words as elements of construction and how to use language to communicate and develop meaning. My data reveals evidence of this material of experience undergoing recombination in the processes of vibrance.

What happened after the students were confronted with the mysterious and allowed themselves to enter into the adventure? Did learning just stay mysterious and strange or did something else emerge? In thinking about the many, profoundly amazing pieces of writing produced by my students in the past, I had to believe that something was happening, something was developing beyond the encounter with the mysterious and I believed it was something indicative of the imagination at work in a specific, complex way. Poems such as Kayla's did not seem to me to be products of ornamentation or accident and neither did complex compositions such as Dylan's. I had a conviction of a specialized process at work in a deliberate evolution of thinking and discovery. I explore this conviction as I analyze the data presented in the next section of this chapter.

The Experience of Vibrance

I had a stack of Thinking Cards in front of me from my fourth period class. Following two classes of other academics plus a health or P.E. class, the students in this section of language arts have had a busy day before I see them. With lunch only forty-two minutes away sometimes it's difficult for them to have good concentration. I pick up the top card written by Jasmine and read: *"I don't really know if this is right but it's so cool. It might be the best thing I've written."*

I begin to code Jasmine's piece of writing for the motif of correctness within dissonance but I am struck by her evaluation at the end. Why would she consider her short, fragmented piece of riff writing as possibly the best thing she had ever written?

What would make a student evaluate such a small, rough piece of unfinished writing in this way?

I flip the card over and read her piece of riff writing:

Fall leaves in the air
and falling through the air
Scott Joplin dreams
in the outer palace of colors

There is a lot to really like in this short piece of riff writing. It's evocative for one thing. The connotation of fall and colorful fall leaves -- from the title of the song, "Maple Leaf Rag?" -- described as a "palace of color" makes an effective metaphor. I am attracted by the clever double meaning of "Fall" as a season and "falling" as leaves do at that time of year. But there is a third meaning here. Scott Joplin's failure to be successful in opera could be considered a kind of falling as well. It's unclear from the riff writing if Jasmine had intended these associations or not. She notes in her fact sentences:

Scott Joplin was a guiness [genius] and wrote one of the most famous different kinds of roots of jazz. Scott Joplin invented the different kind of music called ragtime.

There is no further explanation written on her card. I am left to wonder -- as we often are when reading effective pieces of poetry -- about possibility.

After the Scott Joplin encounter we moved into a similar encounter with the music of Louis Armstrong. We pursued this music with the same method as before– doodling to his music, describing the sketches, writing facts and combining the two into riff writing. The Louis Armstrong lesson also covered two 42- minute class periods. We were four days into the jazz and writing study and data shows students tolerating ambiguity in dissonance. Signaled by comments like Jasmine's, it also begins to reveal a shift from fear or uncertainty to fearlessness and invention characteristic of vibrance.

Jasmine's evaluative comment demonstrates how the experience of the unfamiliar began to encompass a positive response to invention with language. Her comment also expresses a shift to reliance on a personal validation of the work, and less on authoritarian views of correctness, because the student "doesn't care" if her writing is considered to be written correctly. If she feels it is possibly the best thing she has ever written, shouldn't that be the point that must be emphasized?

When I began to code for this theme, I discovered multiple expressions similar to Jasmine's. In the Louis Armstrong lesson Austin writes,

> *"[My writing] made sense to me, and made me feel amazing. I felt like I had never wrote anything better in my entire life. I used words that maybe didn't sound right, but fit very well."*

The experience of producing writing in the jazz and writing activities generated positive feelings of enjoyment and empowerment within students. Dissonance is still in evidence as indicated in Austin's comment that "maybe [the words] didn't sound right." This echo of uncertainty appears in Jasmine's evaluation as well, but what marks these comments as a shift away from dissonance, are the attachments of the feeling. "It makes me feel amazing," wrote Austin. It is significant to these student writers that, in their opinions, the fragments of writing they produced were of exceptional quality– a student's personal best even.

Austin comments that even though he used words that "maybe didn't sound right," they nevertheless "fit very well." His riff writing goes like this:

Deceived beauty

many dodged your wonder
your trumpet
clashes satisfaction in confetti
a magic dream is captured

Austin combines words that in formal writing would most likely remain unpaired. "Deceived beauty," "dodged your wonder," and "clashes satisfaction" may be examples of the words Austin perceived as not sounding right. Something else that occurs in this writing is the movement from past tense into present tense in a manner inconsistent with formal sentence structure where tense must remain constant and agreeable. Perhaps Austin is also referring to that. What is apparent, is his understanding of technique. He writes that he uses syncopation (*clashes satisfaction*, *confetti*) and adds "active verbs" (unidentified in Austin's note). The use of these techniques signals deliberate invention even in the face of the obstacle of correctness or what "sounds right."

The shift from uncertainty is to fearlessness. Students in the experience of vibrance begin to take action in the way Austin does. Within the landscape of the strange and mysterious this action is playful and inventive. This distinguishes the un/fold of improvisation.

This is the process prompting Austin to recombine words in unusual ways, identify that he is doing so on purpose, and having the ability to identify that doing so creates an effective expression. Students are, in vibrance, playing and experimenting. As of yet, there is no evidence they are deliberately constructing meanings with these newly discovered effects.

To illustrate this point further, one student, Noah, demonstrated the inventiveness of improvisation by the deliberate manipulation of ideas of correctness. He writes:

"I purposely threw one word in [my riff writing] spelled wrong. I spelled through like threw. It makes people stop and wonder why I spelled it wrong."

Noah makes the distinction that some words are correct in some contexts and other words would be considered incorrect in the same context. He echoes what every student knows is contained within the grammar manuals lining the shelves in my classroom. There are rules governing formal contexts of writing production. It is the job of standardized assessments to routinely test student knowledge of these rules. When we grade student work according to levels of correctness, we satisfy the linear progression of improvement as the goal of the assessments we give.

To purposefully move against these rules is to take risks. In alignment with stated expectations of national and state core standards in writing, formalized contexts of student writing demand correction of miscues. In this mode of thinking, writing that is filled with spelling or grammatical error is considered in need of correction. Writing containing high levels of error runs a risk of being incapable of communicating clearly and accurately. The experience of vibrance with its defining qualities of risk taking and invention disrupted this paradigm.

The risk taking and invention, as demonstrated by Noah, are in the hands of the students bringing me back to consideration of the learning space we were creating. Gee (2008, 2004) suggests that content and interaction are ways of defining affinity spaces. In Gee's (2004) terminology, a generator is what gives space content (p.83). Entry into the content is through a portal, which is a tool or activity. In classrooms, Gee (2004) argues, "rarely is the core generator… modified… in an ongoing way based on student desires… actions and interactions" (p.88). My data suggests that within the affinity space where

vibrance comes into operation as a portal, core generators are indeed modified according to student action.

For example, Noah makes the determination to challenge that sense of correctness a reader might bring to his poem by deliberately switching words. In doing so, he becomes an insider with specialized knowledge about the techniques he employs in his writing craft. He is now an active designer of the space in which he works. That section of Noah's poem reads:

Syncopated mirror broiled
His many wonders
Jazz beats like rain threw *His veins*
spectacular stars burn

There are a number of interesting elements in this portion of Noah's poem. However, to stay focused on his point of the deliberate switching of the words *threw* and *through,* I note that at this time in the experience Noah was not necessarily trying for alternative or layered meaning. I will see that element emerge later within the experience of *resonance* explored in the next chapter. Here Noah states that his deliberate mix up of these words will make people hesitate and wonder. Noah's purpose was to cause effect.

Remodeling language, or taking the opportunity to fearlessly repurpose traditionally viewed errors of grammar, spelling, or syntax in inventive ways, came to be a central motif in the experience of vibrance. Rather than sites for correcting, such traditional errors became tools for possibility. An attitude of risk taking accompanies remodeling language because a student relies only on his or her self-evaluation of effectiveness. There is no answer key on the teacher's desk to serve as guide. For example, one student writes, *"I like the fact that it [the writing] makes sense to me and it doesn't matter that they [other readers] don't get it."* These data would seem to suggest

that within the experience of vibrance, invention and making meaning are two distinct qualities. In the un/fold of improvisation, invention takes precedence.

A second characteristic of vibrance centers on feeling. In her final evaluation of her riff writing in the Scott Joplin lesson, Jodi explains:

The new writing is much more emotional. It can bring out the most emotion better than other writings. It tells a story in a different way than just being so plain and boring, b/c you can tell what the writer feels.

As I began coding for emotion, the expressions I discovered across my data suggested to me a more nuanced interpretation of what I was encountering. Jodi's remark above is a good example. Jodi does not indicate that a reader of her work would experience a specific emotion. Instead, an encounter with the writing is an encounter with "a story." And secondly, this encounter allows a reader to form an empathetic connection to the writer – "you can tell what the writer feels" – and this connection saves the story from being "so plain and boring." The writer is of course, Jodi herself. This is significant too because it emphasizes Jodi's sense of feeling connected to her subject. It is that connection that creates interest.

In the next chapter I will trace the implications of the connection between a student poet and the subject he or she writes about as it emerges more specifically in the data. Here, in the experience of vibrance, I am after a different set of investigations. What is the "different way" the story is told? In what way is it "more emotional?" What is it that the writer is feeling that the reader should connect to?

Following Langer, I revise my coding for emotion to a broader concept of feeling. As discussed in my review of literature, I interpret Langer's identification of feeling as a broad term for anything that is apprehended through the senses as an experience.

Emotions – such as love, hate, or anger – can be responses to feeling, but feeling is not limited to them. Feeling may also encompass " a feeling of vitality, energy, quietness, or a feeling of spaciousness, expansiveness, peace, solitude, or a sense of humor" (Reichling, 2004, p. 21).

As she listens to Scott Joplin's "The Maple Leaf Rag," Jodi doodles curvy spirals topped by a bloom that makes the whole sketch appear to be a flower. Along the stem of the flower are lines suggesting thorns and there can be seen two climbing stick figures. One figure has spiky hair and seems to be smiling. A small *rawww!* appears in the air by its head. The other figure is drawn with an open mouth as though yelling.

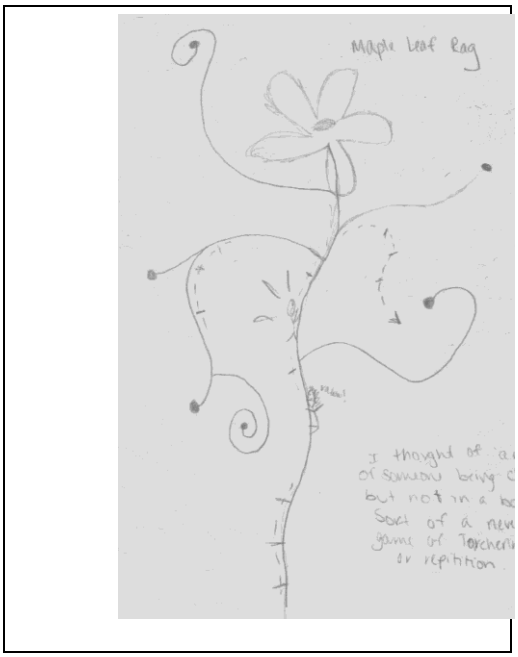


Figure 3. Maple Leaf Doodle

Jodi writes a description of her doodle as an interpretation of the ragtime music and what it makes her think about:

I thought of an image of someone being chased, but not in a bad way. sort of a never ending game of Torchering Tag or repetition.

As I read Jodi's description of her doodle my attention was caught by the word "Torchering." I could not at first make out what she meant. My initial response was to conclude she was referring to "touch" tag. So I asked her. She told me she was trying to write the word *torture* only she didn't know how to spell it.

During the second class period, after listening to the biography of Scott Joplin, Jodi notes information that caught her attention in her fact writing:

Scott Joplin was the master of Jazz, specifically ragtime. He created a sound so known to America that everyone fell in love with. He's the most remembered man in the Jazz industry, and he'll never be forgotten.

When she was challenged to combine information from the biography, which she found interesting, with the image suggested by her doodle, Jodi composed her riff writing in the form of a poem:

Running, Running
Into the sky
Stuck in a game of torture
Death, Death,
terribly sad
no one to call when I'm alone
Lost, Lost
Hopelessly homeless
with no place to call home.

Fleckenstein (2004) writes, "imagery infuses all enactments of literacy" (p.613). In her riff writing, Jodi takes her visual images of pain – "torchering tag" and running in thorns – and creates the textual images of death, loss, and homelessness in her poem.

The placement of the words on the page and the repetition of the words contribute to the textual image. "An image," writes Fleckenstein (2004), "evolves when we shape a reality based on the logic of analogy" (p.617). What she means by this is that an image is formed through the constructive act of creating relationships. Jodi creates specific relationships in the process of producing her final piece of writing.

First, she draws a flower, an image suggesting beauty. But her flower seems to have thorns and it contains two diminished figures in a "never ending game of torturing tag" that even though might be considered fun, is still "torchering." Part of listening to the Scott Joplin ragtime becomes the experience of identifying the syncopated nature of the music. I read Jodi's interpretation of the thorns on her giant plant as the spiky quality inherent in the stuttering rhythm of syncopation. Remember, that while Jodi is drawing her thorns, other classmates are drawing swirls and spirals. For Jodi, the ragtime created the illusion of movement and a spiky quality. Through the imagery of thorns and the written image of "torture," Jodi associates the musical quality she hears with pain or discomfort.

Pain is a feeling. Jodi suggests the *game* of tag she depicts is not the usual fun play, but is, in fact, a feeling of torture. In Langer's complex aesthetic philosophy, feelings are symbolic images of ideas. The images Jodi creates in her riff writing deal with a never-ending game of tag that is torture. Even though she insists that this chasing is being done 'not in a bad way,' she still reverts to images of death, sadness, being lost and homelessness in her riff writing.

Fleckenstein argues that mediated through the pathways of our attention, an image is constructed through a fluid process of influences including "past images, linguistic

experiences… cultural influences, and situational motivation" (618). I follow this line of thinking one step further and suggest creating images in this way is a process of the imagination. Vygotsky (2004) writes, " …emotion selects separate elements from reality and combines them in an association that is determined from within by our mood, and not from without by the logic of the images themselves" (p.18). It is in this way that the images of imagination "provide an internal language for our emotions" (p.18).

There are several notable images created in Jodi's riff writing that seem to transcend decoration and reflect something of the substance of her emotional opinion of the music and the musician she was encountering. *Running into the sky* suggests an illumination as well as a forward movement upwards. There are other, more common directions to run: *away, to, down, over* but Jodi does not tap into these. Her image runs us *into the sky*. Heaven? A place of openness and freedom? As in many poems, the image is not specific but evocative. Interpretation is left to the reader.

As this image evolves further we are introduced to the concept of *torture* followed by *death* repeated. So whatever this movement upward is, it isn't necessarily pleasant. In fact it is revealed to be sad and the reason given is because there is no one to *call when I'm alone.* The introduction of the poetic "I" is interesting here. The "I" immediately interiorizes the experience and places the reader inside the poem, conflates the reader with the subject of the poem, and transfers all emotions specifically to the reader. The "I" can also be interpreted as the poet and all of the above effects apply as well. The eclectic combination of the unexpected image of *running into the sky* in a *game of torture* and death coupled with the submergence of the reader into the poem with the poet's I,

creates through bricolage a subversively playful image laced with something that might be irony.

As I think about what Jodi wrote and attempt to investigate the choices she made, I find myself drawn back to her initial word *torchering.* Jodi was aware of *torchering* being an incorrect spelling of the word *torture* she was seeking to use. You can see on the back of her paper where she has erased the word in an attempt to respell it. I fully align myself with those who believe that "writing growth and error go hand in hand" (Weaver, 1996, p.69). Schuster (2003) warns us that "over concern with following rules may undermine self-confidence" (p.xiv). Students will make corrections when ownership of the work creates the motivation to do so (Smith, 1998). But as we trended deeper into this unit and as the element of improvisation became more prominent in both our thinking and our actions, situations such as this one that allowed Jodi to write *torchering* instead of *torture* became opportunities, a way to remodel language to suit different purposes that may not have been apparent at first.

In the word *torchering* for example, there is the suggestion of fire, a torch, connotative of primitive lighting or the torch carried by Olympic runners. The *–ing* ending suggests action and action in the present. What personal elements of thinking might Jodi have combined in her imagination to be representative of a torch? What is evocative in the image of a torch combined with running figures? What is present in the action that is of the description of torchering? Setting fire to something? Deeper into the unit all of us would begin to be sensitive to the possibilities presented through remodeling of language in this way; the inventive, generative possibilities that would be presented.

The opportunity to remodel language and the challenge, surprise and inventiveness such an encounter can produce is seen in the example of Sandra's riff writing. Sandra, one of my students with a high degree of graphic art ability, wants to do something with her artistic ability in her life. She is thinking about becoming a professional photographer or perhaps an illustrator. Because we share this interest in art we have many conversations outside of the classroom and I knew that Sandra was captivated by the jazz music and relishing the experience of interpretation through drawing and imagery.

Vygotsky notes that adolescents drop away from drawing because they become too critical of their own abilities. He also notes, however, that those young people who do pursue drawing as a chosen embodiment of imagination demonstrate characteristics "very closely associated with the productive work or artistic production" (p.84). Vygotsky elaborates on his thinking in this respect. He writes:

"All art, by cultivating special methods for embodying its images, has its own special technology and this merger of technical disciplines and exercise of creativity is, undoubtedly, the most valuable method in the educator's repertoire for students of this age" (p.85).

Vygotsky seems to be advocating what Eisner (2002) describes as artistic activity being a "form of inquiry that depends on qualitative forms of intelligence" (p.232) In other words, in Eisner's view, as an artist engages in the creation of her piece of art, she engages in making judgments about the use of the materials and how best to create the composition in service of the expression she hopes to communicate -- "service of feeling and imagination" (p.232). This is a synthesis of the "creative and the industrial"

(Vygotsky, 2004) and makes pursuit of the task of invention in the experience of vibrance more complex than simple playing.

Unlike Jodi, Sandra, demonstrating Smith's (1998) argument that personal involvement and commitment to the writing will motivate the desire to make it "correct," would take opportunities to talk about her writing and ask questions beyond simple skills like spelling and along the lines of craft on how to make it better. She also liked to rewrite beyond the required amount, pieces that interested her.

Sandra's doodles as she listened to the "Maple Leaf Rag" are various, both abstract and representative and reflective of elements she was most familiar with in her personal experiences. She has the jagged, graph-like lines, the random swirls and spirals, a sun and what might be stars. She has a fragment of piano keyboard depicted in the center of her paper, and in the bottom corner the lower limbs of a man in trousers and a woman in a skirt and heels perhaps dancing as little musical notes are sprinkled about.

At the top of the doodle she has written *Make Belief Rag.* In the description of her doodle, Sandra writes:

> *Keys of Black and*
> *White moveing from*
> *every pitch.*
> *Happy.*
> *light.*
> *Jumpy.*
> *Bright.*
> *A wonder to listen to*
> *unknown and*
> *mysterious.*

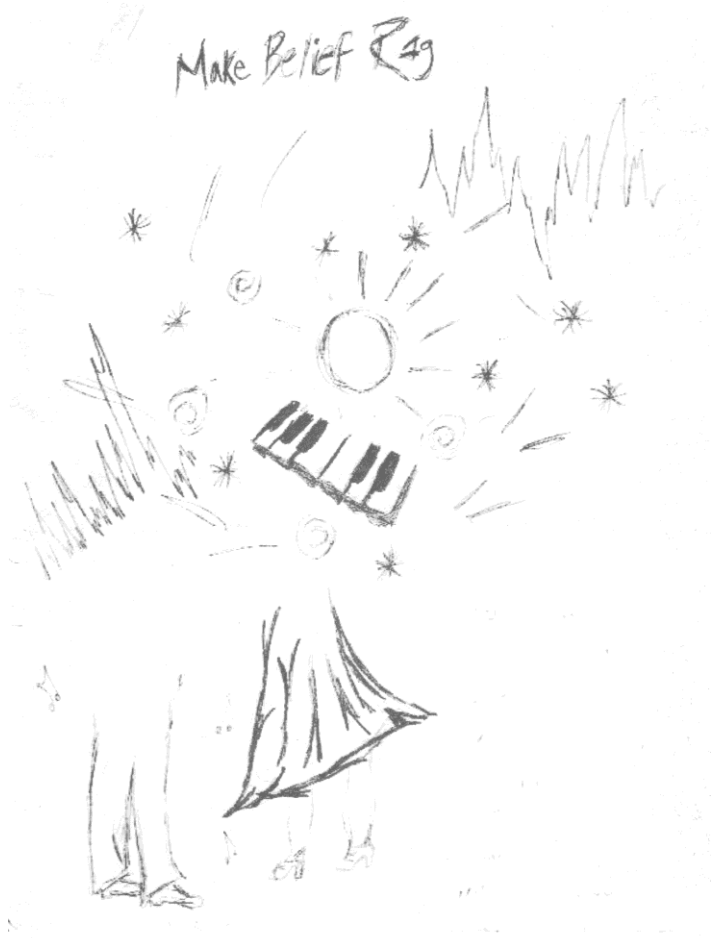


Figure 4. Make Belief Doodle

I note that her description is written in the form of a poem with line breaks. This could be a result of writing in the corner of her paper and running out of room at the end of each line, but she clearly has a list punctuated with periods and even a rhyme. I would guess that Sandra already had a personalized idea of poetry in her mind as she responded to this prompt. I am also cognizant of her identification of the *mysterious* and the *unknown*. Here, I thought, was a student marching into the adventure with eyes wide open and eager with anticipation.

In her fact writing Sandra notes:

Scott Joplin, a musical genius that changed the world and it's feeling for music. Scott Joplin grew up playing popular music but that wasn't good enough for him. So he created the music of ragtime and jazz.

Sandra took her facts, her doodles, and her thinking and created this short poem-like piece of writing:

Musical genius
changed the world
changed the music
changed the way we listen
Black and white keys
Notes of mystery
Notes of wonder
Notes to play, that cost
Money and dreams
That's the sacrifice of greatness.

In this piece of writing, Sandra displays sophisticated use of line breaks. The line breaks create a rhythm to the writing that could be considered reflective of the ragtime music. This piece of writing relies less on overt imagery and more on a tone of statement. Phrases such as: *That's the sacrifice of greatness* and the repetition of *changed* seem reflective of serious opinion. What I find interesting, however, and illustrative of the experience of vibrance, is how this piece of writing evolved.

My field notes document the conversation we had after Sandra handed in this piece of writing. Noticing her title on her doodle, *Make Belief Rag*, I initially found it humorous that she had obviously misheard my pronunciation of the music. That would teach me, my teacher-self thought, to remember to write what I said on the board so students could understand what I was saying. But as I pointed out to her this mistake, my writer-self suddenly became aware of how oddly interesting this miscue was – it was Dizzy's horn, a fortuitous possibility.

"What does it mean to make belief?" I asked her. "Is it the same as make believe? Like when you make something up?"

Sandra, well known for her perfectionist attitude, didn't have an answer and I sensed that she was feeling critical of herself that she had made this perceived mistake.

"Sometimes in jazz," I suggested, "mistakes are seen as just another way of doing things. It might be interesting to think about this accident and see if it suggests anything to you."

Sandra took her writing away to work on it and even though she had no further comments on *make belief* I was hoping she would see a way to utilize the possibilities instead of censoring her perceived mistake. At any rate, if we were going to assign "mistakes," I had as much responsibility here for not speaking clearly.

A few days after the Scott Joplin writings and after a few other encounters with different jazz musicians and their stories, I gave the students the opportunity of selecting a piece of riff writing and revising it into a longer piece. By this time we had begun our discussions of the blue note as a metaphor for manipulating language to create an unexpected moment in the writing. Sandra chose her Scott Joplin poem to revise. Her first version was titled *Remember Scott Joplin*:

A hidden wonder, with music that thunders the world
Dark stormy past with hidden magical dawn
His memory is never forgotten
His creation is forever remembered
The drizzle of his notes sends shivers threw the air
the hopeless blue sky with doute threw out it.
And his thought of failure with in it's clouds
Remember the notes
Remember the feelings
Remember the creator
Remember the music that shot life into the world

Don't ever forget the success this magic [music is crossed out, magic substituted] Brings

Make sure the music lives on!

Because Sandra liked to talk about her writing and wanted to know ways she could make it better, she sought me outside class and I was able to talk to her one to one about the craft of poetry. Again, I noted our conversations in my field notes. Here is where I think Vygotsky's notion of technology and creativity really emerges in this example. Eisner (2002) writes, "Thinking in the arts is a form of qualitative inquiry in which sensibility is engaged, imagination is promoted, technique is applied, appraisal is undertaken" (p.232). I think, collaboratively, Sandra and I engaged in this type of tasking as we worked through her writing in these conversations.

With her writing as the center of our discussions, the craft of poetry as I had learned and practiced it frequently became the focus. In this particular version of her poem, I observed to her that I was most attracted to the imagery. I thought it was the strength of her poem. I discussed with her the technique of taking out the little words, words like *a, with, the, that*, and so on whenever possible. This sometimes produces the effect of making the image being created more immediate. The image is clearer and not cluttered with smaller, unnecessary words. We discovered the misspellings and discussed whether or not they provided opportunities for artistic invention. The matter was left open. I pointed out how the rhythm of the repetition in her poem seemed to be working in her favor, but I also suggested that the content of those lines were less interesting than the images of the first lines.

"If you decide to leave the language the way it is," I told her, "that will be fine. It's a good poem."

Sandra went away and produced a second version. This version was identical to the first one except that she had removed the little words she felt could be chopped out and she changed the title to simply *Remember*. I had some more questions for her.

Remember what? Who is this poem about? Who is remembering? I felt that Sandra was close to producing a very good poem, but there were still areas that felt stilted and awkward to me. Sandra produced her final version titled simply ***Scott Joplin***:

Make …

Hidden wonder, music thunders the world
Dark stormy past in hidden magical dawn
Your memory never forgotten
Drizzle of your notes throws shivers through the air
The hopeless blue sky with doubt threw out its light
Your thoughts of failure in the dark clouds
But I remember the notes
I remember the feelings
I remember you
I remember the music, shoot life into the world
Making sure the music lives forever

Belief …

When she came to my desk with this poem in hand, when I read it, the goose bumps rose on my arms and we both had a sense that this poem was complete. As I read it now, I can see places where the logic of the wild imagery could be tightened to be made stronger perhaps, but then that would be my artistic craft intervening in the world of this poem, not Sandra's. As improvisation lives in the moment of its birth so too this poem lived in the moment she shared it with me. Unlike the transient nature of an improvised piece of jazz that lives only in the moment of its creation, this poem was typed on paper and allowed to stay in my archive of data to be discussed in this chapter. Its history is not yet complete.

I note how Sandra, like a bicoleur collecting moments and impressions, moved back and forth among her ideas in a method of qualitative inquiry. She returned to her Scott Joplin poem and finally to that very first miscue which, in an act of remodeling language she cleverly incorporated into the philosophical tone of this piece of writing. We *make* a type of *belief* out of our memories of the important events in our history.

To Sandra, the music of Scott Joplin and his struggle to become the musician he wanted to be spoke to her on some creative level. Utilizing the combinatorial aspect of the imagination, she took material from her experiences – dawn, storms, blue sky and dark clouds – and juxtaposed them with the experience of the music and the idea that her miscue made possible. Feeling strongly about the struggle and speaking to a long gone Scott Joplin, Sandra personalizes her experience by directly addressing the musician and assuring him that she herself, a thirteen year old girl living in a predominantly white, rural community, has not, and will not, forget him.

Reflecting the invention and improvisational aspect within the experience of vibrance, and now fully demonstrating the ability to tolerate the mysterious generated in the experience of dissonance, another student observed:

This writing isn't the same…it's different in so many ways. This writing makes you think. It's not black and white and told straight out. It's a mystery. A blend of every color. And the reader must look beyond the colors to find the true meaning. The true meaning that gives you goose bumps and sends a message of WOW that shivers down your spine!

During the several years I taught this unit, I experienced those goose bump moments of the world fiercely opening up around me and felt most poignantly when a student would suddenly realize that what they had written had power. Or, read that another way, that what they had written had a *true meaning,* a bigger sense of the world beyond the material of the work. In an example of how the classroom became a community of collaborators where final evaluation was not the sole responsibility of a teacher figure (i.e. me), one student discovered this power. During the Scott Joplin exploration Sam wrote this insight:

I think [this writing] almost takes you into the person seeing this happen or what the writer was trying to persuade you to see.

This observation is significant in that it seems to point to the formation of critical engagement with the material in a manner that arises from an inhabited viewpoint. In the following data chapter I will discuss the notion of inhabited identity as I discovered it emerging from the mythic hero. But here is an early expression of this kind of response and, significantly for this point of discussion, this is a response written by a student who was almost unable to tolerate the encounter with the mysterious. Sam, at one point, was on the verge of fleeing this entire challenge even as we were beginning.

Sam doodled, like his peers, while listening to the "Maple Leaf Rag," but he was obviously disenchanted with the project. Focusing his attention into the smallest corner of his paper he began drawing and shading in squares that resembled a checkerboard. Noticing his grimace of discontent I had started to drift in his direction and overheard his mumbled, "This is stupid," remark to his neighbor – a girl, fortunately too intent on doodling sweeping spirals and circles to respond to him. Apparently Sam was finding the experience of dissonance a little tough to tolerate.

I watched Sam sketch an outsized stick figure, add bug eyes and a goofy grin. Sam was a good student, consistently achieving A grades in language arts and especially known for his aptitude in math and science. He was usually very serious about schoolwork, not known for being a disruptive or negative influence in the classroom. I decided not to make an issue of his remark and moved away.

When we finished listening to the music and after directing the students to write a description of their doodle, I asked for volunteers to share. In this particular class the doodles had become very representational of objects – houses, suns, people dancing, a bar room fight, a circus. The girl sitting next to Sam was one of the very few drawing

totally abstract figures. As could have been anticipated, many of the descriptions of the doodles were also concretely interpretive:

> *I drew a sun shining on a house and kids playing tag.*
> *I thought of a barroom fight with a piano playing.*
> *The song made me feel happy and so I drew a piano.*

In light of his earlier negative mumble, I was surprised when Sam raised his hand to share. Sam was always one to try and participate and I greatly respected his attitude and feeling about what I was currently asking him to do. I was hopeful that somehow I could help him accept the unusual nature of this study. It would be, however, not myself as the teacher who would make this possible. Sam's acceptance of this study would be the result of an awareness that at once created the sense of collaboration as well as initiating Sam into the center of it in every respect as one is called into an affinity space – by shared interest. I called on him and he read his description:

> *The man was dancing. Fiercely into the rainy night he heard a catchy tune from the living room. There was a catchy melody. He danced into the night.*

"Nice," my teacher-self immediately responded genuinely pleased but also eager to encourage. "I like the image of the man dancing into the night. Very nice."

"Why was he dancing fiercely?" a girl asked. This interruption suddenly broadened the interest.

"Oh, yes," my writer-self, struck by the interesting point, interrupted before Sam could respond. "That's right. He isn't just dancing. He's fiercely dancing. That's much more interesting."

Actually, in reflecting back, what would have been more interesting would have been Sam's answer as to why the man was dancing fiercely, but as I am unable to take

back my inopportune interruption I can only be glad for my genuine enthusiasm for the point that was being made. This I believe translated to the students in a positive manner at any rate. The way interactions happen within an affinity space shape that space. Several students nodded and I had the impression that Sam looked thoughtful as the discussion moved on to other responses. This demonstrates another quality of an affinity space according to Gee: the affinity is to the activity, the endeavor, not to the other participants. Sam was discovering he had some specialized capability that was being recognized. I don't know it for certain because I didn't ask him but it appeared that Sam's focus had been turned on to his work and away from his discomfort. Later, Sam wrote his fact writing:

Scott Joplin, a musical genius, was born in 1868 in Texas. He was the son of a slave and very poor widow. She worked as a maid in very rich homes. The owner's loved Joplin's music so they let him play their pianos. He became the most powerful Ragtime artist.

As a teacher I observe that Sam uses good, complex sentence structure to relay his facts and his facts are clear and accurate. He employs the use of an appositive phrase in the first sentence, which was a skill we had explored earlier in the year. He is careful to incorporate dates to anchor the facts in an historical context and his total writing becomes a well structured paragraph beyond the requested "two or three sentences of facts that catch your attention." This writing is indicative of Sam's scholarly approach to his work and represents the kind of writing he was most comfortable with. As he began thinking about combining his facts with the image produced by his doodle, I watched as he recorded something at the top of his page before beginning to write. Later, I discovered that he had written a different summary description of his drawing:

The man was dancing fiercely into the night.

It seemed that the comments from the day before had stuck with him. As students finished creating their riff writing, again Sam volunteered to share his writing. I may have imagined the slight silence, the pause in breathing, that billowed over the students when he concluded, but I know I did not imagine the spontaneous murmur of appreciation and the rowdy arrival of a bushel of goose bumps suddenly racing down my arms. Sam read:

Dancing fiercely
into the rain
into the rain
The legend was born
the hero went crazy
Still dancing fiercely
the praise went away
Drowned in the dangerous rain.

No longer an outsider to this adventure in which we were engaged, this was the turning point for Sam. The approval of his classmates was obvious and this was more powerful for him than any praise that might come from me – although that didn't hurt either. I heard no more negative remarks from Sam and in the final analysis of all of his work produced in this unit, he writes:

I thought this was going to be impossible to do. I was wrong. What I think about this unit is that it makes me feel good inside.

If the encounter with the mysterious produced the experience of dissonance, the beginnings of feeling comfortable within the mysterious produced the experience of vibrance. The notion of the combinatorial aspect of the imagination as proposed by Vygotsky is seen in these examples as students use elements from their personal experiences in unexpected, surprising relationships to create something new. In the tradition of jazz musicians there are improvisational characteristics present in invention,

conversation, and remodeling language. As can be seen in these examples, students were beginning to form opinions and take stances concerning their understanding and felt connections to both the music and the musicians. I will explore this notion further, but here I note how it seemed to be occurring as a result of the experience of creating the writing. The jazz writing, at first a challenge, became a place for invention, the affinity space became improvisational in a collaborative, generative process. But more importantly, I see the un/fold of improvisation as the opportunity students took to embrace the mysterious fearlessly in all its uncertainty and begin to take risks.

In the next chapter I will take up the characteristics of vibrance as it moves deeper into an interiorized landscape in the form of inhabited identities and reemerges as crystallized imagination (Vygotsky, 2004).

CHAPTER VI

SLOWLY WALKING OUT OF SIGHT: DISRUPTING THE TOURIST GAZE

In this chapter, from the dynamic suite of experiences, I take up *resonance.* This experience shapes itself out of vibrance and is characterized by evidence of deliberate crafting of final pieces of student writing. While inventive qualities of vibrance are still present, my data suggests a shift in purpose transpires from effect to meaning making. I interpret this shift through a distinguishing quality of activity. If vibrance demonstrates the activity of touring in which the gathering of elements and materials is the goal, then the experience of resonance pursues the activity of dwelling (Sumara, 1994) where the goal becomes understanding of the new spaces of learning opened up through invention and improvisation. My data suggests these spaces of dwelling are inhabited through processes of empathetic connections with the mythic hero (Egan 1992).

Motifs leading to formation of the themes distinguishing resonance arose from data within the Blind Lemon Jefferson and Buddy Bolden lessons defining these encounters as key events. Data analyzed in this chapter are taken from those key events and include pieces of writing from past years of the jazz and writing unit as well as recent examples. These data speak from the un/fold of imagination distinguished by adolescent writers drawing on both subjective and objective elements to embody their interior selves (Vygotsky, 2004).

Resonance: Choice and Construction

The older pieces of writing I analyze in this section are examples of data produced in a manner cushioned by time. I mean this in two ways. First, the students in those years had more time to think, write and revise their work as the unit was allowed to spread over many more weeks then in the 2009 year of more specific data collection.

And secondly, the distance of years allows the researcher-me to approach these pieces in a more objective manner. I initially collected those pieces of writing because the writer-me or the teacher-me was so impressed or inspired by them that I wanted to collect them. In looking at these older pieces now and setting them side by side with the writing produced in 2009 I hope to provide some context and perspective for the newer work accomplished within the crunch of swiftly moving time.

All pieces of data in this section are considered finished pieces of writing by the students who created them. This means that the pieces have undergone multiple revisions and have been thought about and crafted by the students specifically as work to be presented to an audience. Several of the pieces were discussed in one to one conferences with me thus giving me a specific insight into some of the processes of revision practiced by the students. In this section I focus on an older piece of writing produced in what I view as the key event of the Buddy Bolden lesson and juxtapose a 2009 piece written in the Blind Lemon Jefferson lesson. I compare and contrast the two experiences and the writing produced to discover the qualities defining the experience of resonance.

In 2006, I spun the biography about Buddy Bolden around the fact that except for one image in which his face is so obscured by the grainy age of an old photograph we are not even sure that it is him, we possess no photograph of this amazing coronet player. As it turns out this story is not totally accurate, but in my research at the time without the aid of internet search engines, I thought it was the case. I displayed this photo in my classroom. It is indeed a haunted looking image.

Figure 5. Buddy Bolden

The rest of my story unfolded around the idea that what is known about Buddy Bolden is mostly legend and myth. It is hard to find the facts. That he was great is well known. He could play ragtime with great skill and his genius was to mix in a little blues and gospel with the syncopation to create a newness to the ragtime sound. That he is credited with being the originator of the sound that became known as jazz is also part of his story. He played loudly, adapting any music he heard to his coronet playing. And even though there are no musical recordings of his playing he was so great a musician, he was known as King Bolden

Buddy Bolden is a mythic hero.

Egan (1992) sets forth the notion of the heroic journey, which provides the archetypal story for the mythic hero as protagonist. Egan (1998) proposes the mythic hero appears as a figure with whom adolescents readily identify because the hero is presented within the story as someone who "is subject to the same kinds of rules" (p.81) as everyone else. The mythic hero is heroic because he or she ultimately possesses the ability to transcend obstacles. Egan argues, adolescents being at the stage where they are

just beginning to understand their powers and potential but still find themselves relatively powerless in the larger world around them, empathize with mythic heroes.

At first we encounter Buddy Bolden in mid-stride of his power and popularity. Bolden is a mythic hero in the reverse sense because (as we encounter the story) he starts big and ends tragic. His eventual suffering from schizophrenia and burial in an unmarked grave are poignant elements to his story. My data suggests that this reverse order of events – being successful and popular and ending alone and forgotten – creates mythic heroes that function in the same way as described by Egan. Egan (1998) writes, "The tension characteristic of romance comes from the desire to transcend a threatening reality while seeking to secure one's identity within it" (p.90).

Jessica created her poem about Buddy Bolden in 2006. The poem she composed went through two drafts. Jessica consulted me on technical matters of rhyme scheme necessary, as we shall see, in the execution of the poetic style -- a villanelle -- which she was attempting. In a prior unit on poetry we had studied the villanelle form reading the Dylan Thomas (1951) poem *Do not go gentle into that good night* (in Gwynn, 2005, p.274.) The villanelle is a form poem of nineteen lines, with a pattern of repetition and specific *aba* rhyme scheme. It is not an easy poem to write well for any poet. Jessica's finished poem surprised me:

BUDDY BOLDEN
Slowly walking out of sight
His face half hid
He calls into the night

Barely visible in the light
Not knowing how he plays like he did
Slowly walking out of sight

Not wanting the crowd to take flight
Down the scales he slid
He calls into the night

The band plays with delight
The dusty street, the band, the kid
Slowly walking out of sight

The music seemed to make things bright
The crowd of noise, his trumpet outdid
He calls into the night

Playing loud with all his might
The silence of loneliness he would forbid
Slowly walking out of sight
He calls into the night

Because I just accepted this poem with astonishment, goose bumps, and buckets of praise, I do not possess any of Jessica's interpretation in the form of written comments about what she was thinking or trying to do with this poem. I am left with looking at this piece of writing as I would look at any poem written without access to the poet who wrote it. But one thing I do know. I do know about the experience, which provided the opportunity for Jessica to create this piece of writing, and I know that this was as unfamiliar a territory as any 13-year-old white girl living in present day rural Midwest could find. I know that Jessica projected her thoughts and feelings into the landscape of a black cornet player of 1900's New Orleans and that she did it with power and insight.

This is a haunted poem. Even though she is not here to confirm it, I believe that Jessica was influenced by the ghost like image of Buddy Bolden I hung up in my classroom. *His face half hid* is a compelling description of the face in the photograph that has been obliterated by time. Instead of features, we see a white blotch, an erasure, a ghosting of the face, which is the vibrant representative of a living personality – even one of the past. Here Jessica is engaged in a deliberate construction of the mysterious. Through her imagery she places her audience in the space of disorientation. What is hid? Buddy's face – the human template for communication. I argue that Jessica herself had to travel this landscape in her imagination before she could have so expertly placed her audience there with such seeming confidence and verisimilitude.

Sumara (1994) discusses an aspect of engaging with text – he means specifically literary text, but any text written or otherwise can be considered here – in which he advocates dwelling, the remaining for a period of time in one place to absorb the aspects of that place. Dwelling, Sumara argues produces an effect of enlarging experience. As Jessica writes about Bolden – and as we read about him in her writing – experience is broadened by an opening of affective spaces. Bolden's slow walk out of sight in the poem evokes this enlargement – of entering his world even as it is suggestive of the mental deterioration he suffered in his life. Egan notes that adolescents have the ability to "provisionally think of herself or himself as embodying the transcendent quality represented in the hero" (p.81). This seems to be what Jessica accomplished. Then, because the creative imagination's primary drive is to become embodied (Vygotsky, 2004), she wrote about it.

Once he enjoyed being in the spotlight but as time went on, Bolden was unable to maintain that position. Through drink and mental illness he begins to lose his mental capacity. His slow walk out of sight is the slow walk into being alone, ill, and forgotten. This is the element Jessica focuses on. This is one of the lines that she repeats within the structure of the villanelle to great effectiveness. The repetition makes the walk out of sight, the transcendent moment into oblivion, poignant and powerful. A feeling (in the sense Langer intends) is established for the reader of entering Bolden's world along with the poet.

Bolden's slow walk is also the walk of history – the slow walk of time, the slow walk out of our memories as newer, younger musicians and other music take over the jazz landscape. Bolden becomes part of the history he is walking into.

The *call into the night* is an image that has metaphorical implications. It is impossible to know whether Jessica did this intentionally or not. There is, however, a good possibility that she did understand what she was creating in this image of night. Jessica represented that caliber of student who is often a creative, outside the box thinker,

who is nevertheless able to negotiate the structures of school highly successfully. Straight A's, a band and choir student, affable, articulate, and scholarly Jessica shared these distinctions. In a later piece of prose writing, Jessica describes the jazz singer Bessie Smith like this:

> *Her voice was a golden sunset over the ocean, the last light of day, a golden orb floating out on the horizon. Bessie's shimmering sound was bigger and stronger than bars of gold…*

This piece of writing demonstrates Jessica's ability to create metaphor and her ability to use simile. I believe she knew what she was doing when she invoked the imagery of night.

Night is the metaphorical place for blindness and death. Night connotes ignorance or unknowing and forgetfulness. It is oblivion, the time of sleep. In Jessica's poem, Bolden *calls into the night.* His call is a juxtaposition to the night. Bolden's call is *bright*, he does it in such a way to entice the crowds, to keep them from running away and to *forbid* the *silence of loneliness.* This is a clarion call, a reminder, a show, and it moves his audience, connects to them, banishes their loneliness – and perhaps his loneliness – as it calls from the poet's imagination to the reader's imagination.

As Jessica imagines Buddy Bolden within the context of her poem, she projects herself into his perspective inhabiting a poetic identity. She writes the line: *not knowing how he plays like he did.* This line mixes past and present tenses almost as though the poet is confused as to whether she is describing a past personality or inhabiting a present one. A poetic identity is embodied because it is emotional. It is a perspective interpreted through the personal, known experiences of the writer. The poetic identity evident in this poem is multilayered and consists of a place as imagined by the poet – dusty streets, a band, crowds – as well as the musician Buddy Bolden who seems to be aware of his talent but doesn't understand it.

Jessica imagines crowds of people who want to take flight. We can infer they are fearful of something. The street is dusty and therefore unpaved, possibly dust also connotes time and history. We find in this poet-place bright sound, bands, and delight. Delight here is the only identified emotion. *Delight* is also a rhyme in the poem and so it could be argued that it comes into existence not as a true felt emotion, but more as a formula to meet the rhyme requirement and therefore does not constitute the embodiment necessary for a poetic identity to be present. But *bright* and the other images are being invoked to dispel darkness, night, loneliness and disappearance. Where did they come from?

I suggest that the imagery creating the sense of fear (night, the crowds wanting to leave), the sense of death (night again, the walking away), and loneliness (the silence and the forbidding) all originate within the experiences of Jessica herself and that she is projecting these feelings in a poetic sense into this poem. Because she is the poet here, she inhabits this imagery as she imagines it and crafts language to express it in such a way that an audience will join her in her particular understanding.

My data began to suggest to me a manner in which a poetic identity is formulated from within the experience of resonance. It is the dynamic of resonance that gives the emotional texture of poetic identity amplitude. Borrowing from musical definitions identifying resonance as a sound that is reinforced or prolonged, I appropriated the term to inform this metaphor. In music resonance is a sound made by vibrating in sympathy with a neighboring source of sound. To inhabit a poetic identity my students created sympathetic vibrations between language and emotion. To further this thinking, and to understand more of the process involved, I continued to investigate my data.

As a reader of Jessica's poem I inhabit the same poetic perspective. In interpreting perspective through imagery and poetry, my students created poetic identities that became dynamic within the world as others read and responded to their work . Unlike the work created in the experience of vibrance, this work was intended for an

audience beyond the poet. This proves to be an experience for both reader and writer in much the way Dewey envisioned experience arising from aesthetic encounters.

Rosenblatt (1978) identified aesthetic encounters of this nature as aesthetic transaction. She argued that such encounters broaden a reader's emotional capacities in both cognitive and affective development. How powerful could such an encounter be in that respect if the reader is also the poet? *"This writing makes you feel it deep down inside,"* wrote one student about her poem, "*and no matter what it's about it finds a way to your heart."* How exactly this pathway is followed is where I next turn my attention.

Discovering the Story Behind the Story

As the writing and jazz unit progressed, the writing of the students became more focused and specific to a targeted audience or purpose. In certain ways the writing became formalized such as Jessica's decision to use the formal structure of the villanelle for her Buddy Bolden poem. The quick, half-formed pieces of riff writing and the random images generated from doodles began to find a more stabilized context within finished pieces of writing. This writing took the form of poetry, short prose pieces, experimental forms. It was writing that demonstrated a readable structure, a narrative movement, or, if lacking recognizable format, it was writing that occupied abstract spaces. Like a Picasso of displaced shapes creating an image or the playful surrealism of a Miro, those more abstract pieces of writing nevertheless communicated something of substantive feeling and the possibility of poetic identity.

> For example here is Bailey's, highly abstract poem about Billie Holiday:
> Billie: Fires of Pain
> Freezing flames lash at tigers
> Shards of piercing glass stab
> Salty nails cutting flesh
> glistening tears hang
> in the eyes of all who hear you sing.
> I hear tigers roar
> crying through

numbing music.

Bailey wrote this poem in 2006. It is a good example of the kind of writing I originally encountered in the earliest incarnations of the jazz and writing unit; these were the writings that sang. Bailey's word choice pulls her poem together like pieces in a stained glass window creating an image. Her title orients the poem to Billie Holiday, the famous jazz singer of the 1940's. Her verb combinations reflect sensations of pain: flames lash, glass stabs, nails cut, tears hang (suspended but this can also mean strangulation), and there is roaring, and crying. Her adjectives place words in juxtaposition to amplify the conceptual pain: freezing flames and salty nails – salt in wounds? She cultivates the poetic identity by directly addressing Billie. "You" she says. And then she places everybody – reader and poet – within the pain of this poem by writing *I hear tigers roar.* If the poet hears them, so does the reader.

Out of a staid and predicted background of school type writings, striving for perfection in grammar, spelling, sentence mechanics, and correct formulas of presentation – essays, paragraphs, even school poems – these pieces stood out to me in their ability to raise goose bumps along my arms and to surprise me with their elegant, strange imagery. How were students formulating such powerful pieces? Was it simply successful word play, ornamented language in superficial modes of communication or was there something more?

In the experience of resonance I detected movement but it was not the same kind of movement characteristic of vibrance. This did not appear to be so much the movement of play and improvisation, as a movement of reflection and consideration. It seemed less invention and more a movement of construction. Instead of the swiftly moving *touring* taking one from place to place engaged only with the souvenirs of surface meanings, a dwelling seemed to be occurring. This new action required time and reflective effort to stay in one space long enough for meaning to percolate.

Sumara (1994) discusses a particular kind of thinking he views as arising from practices of dwelling. He writes,

"This thinking is never merely a thinking about something, but instead is a thinking through something. It is an embodied dwelling in which locations … become meditation, a caring about the words in the text, the words of others, and the actions which these words support and announce"(p.45).

Dwelling allows us to not only hear the lion's roar but also to understand why he's roaring. In 2009, Dan wrote a poem about Blind Lemon Jefferson. A look at his poem and what he has to say about it illuminates possibilities on the process of dwelling fostering poetic identity. I begin with his Thinking Card comments and work my way into this discussion from there.

"My poem," wrote Dan, *"is about how people will not forget Blind Lemon because he left a Mark on Jazz history."* This is an interesting comment because Blind Lemon *has* been forgotten – at least by the mainstream. People in the jazz world will most likely know who he was, but my students certainly had never heard of him. What I interpret by Dan's use of the word "people" is twofold. First, that by "people" he means himself. Dan, the poet who has written about Blind Lemon, will not forget him. Blind Lemon has been memorialized within Dan's poem. And second, when Dan writes "people will not forget" as a statement, it is really a hope on Dan's part that what *he* has written about Blind Lemon will stay in the world and become a reminder of this jazz musician. Somehow Dan had made a connection with Blind Lemon Jefferson he wanted to share.

The first idea I note is that for Dan to make a connection Blind Lemon at all is remarkable. Sounding highly unusual to my students, Blind Lemon's genre of music, and his high, nasal whine emerging from the scratchy depths of old, original recordings was a difficult sell. This was music and recording technology was as far removed from the digital clarity familiar to my students as anything I could compare. And then there were

the alien topics of the songs – hunger and poverty, jilted lovers, prison. These seemed well outside the experiences of most of my students. (Although I note that there were probably a few who had knowledge of relatives in prison, I would be doubtful that hard time in a penitentiary was part of that.) To top it off, the barely comprehensible lyrics made it seem as though the development of any lasting connection with this artist and his music would be a remote possibility.

But Blind Lemon Jefferson exemplifies the reverse heroic journey. When Buddy Bolden walks into his tragic history and disappears he becomes legend. When Blind Lemon does it he becomes forgotten. At the height of his musical career, Blind Lemon was a household name. Vastly popular, everyone knew his music. During a terrible blizzard in December 1929, Blind Lemon – who was indeed blind since childhood – walked out of his Chicago hotel into the frozen howl of the storm and died. His death is mysterious. No one knows why he went out in the storm and no one knows exactly how he died – heart attack? Murder? But, when he was no longer alive to record, he became largely, and quickly, forgotten.

"Imagine," I said always going for the drama, " a musician who was, in his time, as popular as Elvis Presley. Imagine how everyone knew who he was until, all of a sudden, he was no longer there, no longer recording his music, and then he became completely forgotten" (Recreated from Field Notes, 2009).

First, by using the word *imagine* I was unconsciously invoking the territory of the imagination. Secondly, by so doing, I was inviting my students to not only step into a specific perspective, but to inhabit that perspective as well. The story of Blind Lemon Jefferson always ignited interesting writing among my students. Dan's poem is no exception. After listening and writing and thinking, Dan produced his final draft poem about Blind Lemon Jefferson. Titled simply *BLJ*, Dan's poem goes like this:

Haunting us
Your screech fills our minds
With your music

Like waves that crash upon the beach,
Your history washes over us.

Like the rain hitting pavement,
The beat of your music floods our memories.

Like the pain of the cold,
We will never forget you.

"What I liked about [my poem]," Dan continues his comment, *"is it brought out the writer in me and I had to go deep to find out what to write down."*

For the teacher -me, this was a remarkable statement to uncover. Dan, his report cards sporting more C's than B's and speckled with the rare A in perhaps P.E. or history when group work was prevalent, frequently vocalized his discontent with being in school and always proclaimed his intention of someday being a chef. Overweight and not athletic, Dan was ostracized from the sports crowd, which made up the greater circle of his peers. Living in the local trailer court Dan was frequently labeled as one of "those students" who caused trouble after school even though he was never directly involved with the antics of which other boys in his neighborhood were accused.

Alternately wearing his hair in a Mohawk and shaved on the sides of his head and then later half dyed a deep black, Dan would tell me that he was just trying to fit in. Fit in where exactly was a bit debatable as no one else in his class adopted the styles he favored. When the history teacher, who also had cachet as the eighth grade football coach, pointed this out to him, Dan toned down his style and cut his hair to be one uniform length and color. Always a quiet student in class and on the outskirts of participation he was never a disruption.

Books were not his interest. "I'm not a good reader," Dan told me. "Books are just hard." And I had never heard Dan describe himself as a writer – until he met up with Blind Lemon Jefferson.

I have to think about what this means. What manner of experience would prompt a student to evaluate themselves in such unfamiliar terms? Blind Lemon Jefferson, his story of struggle and tragic death is a reverse mythic hero. Perhaps there was something significant in the story of his tragedy that generated emotional amplitude. Egan (1998) quotes A.N. Whitehead (1967) on Romantic emotion defining it as, "essentially the excitement consequent on the transition from the bare facts to the first realizations of the import of their unexpected relationships" (p.17-18, quoted in Egan, p. 91). What facts about Blind Lemon might have created unexpected relationships of thought for Dan? Is this the source of the empathetic sense in Dan's poem?

Vygotsky (2004) identifies the emotional imagination as undergoing critical development in the adolescent years. This form of imagination is interiorized and it builds from subjective elements. I take this notion and consider how this idea might fit with a concept of emotion taken from the Romantic poets as expressed by Whitehead and I begin to see how subjective responses can build into poetic identities. Dan takes the story of Blind Lemon which he finds empathetic through the lens of the mythic hero, overlays like a transparency his own experiences of emotions associated with loss and death, through invention and word play creates the artistic crafting of his idea, and then bundles the whole thing back into the world – embodied, crystallized imagination. (Vygotsky, 2004).

I can get further at this experience in reading Dan's final comments because he identifies his Blue Note. Recall the Blue Note is the metaphor we used for the quality in the writing that creates the unique energy or meaning perceived by the writer in his or her work. It is the defining quality that the writer feels he or she tapped into to make the work resonate.

"[In my poem] I used the Blue Note," wrote Dan. "And I also believe that it [the blue note] lies in the story behind the story."

What does he mean by *the story behind the story*? The answer to this question, un/folds imagination in its interiorized form. I considered how Dan, collage-like put together the information he used to write this poem. Part of that information came to him in the form of a story – my story of Blind Lemon. I began to visualize this trajectory as in a hall of mirrors and the sense of amplitude suddenly manifested as Dan reflected my story into his own story. Dan's poem had a resonate quality felt by his audience, but perceived first of all by himself in his sense of discovering the story behind the story, the essential motivation that animated his creativity – the heroic journey of Blind Lemon.

The Tiger's Roar: Embodying Resonance

In her poem discussed earlier, Bailey heard the roar of a tiger within the emotions of listening to Billie Holiday sing or somewhere in the story of the challenges Billie had to face in her life. At first the metaphor of a tiger's roar seems whimsical, perhaps nothing more than decoration. Vygotsky (2004) would argue that Bailey's writing demonstrates a way in which experience and imagination work in a complex interrelationship to produce material possibilities. Bailey's writing exemplifies the distinguishing qualities of resonance: dwelling, feeling, and poetic identity.

Because of the necessity of mediating knowledge through personal experience, for Bailey, a white middle class teenager living in a modern technology comfort zone of the Midwest, a poetic identity is born out of her imaginings of Billie Holiday. In other words, through the combinatorial nature of the imagination which "provides an internal language for our emotion" (Vygotsky, 2004, p.18), Bailey selects resonant impressions from the life of an African American adult woman jazz singer of the 1940's living in a world of poverty, drugs, and abuse as best she can through the lens of her own life experiences. What is produced is neither a replication of actuality --a physical impossibility -- nor the regurgitation of well-known facts. Instead, through a process of

dwelling, creating empathetic connections, a resonant feeling based on a poetic account of Billie emerges. This is translated in abstract sensory images and metaphor.

I believe that Bailey has become the chronicler of a mythic hero and as such, has shifted her position of student-investigating-knowledge to storyteller inhabiting a landscape of her own imagining. Aware of her audience, Bailey works to create in materialized form her experience of inhabiting a poetic identity. The tiger's roar as representative of the emotions of hearing Billie sing – or of Billie herself facing her challenges – becomes real experiences containing real feelings. I read the tiger's roar as representative of something Bailey associated with Billie Holiday, and I interpret it as evidence of a movement to the interiority of feeling. Bailey allows herself into what I see as an interpretive dwelling space – a position from which to discover and then to communicate a deeply felt, empathetic sense of Billie Holiday's story.

The theme of the mythic hero arises from the stories of the jazz musicians in a very natural way. The tragedies and the obstacles the musicians had to fight against and sometimes were able to overcome, create the drama a storyteller is naturally drawn to and an audience will naturally respond to. I find evidence in the writing of my students of the personalization of the material and demonstrations of intensely felt connections to the lives of the jazz musicians.

One student wrote:

"Django [Rinehart] had to overcome difficulties that made him better later in his life so I feel that any difficulties I have now will only make me stronger and better in the future."

And another:

"Billie Holliday had it bad. Her life was just hard and anyone's life could be that way."

In personalizing the experiences of the jazz musicians as related through the storytelling, my students began to dwell within a specialized perspective. We were not bringing real people into the classroom and having conversations with them, and yet as

my students began to write about them, the musicians felt like real people, perhaps our neighbors, someone we all knew. We were meeting with people, most of whom were long gone, in imagination through an interpretation of their music and within the drama created with the storytelling format of the biographies.

Susan Stewart (2002) observes how poetic imagery utilizes the specific senses of sight, touch, and sound to connect the reader in an empathetic manner with the subject of the poem. In 2009, Zac also composes a short poem about the death of Blind Lemon Jefferson which demonstrates such a connection:

THE DEATH OF Blind Lemon
Winter streets
Snow falling in the night
People wonder how you died
Musical genius
Never turned back
You died in the dawn

My memory forgets

It is the imagery and placement of the words on the page that I find so compelling in this short poem. Stewart (2002) writes: "When we express our existence in language, when we create objective linguistic forms that are intelligible to others and enduring in time, we literally bring light into the inarticulate world that is the night of preconsciousness and suffering" (p.3). I find such light in Zac's poem.

If I consider the challenges that faced Zac as a learner, I would describe his learning space as a zone of inarticulation and silence within the confines of normative schooling. Considered a special education student with accommodations in reading and writing, Zac struggled with language skills often simply giving up because the difficulty to learn was so challenging for him. However, Zac's poem on Blind Lemon was created in the affinity space of our jazz and writing unit, in a zone of possibility. Within the imagery of his poem is evidence of poetic identity. Zac sets out empathically felt

descriptions of a heroic death directly addressing Blind Lemon as though he were present in conversation.

Stewart (2002) argues that the figuration of the senses found within the imagery of poetry is "central to the encounter with the presence of others, the encounter of recognition between persons" (p.3). Within such imagery as *snow falling in the night*, I interpret a blanket of invisibility during the time of day when seeing is blinded by darkness and senses must prevail. In the address of *you* as the one who dies, I find evidence to support an "encounter with the presence of others."

At the end of the jazz and writing unit, Zac writes: " I think the poem I created on [Blind Lemon Jefferson] was very true on his part." In other words, if Blind Lemon himself could comment on Zac's poem, he would find it an accurate description of his death. Of course, that's merely fanciful, but in this short evaluation of his writing, I find Zac's use of the word *create* instead of *wrote* interesting as though the composition of his poem was beyond mere mechanics of simply *writing.* That he viewed his poem as *true on his part* I take to be an evaluation of authenticity. I interpret this as Zac reaching for expression that validated the choice of poetic imagery in his poem. Is it *true* even though it isn't factually written? Certainly this is indicative of a shift from self as student to self as artist, chronicler of a mythic hero.

Zac typed his poem – twice – so I would be sure to be able to read it, but I have extreme difficulty deciphering his Thinking Card. What I can make out, suggests a very concrete interpretation of his own work. For example, Zac writes that his use of the image *winter street* is because "that is where he dies and it was snowing." Nevertheless, his imagery creates an emotionally resonant connection and he has included some elements that are difficult to explain given Zac's apparent level of skill with language. Stewart reminds us that what "propels us outward will also transform us, and it is only by finding means of making sense impressions intelligible to others that we are able to situate ourselves and our experiences within what is universal." In the imagery of Zac's

poem I find elements of universal feeling. Recognizing that these feelings are a result of my own subjective recognition of those images, I nevertheless also note that they were first born from Zac's thinking and translated through his sense of self as poet.

In the story I told about Blind Lemon I mention the snowstorm, I mention his wandering out into the blizzard that was in progress and I mention the mystery surrounding his death. No one knows why he went outside and there are conflicting stories as to just exactly what happened. What I don't mention is the time of his death. Two images strike me as indicative of poetic identity in this poem: the specific image created around a time of death and the space created in the poem before the very interesting last line. To specify a time of death here is to imagine one. To imagine one speaks of an activity of thinking *through* that came up with it; a dwelling. I am interested in Zac's phrasing too. *You* is a direct address to Blind Lemon as though he were sitting next to Zac in conversation.

Another image of interest connects *death* with *dawn*. The death of Blind Lemon in the poem occurs *in* the dawn – not *at* dawn. This may be a moment of remodeling or it might be indicative of subjective connotations. Poetically it is a much more interesting image. And what about the space at the end of the poem? Space allows – invites – a reader to pause and think, absorb ideas, mood, tone. It essentially is its own invitation to dwell in the poem. Leaving white space within a poem is something I teach my students in a study of poetry, but that year we did not do that particular study as we tried to fit in the jazz and writing unit. Where Zac came up with it is mysterious. That he doesn't note it in his own writing either means that the inclusion of it was too complicated for his ability to write it down or he never noticed it. Either way it signals an interiorized sense of the drama he creates in this poem.

In writing about the historical background of the primitive blues, Leroi Jones (1963) describes the personalized nature of early blues singing, "…blues went back for its impetuous and emotional meaning to the individual, to his completely personal life

and death" (p. 67.) For my students Dan and Zac, it was exactly a sense of life and death that impacted their interpretations of Blind Lemon as a heroic figure. "The music," writes Jones, " remained that personal because it began with the performers themselves, and not with formalized notions of how it was to be performed" (p.67). Like that early blues music, the writing of my students also began with the writers themselves. It began with personalized interpretations, materialized in the world much the same improvisational, surprising way, and did not concern itself with formalized modes of expression seeking instead the poetic, emotionally charged voices of an imagined past.

CHAPTER VII

MAKING POETIC PLACES POSSIBLE:

ECHO AND ANTICIPATION

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.
T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets, V Little Gidding

As in every unit of study in public school classrooms an ending comes. We close the books, we hand in the assignment, the last credits of the movie scroll and we turn on the lights dispelling the darkness that cloaked the magic. Ending signals vacating dwelling and a movement into the experience of *reverberance*. For students transportation to their new destinations is swift and certain. For a teacher the ending movement is different. Students move on in the linear trajectory incumbent in travel from grade level to grade level whereas the teacher circles back and gets ready to begin again on the same adventures now concluding. For both students and teacher, a dislocation occurs, the familiar becomes strange once again and residue from the encounter is locked into memory. Touchstones for that memory linger in the crystallized forms of the imagination whose fate is uncertain and fragile. This chapter investigates the nature of this ending and the implications discovered there associated with teaching and learning centered around imagination.

Fate of Artifacts and the Recycling of Duke Ellington

It was the second to last day of school. The air was bright with heat, the promise of summer vacation, and students were dressed in shorts, flip-flops and tanks. The halls, a chaotic mess of the flotsam and jetsam of the school year billowed with the energy of

discard as students cleaned out their lockers, stuffed duffle bags with derelict pieces of clothing and casually shed tools of learning deemed superfluous for the summer ahead.

"Does anyone want my dictionary?" hollers a boy waving a sadly crumpled pocket version of Webster's. Normally I collect these sorts of discards to help future students who might have limited resources, but I pass on this dilapidated copy destroyed not from use, but from being shoved into the back of a disorganized locker and forgotten. The boy tosses it in the trash.

I troll the long lines of lockers on the lookout for any of my classroom books lost in the storm.

"Don't throw away any books!" I warn raising my voice above the tumult and rescuing an overdue library book from just such a fate.

Students donate scissors, glue sticks, left over paper, notebooks and pocket dictionaries until I am forced to retreat to my own classroom for a moment to unload my collection of castoffs. My room is silent and dim with the lights off. The desks have been removed and piled in the pod. My bulletin boards are cleared and covered with newspaper, as are my shelves of books. My desk is cleared, empty of schedules and work. The only note of disorder is the overflowing recycle bin by the door.

I bend down and gather the drift of old papers – math worksheets, assignment handouts, weekly school bulletins, cut up pieces of crumpled construction paper and other such debris.

And then I see it.

Ripped and crumpled I recognize a copy of a poem from our recently concluded jazz and writing study.

I smooth out the paper. *Dukes Dream. His songs made people cry sharp triangle tears.* It's Drew's final poem about Duke Ellington. I know I have a copy of it in my data files for my upcoming research into this study, but all the students retained a second

copy of their work for their own. Here was Drew's copy tossed away in the recycling bin.

Dislocation and echo are motifs in the experience of reverberance. On her final Thinking Card Jessie writes: *But what really struck my attention was the memory that you will have after this is over.* A memory, like an echo, returns in the future with stories of the past. I wondered, as I watched my students pack up, just what memory they would take with them of the jazz and writing experience. I wondered what memory Drew would be taking as he was leaving an important touchstone of the experience behind. If he didn't have a copy of his poem, would his memory of what he accomplished in class decay with time? What, if anything, would remain?

I take my final term *reverberance* from aspects of reverberation, a physical phenomenon associated with architecture and acoustic design. In the field of acoustics, reverberation is defined as a "decaying tail of reflected sound from a source" (Barron, n.d.). A quality associated with a built environment, reverberation entails the selection of special materials placed strategically to amplify sound. That amplified sound is a re-echo, a return of sound reflected so many times as to produce a discontinuity or dislocation of the original sound, but at the same time, causing the sound to last longer.

As a metaphor to illuminate this experience, Drew's poem was material that would serve to strategically amplify his memory of what he accomplished in the jazz and writing class. However, reverberance is not simple memory. It represents a special kind of returning in which each return diminishes in impact and the spaces between that are traveled in the return broaden in time. For example, a student – or myself – may return to a composition created in the jazz and writing unit, but over time each returning changes as the experience that created the artifact recedes in time. As a sonic attribute of physical space, reverberation serves as a locator within space and time. A sound emitted here is repeated there and returns again and again to the listener thus distinguishing a space between. However, in the back and forth movement of reverberation, there is a

diminishing of discernible sound so that, in the end, the space between becomes gradually lost, retuning to unknowable, alienated territory. Had Drew's poem, resting in the recycling bin already made this journey?

I think it must have been a mistake. His poem must have become mistakenly tangled up in other papers and accidently recycled. I smooth it out the best I can, but because it is so crumpled I decide to make a clean copy for Drew. I make a copy on the photocopier in the teacher's workroom and look for Drew to return it. I find him sitting with his friends at lunch. Feeling as though I am returning to him a long lost treasure I smilingly hand it over with the story of how I found it. Drew thanks me and slides it under his food tray. If his response lacks enthusiasm or appreciation I don't notice and the day continues.

The students leave and the teachers stand by the front doors to see them off and to guard against any overly enthusiastic pushing that might result in someone ending up under the busses. I happen to see Drew hustle away in a crowd of pushing and shoving boys, all students living in town and walking home in the hot afternoon sun, every aspect of their body language speaking to a wonderful sense of freedom, the promise of the summer vacation ahead. I'm grinning as I re-enter the school and encounter the math teacher hauling her recycle bin to the larger container at the back of the school.

"Just when I thought it was empty," she sighs.

As she passes me I see the fresh copy of Drew's poem jauntily riding atop the bed of crumpled, creased, and discarded papers.

Not a mistake then.

As I watched the copy of Drew's poem *Duke's Dream* vanish into the maw of the outside recycling bin I thought about my collection of student work archived in my filing cabinet -- gifts of student work given to me to keep, as well as the orphaned artifacts rescued from the recycling bins or trash and the personally requested pieces – all, to my way of thinking, too valuable to be so carelessly discarded. I wondered if Drew would

ever look back and remember his writing in the jazz study. Would he recall the poem he wrote about Duke Ellington? Would he remember discarding his copy in the recycling bin? Would he be contacting me, years from now, to see if, by chance, I still had a copy of it? Would he ever think of this piece of writing as personally important?

I recall this event, recompiling it from my field notes (2009) as snow scars through the grayness of the world outside my study window. That day of sunshine and discard is long in the past, but, as I analyze the data of this project and search through the ideas informing my thinking here, I am haunted by this memory. What I recall isn't the other moments of student pride and care about their work that makes up the majority of what I experienced at the end of the jazz unit. Rather it is the story of dislocation, the valuation of unimportance inherent in Drew's action of recycling his poem, his deliberate, careless erasure of his voice. Or, knowing I had a copy in my files was he depending on me to archive his accomplishment? Was there no one else with whom he wanted to share? What do I make of his action? A copy – my copy – of *Duke's Dream* rests on the desk in front of me. For me it retains the wonder of its imagery.

> ***Dukes Dream***
> *He made is sound like demimondes flouting by.*
> **Notes tumble by.**
> *It made your head spin around in circles.*
> **Singing from the heart.**
> *His crown had many diamond and hearts beneath.*
> **Swimming with sound.**
> *His songs made people cry sharp triangle tears.*
> **Who is Duke?**
> *His notes touched you deep inside.*
> **You've never heard?**

His notes touched you deep inside, wrote Drew. *You've never heard?* This is the question I want to explore. What is it we hear when the lesson is completed? As we return into the spaces of traditional classroom learning, what of the resonant cultural tone -- the aesthetic experience -- do we retain? Reverberance, as part of the suite of dynamic

experiences is characteristic of interiorized imagination. It becomes the territory of memory mediated through an aesthetic encounter. The dynamic of experiences in the suite finds amplification in reverberance as the affinity space closes, becomes memory, and participants re-enter the normative boundaries of school. Here I suggest a retreat from the poetic identities of resonance into schooled identities. Will the new modes of consciousness attained in resonance dissolve or diffuse? The loss of the between space provokes a return to the mysterious and a feeling of lamentation, a haunting echo of what once was, at the same time it wonders what will happen as a result. This tension is the un/fold of anticipation focusing the experience of reverberance.

My data suggests two themes occupying the experience of reverberance: dislocation and adventurous teaching. As I analyze the data for this chapter, I trace the motifs of memory, enlargement of perception, and qualifying descriptors of experience to illuminate these themes. I look to the dialectical connection between instruction and learning to trouble traditional notions of pedagogical reflection, which tend to focus on subject matter, delivery, and assessment. The experience of reverberance encourages me to pay attention to what is lost (Britzman, 1998).

The Constellation of Returning

The dynamic experience of reverberance is a kind of returning, a looking back, maybe a traveling back in memory, to visit sites of creative construction. *Returning* as I use it here is an action of looking back, a re-ignition of something resting in memory and is a defining quality of the experience of resonance. Here the something resting in memory is the experience within the jazz and writing study. It is my argument that within the working of imagination a resonant form echoes in memory. The crafted poetry, the vivid imagery drawn and captured in the fragments of riff writing, absorbing the music, and listening to the stories of the jazz musicians reflect the experience of

resonance now, at the end of the study, resting in memory. The experience of reverberance amplifies and then loses these resonant forms with the passage of time. I build the constellation of returning to help the teacher-me and the researcher-me understand the value of this encounter.

Traditionally the teacher-me looks to the end of a study as a time for assessment of procedures and outcomes to clarify and validate all aspects of the study. The researcher-me demands a reflexive survey to interrogate processes, positioning, and cultural understandings. In the constellation of returning I discover something more, something allied in closer sympathy with processes of imagination and thus, foundationally more important to this study and authentically aligned to the experience itself.

The ideas informing the constellation of returning speak to the mindfulness of returning to sites of learning *and* teaching not with a critical reflexivity but with a transformative potential centered in imagination. Leaving behind checklists of skills covered and standardized scores measuring mastery, the constellation of learning suggests something different. If, as Maxine Greene argues (2001), the goals of education should help student learners realize their deep connectivity to others and realize in practical action their responsibility to individual experience to the benefit of the world, then there is something more that needs to be accomplished rather than "staying put in the logic of official knowledge" (Britzman, 1998). In this constellation of returning informing the experience of reverberance, I draw on Britzman's ideas of education as interference and take her lead in suggesting the work of Maxine Greene be viewed as method more than theory. Such a view centers the importance of imagination as method for investigating what is viewed as remnant of nineteenth century boosterism (Cohen, 1988) and the "haunted cultural sphere" (Britzman, 1998) of schooling. From Jonathan Silin (2003) I identify a direction for inquiry into educational pedagogy valuing dislocation, loss, and curiosity as an invitation to explore. And finally, from David

Cohen (1988) I take a key definition of adventurous teaching and learning that summarizes the advocacy of all the thinkers in this constellation.

Britzman (1998) writes: "At work in Greene's text, is a method for interpreting the unconscious of educated life, for puzzling over the strange dream of education, and for imagining education as something different than repression and normalization, something that is capable of surprising itself, something interested in risking itself" (p.58). The notion that freedom and the courage to take risks were necessary in the process of discovery is expressed by this student who writes on his final Thinking Card:

It was cool to me that in the beginning I thought well I'm never going to be able to be a poet and write something that good. But as we learned that it doesn't have to make sense then it let our minds open a bit more, to be open to random things to say in our poems. But even when we thought that using random words didn't make sense, we soon learned that those random words could mean something with a lot of feeling and intense power.

What this student appears to have discovered is the payoff of adventuring into unfamiliar territory and the willingness to take risks. Britzman taps into the body of Greene's work to make her argument about surprise and risk in the moment of learning, but at the center of Greene's thinking is her thesis that aesthetic education is transformative and integral to the development of individuals committed to democratic community. A way to explicate Greene's (2001) "method for interpreting the unconscious of educated life" is to examine her metaphor of the blue guitar.

Taken from the Wallace Stevens poem, the blue guitar is Greene's metaphor for imagination and risk taking. The image of the man with the blue guitar who "does not play things as they are" is the image of an artist utilizing imagination in an attempt to change reality into the possible by refusing to conform. "Things as they are/ Are changed

upon the blue guitar," warns the player. Thus the blue guitar becomes the ultimate thing of power and value – it's what makes it possible for the artist to define the purpose of imaginary reality.

Greene argues for an awakened imagination that will enable "learners to notice what there is to be noticed" (p.6). Playing the blue guitar is generative of the wide-awakeness required to "reflect on things as if they could be otherwise" (p.98). Greene writes, "Opening perspective… enlarges spaces – the perceptual, imaginative, and conceptual spaces – in which the young come in touch with and try to interpret their world" (p. 139). Within the data I investigate here, I will find evidence of students playing the blue guitar in this manner, enlarging spaces.

Student comments on the final Thinking Cards touched on widening perspectives expressing a sense of the event being bigger than it seemed to be at first:

I think [the experience of the unit] would keep our minds open to things and look from another perspective.

I think this jazz unit opened my mind to not only a broader range of writing but a broader variety of knowledge

[it made] our thinking process bigger

I thought a lot of people were thinking outside of the box for this project [and] going above and beyond

It gives you a bigger perspective. It broadens your thinking so that you can see and experience more options and more ideas.

I find experiences of bigger perspectives encouraging and view this thinking as students taking up Greene's blue guitar in moments of powerful discovery. Here too were comments indicative of wide-awakeness. First in a very literal sense:

It really opened my eyes…

Next, wide-awakeness as new experience shaking up the familiar to hold in memory as a characteristic of reverberance:

And it was a new word so it stuck with me…

And finally, the wide-awakeness that makes a direct, enthusiastic connection to the other in terms of understanding and discovery:

It just took you outta this place and into another. I started to know more about him [Scott Joplin] everyday and I liked his music. Even when it was time to leave class I just wanted to stay and learn more because I was learning about him.

Within the experience of reverberance, as an aspect of the amplitude of feeling, students found opportunities to take up the blue guitar as a tool of power and value. Students felt they achieved something of mastery without, as Britzman (1998) warns, condensing learning with mastery through paradigms of procedural learning by direct apprehension. In other words, there is a sense of students feeling as though they learned something, but it is something bigger in the world, not something measured on worksheets or in quizzes or tests.

It gives me the feeling of freedom.

I never thought I would be able to write a poem about him but I did.

I think personally that it changed my way of writing.

I will never think of a poem as an assignment again. More like a chance to out your feelings…

The blue guitar -- or imagination as method as read by Britzman in the work of Greene -- is what will allow us to move inside and outside of what constrains us. It is also the thing that will transform the curriculum as the object between us, to curriculum as the pool of material for imaginative action. This shift supports the dissolution of the teacher/student binary, proposing instead a collaborative, improvisational exploration where learning becomes a form of engagement and knowledge becomes understanding in experience and all participants undertake risk. Shared possession of the blue guitar changes everything.

Ben writes about his discovery of metaphor: *Before I came to eighth grade we could think everything as regular like a rainbow as a rainbow instead of hope.* Ben interprets his understanding of metaphor in terms of something different from the "regular." How did he come to this determination? I argue it was a joint effort.

A pedagogy of teaching that hints and points, instead of names and tells, is proposed by David Cohen (1988) and his notion of adventurous teaching. Cohen discusses a tradition of education as articulated by such nineteenth century school boosters as Horace Mann and Catherine Beecher and troubled by Romantic DIY experts such as Mark Twain and James Fennimore Cooper. The boosters advocated public education as the patch to the social ills plaguing democratic society based on a "simple pedagogy" that students would learn what they were taught. In opposition, the Romantic do-it-yourselfers "depicted education as an adventure, a collision between untamed impulses and real experience" and something to carried out mostly alone (p.1). Cohen weds these two educational traditions in the thinking of John Dewey. Cohen writes, " This was Dewey's most astonishing idea: that education (in the Romantic sense) was possible in schools." Dewey believed that "schools could foster adventure and build on idiosyncrasy" (p.2).

Such an educational paradigm, Cohen labels "adventurous" and outlines several characteristics. First he argues that "adventurous education is more difficult than conventional teaching" because learners in this environment must be able to tolerate, and even advocate for, uncertainty. They must be willing to take the risk involved in being "intellectual explorers," to make mistakes in order to learn. The duality between teacher and student is broken in adventurous learning, argues Cohen, because students must assume the autonomy and authority, become the producers of instruction and the teachers must allow them to do so.

I take much of Cohen's evaluation of adventurous teaching and apply it to the remarks made by Ben. Adventurous teaching *and* learning allowed us to understand

something beyond the "regular" way of thinking about ideas and experiences. However I argue against stances that marginalize the presence of the teacher. While allowing autonomy and authority to root in the student experience as Cohen suggests, I argue that the blue guitar needs to be played by all invested participants equally. Cohen argues "teachers must make themselves more vulnerable" in order to achieve modes of adventurous education and here I disagree.

Teachers are already placed in heavy positions of inconsolability, caught within political storms and efforts to sacrifice all for their students. I see a furthering of vulnerability here as mere psychic destructiveness. Risks in adventurous teaching and learning can – and should -- be taken equally as affinity spaces are created and participants trade and shift positions within as needs arise. As Megan writes, *The experience I got was of like not knowing what to do at the beginning and at the end of being an expert at it.* This is reflective of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development if viewed as a process and generative of possibilities of transformative modes of consciousness for all participants. Teachers need be no more vulnerable than the students if participating in the exploration with wide-awakeness. I see no necessity of furthering the duality of student/teacher even in reversal when there is the potential to melt it down completely.

To understand the deeper, less obvious implications of adventurous teaching I look to Britzman (1998) and her notion of education as interference. Britzman writes, "Education must interfere. There is nothing else it can do for it demands of students and teachers that each come to something, make something more of themselves"(p.10). Education as "all types of interference" is taken from the psychoanalytic theories of Anna Freud and means "the wishes of education clash with the wishes of the child" (p.1). For Britzman any effective educational pedagogy must be prepared to grapple with what she identifies as the "others of education:" the incognito, unapparent, contested, the what else and the elsewhere (p. 5). These are the nexus of real sites of learning and teaching.

Education, the way Britzman sees it, is interference as opposed to engineered development. She warns if interference remains outside of the vicissitudes of learning, learning will remain confined to the "small corner of correction, adjustment, and accumulation" (p.24) that closes down the larger horizons opened by imagination. "Education," Britzman argues, "is best considered a frontier concept: something between the teacher and the student, something yet to become. The work of learning is not so much the accumulation of knowledge but a means for the human to use knowledge to craft and alter itself" (p.4). In the experience of reverberance this is the un/fold of anticipation, the idea of something yet to become that dislocates the linear duality between teaching and learning into the dynamic processes of relation building where there is no guarantee, a shaking loose of the taken-for-granted attitudes cloaking learning in public school classrooms.

In the shaking loose of taken for granted attitudes relationships do not remain unaffected. Silin (2003) discusses loss, dislocation, and the value of curiosity as an invitation to explore. Silin writes:

The 're-searches' into the past lead me to argue that learning often involves unspoken forms of loss as well as the acquisition of new skills and ideas. Effective teaching, teaching that honors student imagination, seeks authentic engagement, and creates spaces for difficult emotions, works through hinting and pointing rather than naming and telling. Literacy, and by extension the curriculum as text, becomes pleasurable when it exceeds social utility, leaves behind the familiar and the well rehearsed and moves into uncharted territory where loss, discomfort, playfulness – even sexuality – can be fully expressed, (p.261).

Silin discusses his realization that in "learning a new way of being in the world" entails a loss – the giving up of an old way. To accommodate this loss Silin points to Britzman (1998) and her suggestion that teachers should foster in their students a tolerance for ambiguity, complexity and uncertainty rather than "false notions of truth,

knowledge, and linear paths to learning" (Silin, 2003). Silin argues for the necessity of teachers to embrace resistance and cultivate acceptance of disorientation and dislocation. Teachers must be ready and willing to walk onto the "rackety bridge between self and other" (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 174, as quoted by Silin) and in the process point out what is important to them as an invitation to explore and as a "critical form of valuing" (p.267). Silin wants to redefine the way we consider curriculum and move away from curriculum as compulsory. I believe this is possible in pursuit of adventurous teaching and learning within the processes of the dynamic experiences.

Out of Place in a Different Story

Every morning brings us news of the globe, and yet we are poor in noteworthy stories. This is because no event any longer comes to us without really being shot through with explanation. In other words, almost nothing that happens benefits storytelling; almost everything benefits information. Actually, it is half the art of storytelling to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it… The most extraordinary things, marvelous things, are related with the greatest accuracy, but the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader. It is left up to him to interpret things the way he understands them, and thus the narrative achieves amplitude that information lacks.

Walter Benjamin, Illuminations, p.89

As a teacher, I am forced into the world of information. I require information to assess the progress of my students, my students require information to pass the testing formats established for them; parents and administrators require information about my curriculum, my grading practices (which are mini-information paradigms in themselves), and the content of the novels I teach. Within the constellation of returning, however, I find critical stances taking the view that there is something beyond such information laden paradigms of evaluation that I may tap into to assess the jazz and writing study. This requires taking a different perspective, one that eschews education as engineered development and embraces pedagogies suggestive of "collisions between untamed

impulses and real experience" (Cohen, 1998), risk taking and loss – pedagogies keeping the imagination in mind.

I was interested in how students described their experience within the jazz and writing unit after we had completed it. One student wrote: *In poetry it is good to lose your train of thought but keep writing. It may or may not be about the same thing but that's okay. An example – Walking to school I got inside a giant spider and saw my locker. Just for a moment you were in a different story.* Teaching and learning within the dynamic suite of experiences I use to describe the process of interiorized imagination, is like being in a different story. That story is different because it is not the same plotline as a traditional language arts classroom relying on exclusively on text based modes of discovery and expression. It's the locker – the place of academic storage – discovered in the unlikely spot of the abdomen of a giant arachnid – something potentially very scary indeed. What was the nature of our engagement in such a different story?

I uncovered the motif of qualifying descriptors as I looked for evidence of fully committed engagement within the evaluations of the students. I argued with myself that if students were completely immersed within the jazz and writing experience their comments would identify only the walls of the affinity space. In other words, I expected their evaluations to focus exclusively and in detail on the experience of the jazz and writing unit. The comparative language that I uncovered, surprised me. Student evaluations and comments reached across the boundaries of the affinity space back into expectations of the normative classroom. Here are some representative examples:

Using the music, poetry and drawing was <u>way</u> better than taking a test over all the jazz musicians.

I loved it overall.

So it was a pretty cool unit.

I think this unit was very interesting. I liked how we had to draw what the music made us think of. It was just a different twist from what we normally do in class.

Comparison to normative practices such as taking a test surprised me as test taking is never part of what we do in my classroom except when taking the district mandated standardized tests. That what we did was better is encouraging, that the alternative might have been a test on the jazz musicians seems to me to miss the point of all the writing that was accomplished. That the experience was different from what we *normally* did seems also exaggerated as study in my classroom almost always contains an element of visual arts if not dipping into the territory of music and film. Everything we studied that year had such elements from the hand crafted Shakespeare trading cards, to multimedia explorations of digital storytelling, to multigenre research papers, illustrating vocabulary words, collage, posters, and poetry.

My uncertainty in how to interpret these comments is illustrative of the whole paradigm surrounding the endeavor of evaluation. As Daniel Schacter (1996) reminds us, "The way you remember an event depends on your purposes and goals at the time you attempt to recall it"(p.22). If, as I set out to do here, I acknowledge the existence of interference as well as the invisible others of education, any interpretation I put on the comments of my students becomes immediately flawed and incomplete. I will quickly find myself in such dialog as above – *but how could they say that when that isn't what we did? How could they not have noticed …. Why didn't they mention …* and so on. There will be nothing productive if I stay this track.

Instead I choose to focus on possible indicators of motifs. For example, these statements also, while positive in tone contain qualifiers that hold the experience in suspension with normative practices. The unit was loved "overall" and was "pretty" cool. These could also merely be the colloquial expressions of teens where there is no quantifying differences between *pretty cool*, *way cool,* and simply, *cool.* But, in these statements I find no evidence of connectivity, of wide-awakeness, or risk. I cannot, however, so easily dismiss education's Others (Britzman, 1998). What might be present

here but incognito is trickier to uncover. The best I can do is acknowledge the possible presence of the non-apparent.

I turn to other comments and think perhaps these evaluations are reaching for what the above statements leave uncertain:

[This] is different because in math, history, and any subject except LA [language arts] you would most likely be studying this in a text book.

This evaluation reminds me I need to look beyond the insular view I possess and consider the broader view of my students. My day consists of class after class studying the same material in the same way. My students travel a broader highway through the day visiting as many as eight different classes all with different expectations and topics of focus. That can make a difference to what one might mean when saying, 'what we normally do' because perhaps it encompasses a broader selection of normal -- classes, topics, times, and history.

Other comments were simple evaluations of appreciation, which are always good to hear:

I loved this jazz unit. It was absolutely positively awesome.

And some a little more critical, but all directly tied to issues of time:

It would have liked it better if we had more time.

It can sometimes be difficult to write about the life of a person when you didn't have a lot of time,

My idea is that we should have more time to do it…

Schacter (1996) writes, "What we believe about ourselves is determined by what we remember about our pasts"(p.40). What kind of lasting impact would this study have on my students? Would they remember what we did here? If so, what would they recall?

I think it will be more rememorable learning in this interesting way…

Within these expressions I can trace our journey. I can see evidence of grappling with the mysterious, playing within vibrance, a serious crafting of crystallized

imagination in resonance and the looking ahead to a time of looking back to see what will be remembered. I cannot approach what is most significant within these comments without troubling the assumptions that rely on teachers as producers of education. Set within strands of educational discourse grappling with resistances to libratory education I find difficulty in moving learning from facts and dates to more authentic transformations. My students, speaking from the experience of interiorized imagination, do not. What they value is what has impacted them on the level of feeling and understanding and memory. That they deem such an experience important is clear. One student writes, "I thought this was going to be impossible to do. I was wrong. What I think about this unit is that it makes me feel good inside."

Any other kind of evaluation is limited. Even this evaluation is flawed because it is impossible to measure that which can't be measured – experiences where measurement is antithetical to the process. What we, setting educational pedagogy in the public school classroom, haven't yet been able to do is be all right with that, to allow the imponderables to percolate in mysterious ways not observable, incognito but nevertheless within perspectives of historical importance. The experience of reverberance illustrates the organic nature of culture in its unobservable processes that can't be predicted and travels along on an unknown trajectory.

CHAPTER VIII
THE CAPTURE IN THE MOMENT:
FINDING THE BLUE NOTE

The writing produced in the jazz and writing class astonishes me in the depth and scope of what I feel is its imaginative potential. In the years immediately following the visit from the Marcus Roberts Trio, I believed I had discovered a lesson that was both language *and* art. Language/arts like this would inspire students to create writing that was rich in poetic detail, strong in emotional resonance, and inventive in highly unique and idiosyncratic ways. I have a strong conviction of the importance of placing imagination at the center of teaching and learning. My study clearly shows students learning how to craft language in personally powerful ways as they concurrently develop strong critical and creative thinking capacities. Such writing experiences impact not only intellectual development but the critical emotional development and understanding connecting a child to the larger world as well. I thought that because my student writers had performed such richly evocative pieces, they would feel empowered as writers and thinkers. This, I felt, was what it meant to be a language/arts teacher pulling on the powers of imagination.

Here is a story to help me explain what I mean.

"Alan…" Using her no nonsense teacher voice to address the small, blond headed boy slumped in his seat, Sarah the current eighth grade Special Education teacher, shuffled her papers together and calmly opened her folder of information. "Tell us what strengths you think you have developed this year."

We were gathered in the Learning Resource Room meeting with Alan's mother for a final IEP (Individual Education Plan) review. Alan, the boy slumped in his seat was the subject of our meeting. Requiring an associate to accompany him in every class, Alan read at around the second grade level. He could write only simple words and phrases on his own in large blocky letters. According to the various tests his teachers and the school specialists involved in his case conducted, the deeper mechanics of sentence and paragraph structures and the parts of speech and their function were now, and always would remain, outside his capabilities.

Alan had some academic goals to achieve before moving on to the structured, special education classroom waiting for him in high school. These included the ability to balance a checkbook and to read road signs. As per the requirements of the IEP meetings, I was present as representative of one of his academic instructors. I had volunteered to attend this meeting because Alan had taught me something very important that year about my teaching practice. I felt a personal investment in what I perceived as some of his very powerful capabilities.

Much smaller than the average 13 year old, Alan had trudged into my language arts classroom everyday that year lugging a gigantic backpack that was almost literally bigger than he was. Plunking it down on his desk, he would disappear behind it for the duration of class. From my position at the front of the room, all that was visible of this small boy was the top of his head. His white blond hair in typical bed-head disarray stuck up like feathers on an irritated bird. Occasionally I would catch a glimpse of his glasses, inevitably slightly askew on his face, as he would begrudge a brief peek from behind his backpack barrier coaxed by the associate accompanying him for that day.

My breakthrough with Alan came during a short poetry writing exercise when his associate complained to me that, regardless of the writing prompt to write about your very favorite place, all Alan wanted to write about was his damp, half fallen down, spider-infested garage. As the other students eagerly wrote about lounging in friendly

bedrooms, eating in cinnamon roll scented kitchen havens, or hiding in secret tree houses, Alan seemed fixated on the unpleasant conditions of his garage. He wasn't being all that cooperative about communicating the details either.

"You'll have to deal with him," his associate informed me not unsympathetically. "I can't get him to cooperate."

Alan was definitely a reluctant learner. But I was not intimidated by this. I viewed Alan as a reluctant adventurer. I felt that if I could figure out the right adventure for him, Alan would become an eager participant in his learning. It didn't matter that he could only write with great difficulty. If, as Langer (1953) theorizes, art is a living form of making meaning, then writing words was only part of it. The arts of language -- poetry and stories, invention and taking risks -- were important too.

Tom Romano (2007) in characteristic style describes teaching English/ language arts in the following way:

Language is our canoe up the wilderness river, our bush plane, our space capsule, our magic. Instead of 'now you see it, now you don't,' using language works in reverse: 'now you don't see it, now you do." (p.170)

As a writer and as a teacher of adolescents, I am attracted to this description of language instruction for several reasons. In the first place Romano seems to me to be suggesting that language, specifically writing, is adventurous. This was evident in the jazz and writing unit. The kind of adventure Romano is suggesting is, of course, not your adrenalin for fun theme park adventure. This adventure happens in the wilderness where events can go wrong, where there is danger, where it's possible to get lost – we will have to take real risks. It's exhilarating and the rewards are great.

As a writer I understand this.

As a teacher, I want my students to understand it too.

Students like Alan, David, Kayla, and the others in this study had such opportunities. In this adventure we searched for our Blue Notes -- the unique aspects in

our pieces of writing that set them apart, made them special, made them transformative. One of my students wrote, "My Blue Note was the moment in the capture." She was referring to a phrase in her riff writing but I think this is as good a description of any as to what it means to learn in a poetic place within a dynamic of imagination. We are captured, in a moment, kidnapped, consumed and rendered transcendent.

Frank Smith (1989) in his discussion of literacy advocates the idea that teachers can promote interest through the demonstration of their own interests. As a result of this type of pursuit, Smith argues that "literacy is good for two things: the pursuit of the individual imagination and the exercise of personal growth" (p. 358). Because of the experimental and improvisational characteristics of the writing produced, the jazz and writing unit students took risks pursuing both of these goals and producing powerfully evocative, deeply textured, nuanced pieces of magical writing.

Romano (2007) suggests language is magic, that it possesses the ability to conjure something that was absent before. Who doesn't dream about the power of such magic? Who would decline the ability to create something where nothing was before? The improvisations of jazz musicians seem to me to exemplify this experience. "Jazz is music never played the same way once," is the quote I find buried in my notes from one of the first years of the jazz and writing unit (attributed to Louis Armstrong). How often had my students expressed a sense of powerlessness in some form or another? Wouldn't language pursued in this manner afford agency? Encourage enfranchisement?

So I was eager to work with Alan contrarily bent on exploring such a non-traditional favorite place as a spider infested garage. In the first place I was intrigued. What could possibly be so enchanting about such a place?

Over the course of the next couple of class times, my conversations with Alan gradually revealed that his interest in his garage centered on the motorcycles and snowmobile stored in it. Delighted with this discovery, and thinking that now I knew

everything I needed to know to teach Alan about similes (the skill at hand), I began trying to get Alan to put into descriptive language his experiences with his bikes.

At first very talkative about the motorcycles and what kind they were, he suddenly became resistive when I pushed him for sensory details. For example, he would not tell me what it was like to ride one of his bikes.

"What's it feel like?" I asked him. "What does it sound like when you ride?"

My answer would be a mumbled, "I don't know," or merely a shrug of his thin little shoulders.

Initially I thought his reactions a form of resistance to the learning. Or maybe he just simply didn't want to go to the effort to produce work for my class. I was focused on issues of motivation so I persisted. It never occurred to me that the issue at stake might be along the lines of incoherent communication.

At last I asked the kingpin question: "Why don't you know what's it's like, Alan? You do ride them, don't you?"

Alan looked at me through his smudged and crooked glasses like I was a crazy woman. His frowned deepened. "No," he informed me, "They're all busted."

Finally, I got it. Alan couldn't make any similes about what it was like to ride his motorcycles because he never *had* ridden them. He *didn't* know what it was like.

Asking him to elaborate, I slowly discovered the fact that Alan's motorcycles didn't exist as actual road machines at all. They were bits and pieces of broken motorbikes that he loved to play with after school and in every minute of free time he could find.

He spent hours in the garage taking them apart, separating screws and bolts and pieces of metal into a range of coffee cans and boxes, and trying out different pieces with other pieces. Alan couldn't understand my questions about what it was like to ride his motorcycles because they were all broken pieces. He understood this, but he didn't

understand that I didn't. Alan couldn't figure out why I badgered him about what it *felt* like to ride one. How could he know?

When, at last the picture became clear to me, I also understood that in a colossal merry-go-round of misunderstanding I had been trying to get Alan to conform to an idea that was mine. Instead of trying to help him tap into the experiences he knew, to build possibility from his own life, I had tried to impose a different reality. So focused on trying to teach him about descriptive writing, I failed to listen to his descriptions. Following this realization, I took a step back and Alan began to write very funny, as well as very descriptive, poetry about his desolate garage and all the broken machines stored in it.

When, at last we came to the jazz and writing unit that year, I knew what to expect.

"He doesn't want to write about the music," his associate complained to me. "All he wants to write about is his motorcycles."

Unfortunately I did not ease her concern over his ability to successfully conform to the assignment when I answered, "Let him."

What would Alan be able to accomplish now that he understood how to bring his experiences into language in his specialized way? Romano notes that the conjuring of language is not mere trickery. It becomes discovery. It isn't just a matter of bringing into being something that was hidden by an illusion. Romano suggests that language gives us the power to discover something we didn't know existed until we began to write about it. It is an artistic paradox; one that is not unfamiliar to artists and one I discover I am passionate about bringing to life for my students.

Like Alan, I want my students to understand writing is not only about correctness. It is also about discovery in the most vital sense of the word. "Literacy," declares Smith (1989), "can best be fostered in an environment of inquiry and opportunity for teachers and students alike" (p. 359). Alan taught me that I had to allow my students to make

connections to language in their own way based on personal interpretations of their unique perspectives.

In the meantime, Alan wrote his poem:

Motorcycle Jazz
Yamaha Louis
Loud as doorslamming drums
Jelly Roll Suzuki
broke down cars and chicken livers
Honda Blues
lazy as a lingering turtle
Ragtime Harley
like a party
a loud party of lions

When I think back to how I tried to get Alan to engage with simile and describe in that way his motorcycles I cringe. Imagine if he had tried to contrive similes only to satisfy the requirement to do so. There certainly would have been no loud party of lions in his mind roaring to take form in language. I can hardly suppose anything he might have written before the jazz and writing unit, and before our sudden understanding of each other, could compare with the imaginative power of Yamaha Louis or the Honda Blues.

Ragtime Harley and a Loud Party of Lions: A Conclusion

It would be naive of me to ignore the larger issues concerning the profession of teaching in the 21st century. These issues involve my own presence as an educator in the classroom. They encompass broader considerations of state and district mandates impacting what is being taught, how much time is delegated to it, and how it should appear in the standards of curriculum design adopted in my district.

In the fall of 2010 I took a year's leave of absence to fulfill the residency requirement at the university as I pursued writing this dissertation. When I returned I discovered a rearrangement of priority had taken place. To accommodate statistics that

suggested too many of our students were "non-proficient" in reading or not making a "year's growth," extra reading classes, now taught by all teachers, had been implemented. A push to cement our curriculum to state standards and core curriculum, and a close examination of standardized test scores has pushed the jazz and writing unit completely out of my curriculum.

Smith (1989), in an attempt at defining literacy argues, "Individuals become literate not from the formal instruction they receive, but from what they read and write about and who they read and write with" (p.355). In other words, literacy development is predicated in experiences not isolated skills in a workbook. The richer the experience, the richer the development of literacy.

Vygotsky would agree -- experience is the cornerstone of the development of the imagination. Dewey would agree -- meaning is embodied in experience. To my thinking, a study encompassing the rather difficult and unfamiliar (to my students) music of jazz and the biographies of the musicians also creates an opportunity for rich experience. More so -- I would argue vehemently -- than the simplified reading intervention program I currently teach to "struggling" readers. The simplistic, banality of the thin chapbooks have turned us all, myself wholeheartedly included, into struggling readers fighting to keep our attention from wandering out the window. There is no wilderness adventure here. There is no conjuring of magic here.

As Alan's eighth grade year was ending, we sat around the table in the Learning Resource room waiting for him to respond to Sarah's question about what skills he felt he had improved in over the year. I speculated on his response. Would he be able to say that he had learned something about descriptive language? Would he mention his ability to create similes? Would he discuss his ability to read his own work out loud in front of his peers? Maybe he would say something about how he had liked to listen to Louis Armstrong play his trumpet in *Struttin' Some Barbecue.*

We wait for his response. It always takes Alan time to formulate his answers and sometimes his teachers suspect that his mind has wandered to some other thought.

"Alan?" Sarah prompts him again.

Alan squirms in his seat and I realize that he is making an attempt to sit up as tall as he can in his chair. He places his hands on top of the table neatly folded one on top of the other and looks calmly and seriously at Sarah and then at his mother. His glasses are slightly crooked on his nose.

"I," he announces in a loud and firm voice surprising us all, "am a Poet."

I have to admit at that moment in my life a loud party of lions moved through my own consciousness and we went dancing over the rooftops to a Ragtime Harley tune. If I could have doodled the goose bumps racing along the backs of my arms at Alan's declaration that is what they would have been doing.

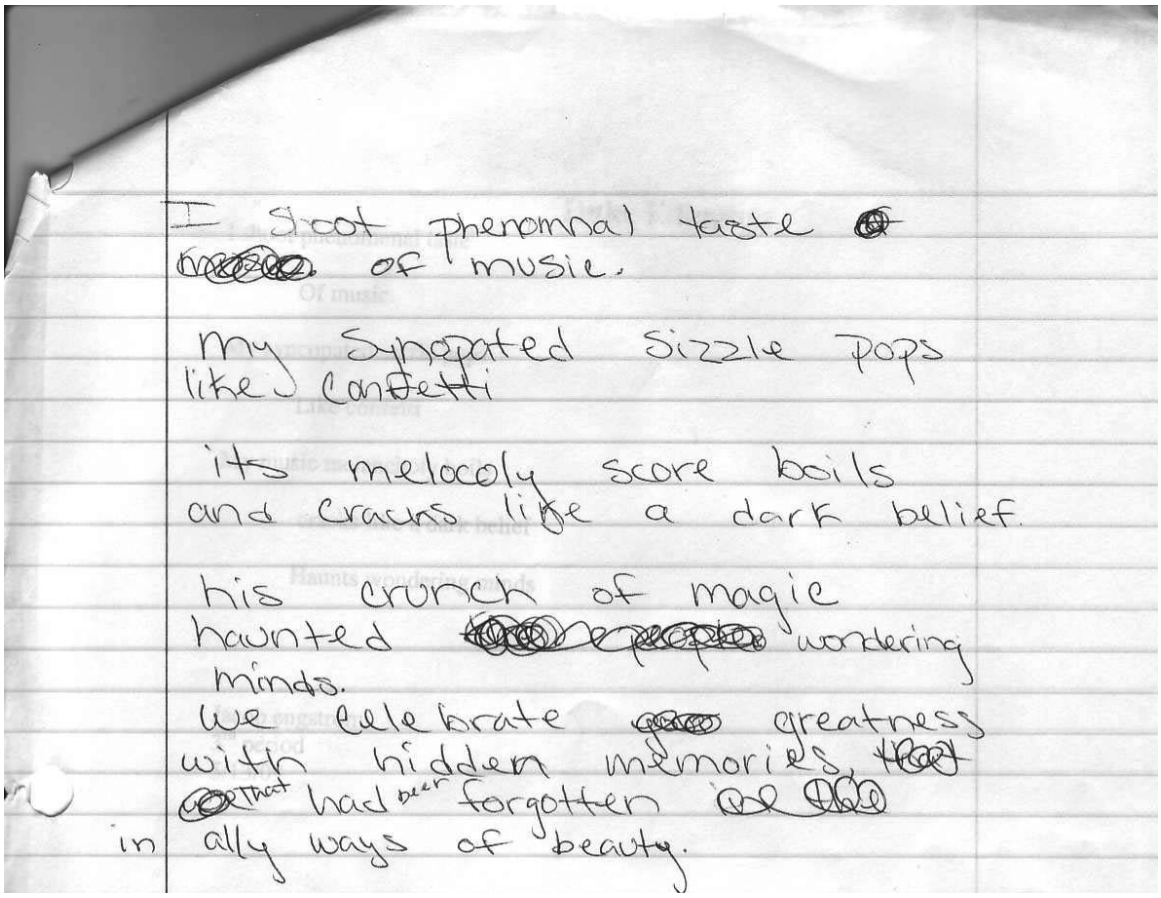
After a moment of surprised silence, Sarah taps her pencil on her folder and asks Alan to say something about how he has learned to balance a checkbook. Nothing could have made the lion's roar diminish faster.

Through writing this dissertation, I have come to see the results of the jazz and writing encounter as discovering a type of empathetic, poetic writing – our Blue Note -- standing in contrast to institutional writing that seems fragmented away from emotion and thinking. On her final Thinking Card, one of my students wrote, "My blue note was when I thought I was acting like I was actually in a poetic place." This is what I think the jazz and writing unit was all about – acting like we were in a poetic place. As I conclude this dissertation and contemplate the current standardized landscape of education in front of me, questions remain. What of this event of jazz and writing within the suite of dynamic experiences of imagination informs, impacts, or perhaps even changes, my teaching practice? Where in the ever tightening, scripted learning practices invading my classroom, will I ever again be able to fit such a lesson as this? Should I even try?

These are the crucial questions that remain. It is my hope that this narrative describing the immersion of adolescent writing students and their teacher in the music of jazz, not only challenges assumptions of instrumental teaching paradigms, but contributes to the search for Gitlin's (2005) deep politic, a "form of political humanism that links our human potential to imagine, to dream, with our ethical potential to separate ourselves from the everyday politics" of the status quo (p.17).

APPENDIX A

Samples of handwritten student work.

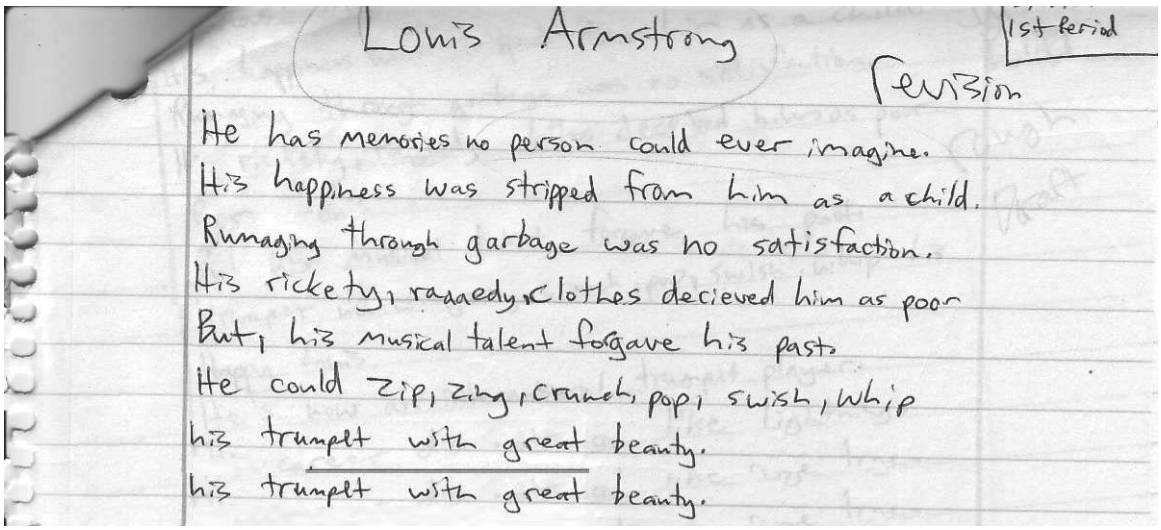


I shoot phenomnal taste of music.

my Syncpated sizzle pops like confetti

its melocoly score boils and cracks like a dark belief.

his crunch of magic haunted wondering minds.
we celebrate greatness with hidden memories, that had been forgotten in ally ways of beauty.

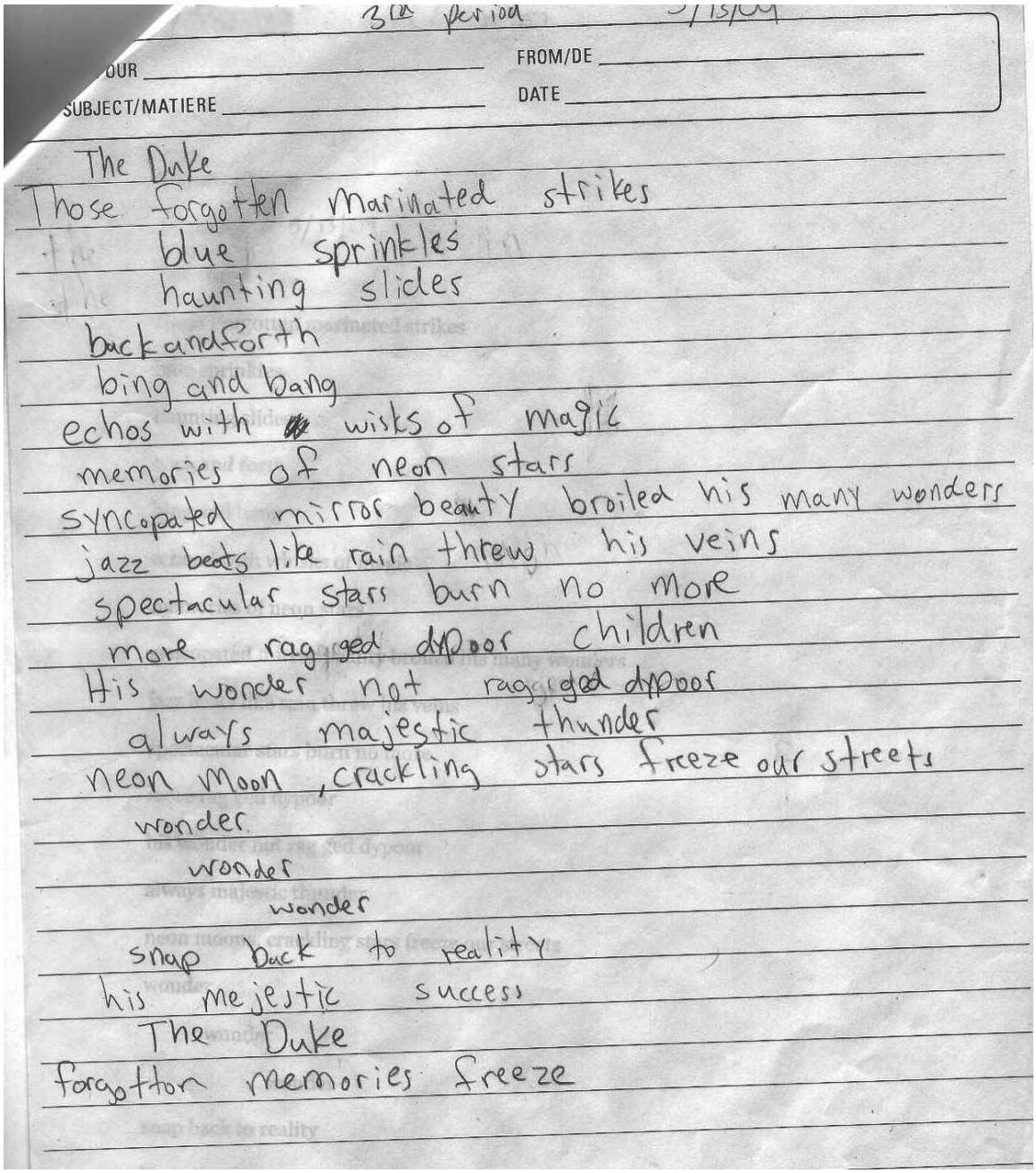


Louis Armstrong

1st period

Revision

He has memories no person could ever imagine.
His happiness was stripped from him as a child.
Rumaging through garbage was no satisfaction.
His rickety, raaaedy, clothes decieved him as poor
But, his musical talent forgave his past.
He could zip, zing, crunch, pop, swish, whip
his trumpet with great beauty.
his trumpet with great beauty.

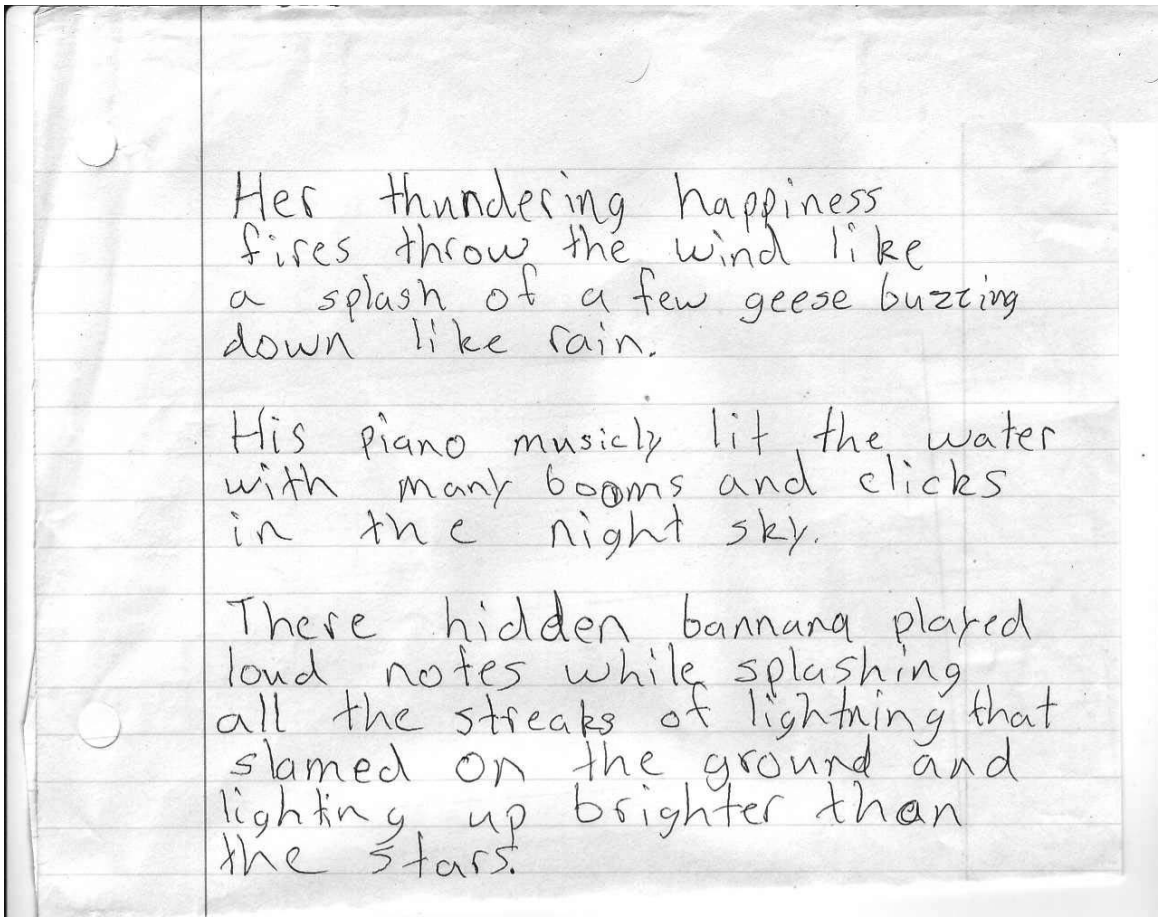


3rd period 5/15/09

OUR _____ FROM/DE _____

SUBJECT/MATIERE _____ DATE _____

The Duke
Those forgotten marinated strikes
blue sprinkles
haunting slides
backandforth
bing and bang
echos with wisks of magic
memories of neon stars
syncopated mirror beauty broiled his many wonders
jazz beats like rain threw his veins
spectacular stars burn no more
more ragged dypoor children
His wonder not ragged dypoor
always majestic thunder
neon moon, crackling stars freeze our streets
wonder
wonder
wonder
snap back to reality
his majestic success
The Duke
forgotton memories freeze



Her thundering happiness
fires throw the wind like
a splash of a few geese buzzing
down like rain.

His piano musicly lit the water
with many booms and clicks
in the night sky.

There hidden bannana played
loud notes while splashing
all the streaks of lightning that
slamed on the ground and
lighting up brighter than
the stars.

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