

Science and Mathematics Education Centre

**Melodies That Live in Our Hearts: Intentional Harmonies and
Rhythms within the Inspiring Teacher**

Julie Maree Fielding

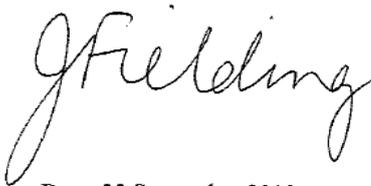
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Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published by any person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

Signature: Julie Fielding

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "J Fielding". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the printed name.

Date: 22 September 2010

Dedications

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Marjorie Olwyn Boulton (Long). As a lifelong learner and rapacious reader herself, she encourages me to question, to be inquisitive and to be open to new possibilities. She has given me the impetus to begin this journey, bringing my teaching soundscapes to life through narrative.

Within these pages also plays the soundscape of a musician and childhood friend whose life was so tragically ended on April 17th 2009. Bruce Holloway lived his joy and passion for music and was the author of many lyrics and tunes. His melodies, harmonies and rhythms will live on in the hearts of many through his music forever.

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I wish to thank the many colleagues, students, parents and friends who have contributed to the writing of this thesis, their soundscapes, their interviews and their wisdom. I also thank my family, especially my children, Caitlin and Matthew, who have patiently watched their mother work through the frustrations and joys of piecing together a work of passion and love.

An Abstract

The interpretative narratives that lie within the pages of this study tell the story of a teacher who seeks to find the heart and soul of her teaching practice. Represented as *soundscapes* the stories evoke a consciousness of sound, the sound of learning. As she journeys through times of fear, confrontation with violence, loss of self-confidence, and depression, she opens her eyes to the harsh realities within the world of education, a world that appears to deny humanness through its preoccupation with objective measurement. As she focuses on what it is to be a teacher of students she views the outside world as incomprehensible in its absurdity.

Illuminating encounters expose understandings and insights as she deliberately reflects on her narratives, engages in scholarly reading, thinking and writing. She particularly draws upon her deeply-held beliefs for the democratic principles of teaching.

This is the story of a teacher who searches deeply for understanding amidst the minds of writers who help make sense of her world. They offer optimistic pathways to possible realms of education where the identity, integrity and humility of everyone who participates within these worlds with her can be honoured.

This teacher is moved by the passions that stir in her heart. The passion for art and music sensitises her towards the aesthetic, artistic and spiritual possibilities of teaching. As she embraces her spirituality and awareness, an inner sense of the higher self to which she can appeal to for insight, wisdom, comfort, peace, calm and a clear mind she aspires to capture a teacher's reflection in the mirror of these narratives. She hopes teachers might

see a reflection of themselves within the stories, stories that resonate and add to self-understanding.

This teacher draws twenty-first century learners, guiding from the side, towards the possibilities for advancing in technology. She sees fearsome consequences that a lack of moral thought and deliberation could put young people, who are barraged by superficial modes of technological communication, at risk, becoming unguided by thoughtful, moral purpose. As the gaps between student and teacher grow exponentially, she still has an optimistic energy for the possibilities of reconnecting hearts and souls in education.

She has a desire to reveal the confronting life of a teacher who struggles daily to maintain her integrity and honesty whilst remaining humble before all these confrontations. This desire has empowered her quest to understand what lies at the heart of a good teacher.

This is Jodie's story, my story, a story that many others may have written, yet so far unwritten by many teachers.

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CHAPTER 1

COMPOSING THE MELODIES OF OUR HEARTS

Jodie watches her granddaughter Charlotte, with absolute fascination, as she learns about the world around her. Jodie is amazed at what Charlotte knows and understands. Her joys and frustrations become Jodie's joys and frustrations. Jodie painfully holds back whilst Charlotte explores something new, first with agitation and then with new found excitement. How often we are tempted to take over and relieve a small child's frustration, she thinks. As a grandmother it's easy to be patient and let the child find out through self-discovery, with wonder. If we interpreted her world for her before she has discovered it, could that mean her learning and understanding would be less fruitful? How often, she asks herself, do we forget to allow such frustration and wonder to grow in the students we teach? Is the natural instinct of today's children to learn dissolving in ways that harm or even destroy that original yearning to learn? No, she is sure, we will not sit back and watch.

Jodie's profession is teaching, a profession toward which she has aspired since her primary school years. It is not clear why she picked this particular life work and she cannot make the claim that she was born to be a teacher. She only knows that her mother instilled a love of learning, an insatiable need to find out,

This interpretive study embraces traditions of phenomenology as a means to explore, understand, reveal and set to sound, or sing if you like, some melodies that ring out from and tune into the hearts of teachers. The melodies release a series of themes, harmonic and dissonant, and follow distinctive rhythms to address the key question of my inquiry:

What is it that lies at the heart of teaching? I introduce a metaphor that features throughout my inquiry, one that I encapsulate in a single word, soundscape. Soundscape suggests an expanse of music, voice, tonality, conversation, dialogue, storytelling — as much as can be heard by the ear, just as the word landscape suggests an expanse of scenery, especially as much as can be seen by the eye. In my soundscapes, sounds of voices of individuals and groups are arranged to produce varied responses to questions as interpretive findings of my inquiry. Narrating the lived experiences of a number of people — teachers, parents, friends and stories from the life of one teacher, Jodie, I wish to show how everyday soundscapes can be enhanced, if we alter our orientation to sounds — of conversations, stories, voices, opinions, actions in the field of education, for ethical and aesthetic reward for teachers whose hearts belong to the art of teaching. I use my own, individual appreciation of music and art to illuminate the particular musical allegories that the soundscape metaphor produces.

I draw upon writers who animate a philosophy of phenomenology — Madeleine Grumet, Max van Manen, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Emmanuel Levinas, and Robert Sokolowski amongst others — who teach me that “every act of consciousness we perform, every experience we have, is intentional, . . . is essentially “consciousness of” something or an “experience of” something or other” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 8), a teaching that leads me to a conscientiously written understanding of the complex, baffling and moral responsibility that a teacher must hold heart-wise.

My experience, *Jodie’s* experience could be *our* experience if, as van Manen says, we can “be reflectively aware of certain experiential meanings” (1990, p. 57). In *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, when writing phenomenological descriptions, says van Manen, we often use the form of “I” or “we”. This is to show that

“the author recognises both that one’s own experiences are the possible experiences of others also that the experiences of others are the possible experiences of oneself” (1990, pp. 57, 58). This thesis, *Melodies That Live in Our Hearts: Intentional Harmonies and Rhythms within the Inspiring Teacher* explores and illuminates the soundscapes within which a teacher teaches, and which influence and impact upon the lived experience of individual teachers and students. It attempts to arrange narratives of phenomena as possible human experiences to be understood and suggests that such narratives of lived experience can have a universal (intersubjective) character (van Manen, 1990, pp. 57-8).

The purpose of re-constituting narratives of lived experiences of the protagonists who inhabit my thesis is to demonstrate possibilities for interpreting. Narratives help us to understand human knowing and the ways we relate to each other and the world.

Narratives help to bring our consciousness of something to the fore through remembrance, dialogue, imagination and theoretical application. They help us to evaluate the everydayness of life to take “special meaning” for the person whose story is told, for the author who tells it and for the reader who follows it. With van Manen, I too realise that it is important for individual growth and learning through life: as others may occupy special meaning in our own lives, we recognise that we are special in the lives of others (1990, p.57).

It is here that I must explain how Jodie, the key protagonist, has entered my thesis, the role that I propose her stories to play and the peculiar relationship that I have developed with her to help deepen understanding of the heart of teaching which might otherwise remain a mystery to me and many others. As I developed my friendship with Jodie, I was at first deeply involved with her, the same prejudices, the same memories, the same traditions and values, the same voice. Then, because I was too close to become her

narrator as observer, as author I had to create her as a stranger to me. In reality, Jodie's stories are mine, Jodie is me. In the writing of her, we separate and later, through the inquiry, Jodie and her stories, I and my stories, close together again in self-understanding, transforming the Jodie of recalled, narrated, interpreted stories into being one with the author, me. As my writing proceeds it is my wish that the soundscapes of the thesis, in my inquiry into the heart of teaching, can capture the melodies of understanding that resonate and clash between us until the strangers we were to each other reveal harmony together in understanding. I must exercise truthfulness and responsibility as, intentionally, I develop such a conscious relationship between Jodie and me. The text that belongs to us, Jodie and me, is of course by my very invention, autobiographical. It is with the autobiographical text that I expound the intentionality of my thesis — to understand what lies at the heart of teaching in the spirit of a philosophy of understanding.

I turn now to explore how some animators of a philosophy of understanding inspire me to explain the approaches I have taken with my inquiry into the heart of teaching and to signify the effect that their thoughts and ideas have upon my deliberations.

In *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty describes phenomenology as a “dialogue or infinite meditation”, one that will ever be unfinished, its task to “reveal the mystery of the world and reason” (2006, pp. xxiii, xxiv). In the soundscapes of students, parents and educators released in this thesis, we will find ourselves amidst such a dialogue, an infinite meditation on the heart of teaching. At the point where we begin the dialogue, here in chapter one, we hear the first fragments of melodies that are to become songs yet unknown in their fullest manifestation. At this beginning, we do not know where the music will take us. We do anticipate journeying to a place in our hearts where melodies, harmonies and rhythms of lives are gently, quietly, robustly, noisily, urgently, even

violently — in orchestral expression — ask us to listen to the sounds of learning we hear around us and experience some of the mystery of teaching as it reveals itself to us.

*Oh I sing my song, on and on
And take you with me
in a dreamy course
I sing my song, on and on
And take you with me
no one can change our course
(I Sing My Song, Kooymans, 1969)*

In my thesis I am inspired to sing my song, Jodie’s song, and to take others with me, finding a voice that will capture attention and evoke emotions.

...an ordinary text [narrative], just like in an ordinary musical melody, may sometimes be charged with a certain vitality and significance so that it touches and speaks to us with special meaning. We experience this meaning as evocation of deeper significance or richer understanding of life. (van Manen, 1994, p. 159)

I use metaphors of music to vitalise and make significant acts of teaching that evoke rich understandings of a teacher’s life.

Merleau-Ponty illustrated phenomenology as a “study of essences”, a philosophy that puts essences back into existence and does not expect to arrive at the understanding of man and the world from any other starting point other than that of their ‘facticity’”(2006, p. vii). It will help me to present, in each chapter of my thesis, a study of essences — in my

effort to restore essence in the accounts of the lived experience, the existential lives of the protagonists. To assist in framing the structure of my thesis and in my attempt to foreshadow the essences I deal with, I foreword each chapter with a theme-like statement — inspired somewhat by van Manen who describes the meaning of ‘theme’, offering theme-like statements about themes,

- (1) Theme is the experience of focus, of meaning, of point. As I read over an anecdote I ask, what is the meaning, its point?
- (2) *Theme formulation is at best a simplification.* We come up with a theme formulation but immediately feel that it somehow falls short, that it is an inadequate summary of the notion.
- (3) *Themes are not objects one encounters at certain points or moments in text.* A theme is not a thing; themes are intransitive.
- (4) *Theme is the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand.* Theme describes an aspect of the structure of lived experience. (1990, p. 87)

Applications of themes in these ways assist writing in phenomenological ways. Inscribed at the beginning of my chapters, the themes announce the soundscapes symbolic of lived experience. Though the reader will find accounts of the lived experience of some others amongst the chapters, I focus upon recording soundscapes of one teacher’s life, Jodie’s, as she recalls, recounts and rewrites the experiences she believes taught her the most, to eventually restore her to her ‘self’ with truthfulness and moral understanding. I record her understandings where they might have been obscured before — each hidden occurrence revealing the influences, the keynotes of her life that were previously unconscious — impacting upon the next step in her journey of discovery. Gadamer tells us

Every experience has implicit horizons of before and after, and finally fuses with the continuum of the experiences present in the before and after to form a unified flow of experience...A horizon is not a rigid boundary but something that moves with one and invites one to advance further. (2004, pp. 237, 238)

Jodie's journey from student to teacher flows back and forth across many 'horizons'. As the soundscapes play we may be 'conscious of' how each of her experiences move and advance Jodie further in her search for heartfelt teaching. I hope to unveil, through far-ranging reflection many patterns of experience as one teacher lives them, some penetrating insights into "the inexhaustible richness of our lived experience and the fruitfulness of reflecting on its forms and patterns" (1969, p.12), as Levinas honours it. It will be important for me, from my study of Levinas's work, to draw upon his writings with my own understandings and with those of others who have applied their life work to his work, with Sharon Todd for example. In particular, I will unfold some understanding of the notion of responsibility in the sense of self and Other, self as responsible for the Other. This will require some deliberations about the moral purpose of teaching and dimensions of ethical relations and responsibilities that reside in the heart of teaching.

Grumet, author of *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching*, says that as we study the form of our own experience, we not only search for evidence of external forces that may have diminished us, "we are also recovering our own possibilities. We work to remember, imagine, and realise ways of knowing and being that can span the chasm presently separating our public and private worlds" (1988, p. xv). We risk misinterpretation, Grumet tells us, as we draw from our own and the stories of others to expose consciousness 'of something but she is convinced that "...if only a theoretical presentation of these issues

were offered, we would literally “overlook” the ways that each of us is implicated in them and the ways that our own practices as educators are motivated by them” (1988, p. xvii).

Within Jodie’s stories, much may remain concealed, horizons constantly change, consciousness of particular instances rely upon personal perspective and relationship with others. Grumet says “The figure is never fully illuminated” (1988, p.60) and poignantly reminds us we are looking at “the shadow of the experience of teaching...hoping to catch a glimpse of its distortions and of the ground on which it falls” and attempting to “address the relation between what appears and what is hidden in autobiographical accounts of teaching” (1988, p 61). Using a philosophy of understanding, Grumet reads the intentionality of each teacher’s autobiographical text. She seeks meaning not just in the story but also “in the dance [song] of the body subject through the prereflective landscape [soundscape] nestled in the shadows of the text” (1988, p. 61).

Grumet speaks of the need to move back and forth between two different worlds, “the world as it appears to us and the world we refuse to see.” As we move between these two worlds we require a mediating method that “stretches between lived phenomena and an ideology of family life [teaching life] to help us diminish the distance between the private and public poles of our experience.” She goes on to say that the “the world we feel, the world we remember, is also the world we make up” (Grumet, 1988, p.65). When Jodie recounts her lived experiences she recalls what she remembers, what she felt and interprets the events of her life, the world she has made up. As she recalls these soundscapes she diminishes the distance that exists between her private and public experiences. This calls upon me to examine some ideologies and theories as they reverberate loudly amongst the phenomena of teaching experience, for example, traditions

inherent in ideas about archetypes of teachers, teacher relationships with students and industrial age paradigms.

van Manen insists that storytelling assists us in our everyday teaching. The stories we have to tell bring consciousness to our teaching practices, places them in the public domain, helping us and others to change our practice to closely suit the needs of our students.

It is often through telling and reflecting on anecdotes or stories, that we come to an understanding of what is good pedagogical action. So, when we wonder about “What is (was) going on?” “What should I have done?” and “What to do next?” it is the embodied knowledge shaped by reflection on experience that will help us interpret our pedagogical situation and possibly give us a sense of practical guidance. (1994, p. 162)

When teachers recall their stories they *re*-experience the stories of their lives.

“Phenomenology [researching with a philosophical understanding] aims at establishing a renewed contract with original experience” (van Manen, 1990, p.31). We explore our renewed contract with the original experience by describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting.

Thus central to a philosophy of understanding which comes from writing and rewriting experience, is storytelling. A number of authors — novelists, philosophers, sociologists, researchers — open us to possibilities for telling stories with a philosophical understanding, for example, Tad Williams, Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Frank McCourt and Parker J Palmer. We may be enthralled as authors transport us to another world or dimension, like Williams, who penned the series, *Otherland*. He wrote of the sudden rise in social networking and online web games, years before Google, My Space and online

gaming existed, as if he knew what was to come with foresight. His fiction closely mirrors reality, full of visual imagery and intriguing story lines. Williams believes story writing, listening and reading are vital and that “stories [are] the things people [use] to give the universe a shape” (1998, p. 347).

Pinkola Estes surrounds herself with story. Her book *Women Who Run with the Wolves* tells many different stories, teaching women about the different aspects of the true nature of being female. Pinkola Estes says,

Stories are medicine. I have been taken with stories since I heard my first. They have such power; they do not require that we do, be, act anything – we need only listen. The remedies for repair or reclamation of any lost psychic drive are contained in stories. Stories engender the excitement, sadness, questions, longings, and understandings that spontaneously bring the archetype, in this case the Wild Woman, back to the surface...For us, story is a medicine which strengthens and arights the individual and the community. (1998, p. 14)

She believes stories can help us when we become stuck or need to find a way to deal with the difficulties that face us.

Stories set the inner life into motion, and this is particularly important where the inner life is frightened, wedged, or cornered. Story greases the hoists and pulleys, it causes adrenaline to surge, shows us the way out, down, or up, and for our trouble, cuts for us fine wide doors in previously blank walls, openings that lead to the dreamland, that lead to love and learning. (1998, pp. 18, 19)

Pinkola Estes is described as a *cantadora*, keeper of the old stories. In her writings she emphasises the importance of storytelling amongst tribes across generations to guide us through the complexities of life and to share the wisdom of the tribe to assist in our growth as a people. As a Jungian psychoanalyst Pinkola Estes uses fairytales and folktales within an archetypal context to help people understand the meaningfulness of their personal stories. I use such a collection of personal soundscapes to press towards an interpretation of the heartfelt melodies within the lived experiences of Jodie and others, guiding us through the complexities of teaching and giving us an opportunity to share the wisdom, passions and insights of the teaching ‘tribe’.

Storytelling has not always been considered a valid part of the teaching life, for teacher reflection and for student learning. McCourt, as he reminisces about his teaching years during the seventies in his book *Teacher Man*, grapples with the concept of storytelling as an authentic teaching tool, moving back and forth in a conversation with himself.

I argue with myself, you’re telling stories and you’re supposed to be teaching. I am teaching. Storytelling is teaching. I can’t help it. I’m not good at lecturing. You’re a fraud. You’re cheating our children. They don’t think so. The poor kids don’t know. I’m a teacher in an American school telling stories of my school days in Ireland. It’s a routine that softens them up in the unlikely event I might teach something solid from the curriculum. (2005, p. 27)

Palmer, author, educator, and activist, needs the stories of students to plan ‘the space’ in his classroom sessions.

...the 'little' stories of the students and the 'big' stories of the disciplines and tradition...there must be ample room for the little stories of individuals, stories of personal experience in which the student's inner teacher is at work. (1998, p. 76)

Palmer deliberately plans space for stories because he believes teachers must have "...the knowledge that although students can tell their own stories, they, like the rest of us, rarely understand the meanings of the stories they tell. How could they, when education so seldom treats their lives as sources of knowledge?" (1998, p. 81). In this thesis stories are sources for rewriting lived experience through remembrance, dialogue, imagination and bestowing meaning to create new knowledge.

David Bohm appeals to dialogue as a way to engage in genuine communication with others and to come to understandings shared with others. He offers us insights for everyday conversations, the need for sensitivity and to honour similarity and difference. "...communication can lead to the creation of something new only if people are able to freely listen to each other, without prejudice, and without trying to influence each other" (2004, pp. 2, 3). Bohm poses questions familiar to many of us. "How can you share if you are sure you have truth and the other fellow is sure he has truth, and the truths don't agree?" Dialogue "may not be concerned directly with truth – it may arrive at truth, but it is concerned with *special meaning*" (2004, p. 37).

To bring forth meanings that are hidden in Jodie's soundscapes I follow Bohm's framework for conducting dialogue that will create new knowledge and understandings. For example, as the thesis proceeds, I ask Jodie and others to suspend judgments, beliefs and assumptions and seek without judgment what meanings lie behind them, and mindfully consider the thoughts and feelings that have evolved from her experiences in

education. Jodie's stories are in many ways, "the world she has made up". As we gradually come to know this world Jodie has 'made up' the stories may expose the masks through which Jodie can be seen, as Grumet suggests, and with each story we can stop the "flood and swirl of thought" so we may "catch a glimpse" of Jodie and "catch [her] if we can" (1991, p. 69).

Many ethical issues arise in the rewriting of a teacher's life. Tom Barone reminds us of the "enormously complex, wide ranging, highly ambiguous, profoundly personal, unquestionably social, intrinsically political, and the inevitably subjective nature of the outcomes of teaching and learning" (2001, pp.1, 2). Obviously the recounting of Jodie's experiences will be coloured by her opinions and her deeply held values and beliefs. Her recollections will reflect her moral and ethical decisions and her professional observations. I will find myself at issue with Jodie in relation to her place relative to the good. Charles Taylor, in *Sources of the Self*, suggests that when we are making sense of our present actions we must deal with the issues of our individual place relative to the good. For this we require a narrative understanding of life to gain a sense of what we have become and that is given in a story (1989, p. 48).

This study weaves through a musical metaphor to help portray something of what teaching from the heart might be like. Melodies express feelings, beliefs and concerns through voice. Musical lyrics tell us stories of life, love and experiences, reaching out and capturing our hearts. When we watch a movie the music often creates a soundscape that sings with our hearts, awakens our feelings and creates a certain mood. Can we deny the power of music?

Some musicians clearly articulate the power of the music they play. Bono from the band *U2* believes music is uplifting and that it can stay with us forever, evoking memories of our past. Jane Rutter, interviewed on the ABC Television program *Talking Heads* by Peter Thompson, views her solo flute playing as a commitment to her audience.

...you have an impassioned conversation through the secret language of music to your audience and to yourself. And in this way, I mean, it's my commitment to actually speak to...a different part of the souls of my audience, and to my soul, when I play.

(Thompson, 2006)

Neil Finn, lead singer and creative song-writer from the band *Crowded House* speaks of music as a way for us to stay 'in touch' with others. "Music is the most powerful thing on Earth for making us feel something, and that is at the heart of (change) - breaking through apathy and the modern affliction of detachment and lack of empathy" (Finn, 2007). A selection of song lyrics appear in this thesis to 'sing' the essence of the many stories, to create a lyrical 'voice' for the protagonists, asking us to stay 'in touch' with our feelings and emotions.

The musical imagery provides a 'space', a space for sound to reverberate, exposing the complexity of conversations for the heart of teaching. The chapters move through different genres and forms of music which parallel a range of teaching methodologies and practices, arriving at the final resolution, a release, a soundscape performed in the heart of everyday.

As I have selected songs and references to musical terminology from a variety of sources I have divided my references, found at the end of this thesis, into three sections. The first

section contains the books and articles referenced as support for the philosophical inquiry this thesis investigates. The second section contains the Open Source material, found on the Internet, which provides reference to recent events not found in books or journal articles but that are essential to the philosophy of understanding my study refers to. The final section contains lyrics and musical definitions which give 'colour' and explanatory text for the songs and musical terms indicative of the soundscapes that follow throughout my chapters.

The idea of soundscape, our individual collective stories that live in our worlds at particular moments, and the melody, our voices, may help to illustrate the various forms and styles of teaching. The notion of landscapes has been used in research such as Maxine Greene's examination of the internal and external landscapes in which people live and learn and Jerome Bruner's fictional and real narratives that are played out on a dual landscape (the subjective and the objective). I wish to evoke a third 'scape', a third place, a soundscape where we focus our attention on the sound of learning, a place where we become acutely conscious of the sound we hear. This is where perhaps the originality of my thesis lies.

Soundscapes are phenomena with which we can explore to identify the melodies that live in our hearts, those melodies that are hidden within the inspiring teacher. Gadamer encapsulates the meaningfulness of sound in our lives,

It is not just that he who hears is also addressed, but also that he who is addressed must hear whether he wants to or not. When you look at something, you can also look away from it by looking in another direction, but you cannot 'hear away'. (2004, p. 458)

The words remembered are the 'lyrics' of our teachers and students, revealing the importance of what we have to say. These voices help describe the thoughts and feelings surrounding the events of Jodie's stories. Interpretation of the voices in Jodie's stories, what she has spoken to her relies somewhat on a tone of voice, but not all the time. I show in the dialogue of students and colleagues that what is spoken may change a decision made, and a motivation explored. The sound of our voice and the words we speak may influence, coerce another to travel a different pathway, instilling an expectation that may have been unintentional...or maybe intentional. Once our words are spoken the other cannot 'hear away' what was said. The sound of those words can play a tune in our heads for an eternity.

I attribute pseudonyms to teaching colleagues, students and friends allowing me to share their lives and their educational soundscapes without risk of personal disclosure in public. Research methodology as explained in *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, asks us to be thoughtful when disclosing our own stories as well as those of others. D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly's chapter *Personal Experience Methods* details this need for anonymity when we enter into narrative writing as research.

...there is the potential to shape their lived, told, relived, and retold stories as well as [our] own...Anonymity and other ways of fictionalising research texts are important ethical concerns in personal experience methods. Even in an autobiographical work. (1998, pp. 169, 170)

In songs we hear many references to 'heart'. The lyrics often refer to the heart as being the centre of our being, a place where our most profound feelings are felt. A place to be

‘captivated’ and where our soul is ‘elated’. In terms of spirituality, the heart is at the centre, the middle Chakra that holds our emotions. Then there is our physical heart where some of us believe we feel real pain when we are hurt emotionally. As we speak of love and emotion we might place a hand over where our physical heart lies in our body. The ‘heart’ brings forth images and feelings that are part of our being. The soundscapes of teaching might be ‘close to our own hearts’ the ‘heart’ expression might clearly convey the importance of teachers and teaching in our lives.

The Music of My Heart

*Creator of all that is lovely, oh, Write a tune upon my heart
And when you finish will you play me, Like a beautiful guitar?
Strum the chords of mercy, Restore my soul completely
Bring life unto me, And this instrument will sing*

Of my heart, I'm captivated

Of my heart, My soul's elated

Of my heart, Because

Every single light's full of love divine

Write me like a valentine (Mullen, 2003)

How many teachers invite others into their hearts, their hearts of teaching? Palmer exposes his heart to others, taking risks and laying open his fears, his failures. These heartfelt emotions appear within the pages of his book *The Courage to Teach*. Palmer discloses, “I am a teacher at heart.” Like Palmer I am a teacher at heart and like him “there are moments in the classroom when I can hardly hold the joy...But at other moments, the classroom is so lifeless or painful or confused – and I am so powerless to

do anything about it – that my claim to be a teacher seems a transparent sham” (1998, p.1). Palmer refers to the meaning of heart “in an ancient sense, as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit will converge in the human self” (1998, p. 11). He shows that the ‘heart of teaching’ can be woven as if in a loom.

As good teachers weave the fabric that joins them with students and subjects, the heart is the loom on which the threads are tied, the tension is held, the shuttle flies, and the fabric is stretched tight. Small wonder, then, that teaching tugs at the heart, opens the heart, even breaks the heart – and the more one loves teaching, the more heartbreaking it can be. The courage to teach is the courage to keep one’s heart open in those very moments when the heart is asked to hold more than it is able so that teacher and students and subject can be woven into the fabric of community that learning and living require. (1998, p. 11)

Our heart can be the place where searching and changing takes place. Palmer says

...the transformation of teaching must begin in the transformed heart of the teacher. Only in the heart searched and transformed by truth will new teaching techniques and strategies for institutional change find sure grounding. Only in such a heart will teachers find the courage to resist the conditions of academic life while we work and wait for institutional transformation. (1993, pp. 107, 108)

I intend to study the narratives in this thesis through a philosophy of understanding. It is appropriate, because of the lives of teachers today to ask questions like: Could institutional and government policy-making crush our determination to teach from our hearts, dangerously fragmenting our inner realities, disconnecting us from our students? Today our hearts are often on the edge of heartbreak. At the beginning of our careers we

aspired to be teachers of students, to engage young minds and instil a love for learning. The soundscapes of education continue to change, maybe asking us to be teachers of subjects, posing obstacles to our passions, convictions and commitments. McCourt says, “Find what you love and do it” (2005, p. 255). Many teachers embarked on the career of teaching, having found what they love, only to have this love gradually swept away between recriminations, limited resourcing and depersonalisation. When we teach from our hearts are we able to reclaim this love despite the obstacles that surround us? How can we be an inspiring teacher if we do not love the life of teaching? As parents and as teachers, would we not wish that every student, in every classroom, has the opportunity to be with a teacher who loves teaching every day of their school life.

I cannot claim, as I recount Jodie’s stories, my stories, to provide answers for the complex nature of teaching, nor solutions for the ‘perfect’ teaching methodology. As Barone declares in his book, *Touching Eternity: The Enduring Outcomes of Teaching*, “researching and writing this book did not answer those questions for me with finality. Readers may likewise come to accept the likelihood that the answers can never be known with unqualified certainty” (2001, p. 2). Here I am seeking the heart of teaching, a theme that may be similar to the one Barone’s speaks of in his own search for the lasting differences teachers make on their students. He seeks out “evidences of deep etchings by a teacher on teenage souls” (2001, p. 2). I seek evidence of deep etchings of the effect of teaching on a teacher’s soul.

CHAPTER 2

MELODIES OF TEACHING LIFE

(Teacher competencies and standards may be behind the heart of teaching)

Political Melodies

Currently, in Australia, the Federal Government plans to create performance outcomes for teachers to influence teacher training and measure teaching performance. The *Summit Report 2020* advocates that improving teaching skill would assist the productive growth of the nation. “Reward excellence in teaching: focus on the connections between quality teaching and productivity” (Point 1.8, Gillard & Smith, 2008).

In this chapter, I first wish to tune into some of the political activities that require the attention of teachers in Australia. I believe there are many ways to be a good teacher. I ask whether it is possible that one could articulate quality teaching in terms of industry-training – like standards with accompanying sets of performance criteria.

There is no doubt that as teachers we need to be the very best we can be for our students. In the soundscapes re-presented as narratives in this thesis I wish to portray the frustrations and dilemmas that wear away the vocation of teachers – overtime they become less committed, they hide from the faces and interests of politicians and bureaucrats or they give from the heart and continue as advocates for and agents of what they believe is good moral education for their students.

Who can say what quality teaching is? Does quality teaching include the humour of the teacher we had fun with? Does quality teaching require the passion for knowledge, the teacher who inspired us to love learning? Does it need the compassion of the one who cared when we had a problem? Does the notion of quality teaching defy the possibility of ever describing it with a set of dot points? I aim to contribute some understanding about good teaching from the hearts of good people through considering the many the horizons of education, past and present, exploring the existing attitudes and expectations of teaching, tuning into the melodic themes of being a teacher.

An Old-Fashioned Melody – Are We Still Humming the Same Tune?

Whilst the politics of standards for measurement of quality teaching play out, the world is rapidly changing for our students. Sir Ken Robinson, leader in the development of creativity, innovation and human resources, claims that our present education system was devised to suit the industrial age.

The dominant forms of education both in the Western developed economies and the ones that derive from those systems are rooted in a particular view of utility that has its origins in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This view of education has really permeated every aspect of how we think about and apply educational practices. Most public systems of education were created specifically in response to the growing demands of industrialism. (Robinson, 2007)

We could ask the question, “Did this system actually suit people of the industrial age?” When I speak with elderly people about their thoughts on education their most common complaint is that education at the beginning of the twentieth century did not allow for

their individuality, it did not view them as people with individual needs, circumstances and talents. One ninety year old man I interviewed, Leslie, spent his primary years at a 'one teacher' school in a farming district. He often felt dumb, he said, because his teacher only accepted one way of solving a mathematics problem. Leslie described himself and some of the others in his class as the 'dumbclucks'. Even though they solved the mathematics problem correctly they were still marked incorrect because they were not using their teacher's formula. Leslie went on to become a very successful businessman still believing he was not good at that 'school stuff! He finished school at the age of fourteen.

Leslie's family were very poor. He came from a family of thirteen. Each child could not have his own reading book. Leslie remembered being slapped on the hand with a ruler by a school inspector for not having his own book. He found it difficult to understand the reason for his punishment. At ninety, Leslie believed the inequality that existed had distorted his view of school for his entire life. He attributed his success in business not to his education but to his ability to listen to others, to be honest and to take responsibility for his own actions.

In such a way, memories of school can often be daunting, infecting our current and future views of education. Many parents who arrive at our schools as parent help, for parent-teacher interviews or to drop their children off may have had similar experiences to Leslie's and these memories stay with them. These memories influence how they interact with teachers and the school community in general. It is little wonder some parents do not wish to set foot into an environment that has given them no joy in the past.

In a practical guide to school organisation called *Schools that Learn*, co-author Peter Senge shares many teaching stories. Senge captures, somewhat starkly, what parents may feel when their child goes to school.

...some parents associate the school building with their own past history of uncomfortable learning...attitudes like these are pervasive, and they unnecessarily diminish children's learning. (Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner, 2000, p. 13)

...the experience of watching their kids struggle to perform often brings back the parents' own performance anxiety from when they were at school. Their natural concern for their children gets mixed with their own internalised traumas from long ago. They relive their own school anxieties every time their kids take a test or bring home a report card. (2000, p. 36)

In these ways, suggests Senge, we develop mental models that could distort our views of reality, our assumptions and judgements, interfering with our perception of reality and diminishing the opportunity for a successful dialogue with a colleague, parent or student. Such mental models are tacit.

A forty-five year old labourer who never earned a high school diploma may assume that his children's teachers look down on him; he never summons the courage to come in to school for meetings, and the teachers assume he doesn't care. (Senge et al., 2000, pp. 67, 68)

Unless we go searching for them, these mental models exist out of reach of our awareness. If we speak with the parents of our students with awareness of our mental

models, we may understand the basis of their fears of school and the reasons for the reactions and responses they project. A parent's past experience influences their children's attitudes and dispositions towards school and learning, so even if schools have changed from Leslie's day, many of the assumptions about education still remain in people's hearts influencing the educational decisions of politicians and governments.

Despite changes in education, many of our students still fail, still become victims of abuse and still feel excluded within our school systems. A group of High school teachers share their despair for students who no longer want to be part of our education system. The teachers struggle to persuade many students to stay at school. The teachers and students with whom I conversed with during my work at Northlands High School observe the restlessness of students and the seemingly insurmountable barriers to inspiring them to love learning. The personal lives for the students at Northlands High are often disruptive and unpredictable so the school attempts to provide a calm, safe and inviting environment for students to work in. As Senge says,

Schools are increasingly expected to compensate for the shifts in society and family that effect children: changes in family structure, rapidly shifting trends in television and popular culture, commercialism without end, poverty, violence, child abuse, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, and incessant social upheaval. (2000, pp. 9, 10)

The Northlands High teachers face disillusion and disappointment every day as they endeavour to encourage students to stay at school and motivate them to engage with what is taught alongside the sometimes 'old-fashioned' expectations of their parents and local community.

Struggling to keep up with these kinds of demands, school leaders continually place their institutions on the frontier of change. (The perennial whirlwind of educational fads and fashions is a symptom of this struggle.) Yet schools also face intense pressure to slow down change, to be conservative, to reinforce traditional practices, and not to leave anyone behind. (Senge et al., 2000, p. 10)

Students are interested in the innovations of Information, Communication and Technologies (ICT) and associated learning experiences. These experiences sustain some degree of engagement. Northlands High is fortunate to have a group of inspiring, empathetic teachers who understand the needs of their students. Yet in other local high schools I have observed, during my work, some teachers continue to maintain the same rigid expectations as those teachers who taught Leslie in 1924. How can this prepare our students for their future worlds?

The teachers who continue to hold on to the old teaching paradigm, teaching students as they were taught, complain most fervently about what they see as the dysfunctional, disobedient youth that exist in our communities today. A high school mathematics teacher recently commented that the experience of teaching high school had become distasteful. “It would be okay if all the students enjoyed working and learning, but not those kids who don’t want to learn...it makes teaching very unpleasant and unrewarding.” Where does that teacher’s heart lie? We hear disharmony, the music is not melodic and rhythmic. Have some teachers lost their heart melody or do they keep their heart melody only for the ‘good and easy to teach’ students? I continue to wonder what quality teaching is about and if good teachers can survive in the current climate of our schools.

The Measure of Our Melody

The classroom environment is unique. Where else in the world of working adults do we meet up to thirty people who are still developing their personalities, bringing along with them their parent's needs, expectations and aspirations, and indeed the requirements of a whole country!

How will the performance-based accreditation for teachers and standard assessment measurements for students as favoured by our current governments be developed? How do we create competencies and standards to suit such a unique and diverse environment?

Our performance is based upon the successful teaching of our students. This success is dependent on our students' achievement in state-wide testing, on the standard assessment measurements. Our students are to be given melodies to play to perfection and we, their teachers, are to ensure they are able to perform these melodies to a standard commonly set for everyone, whether or not we doubt they speak to the heart of a student.

Senge uses the analogy of the student backpack to give us a troubling view of the kind of pressures we place upon ourselves as well as our students as we attempt to attain these 'standards'. Senge's analogy permits us to see the predicament of students, where backpacks could not be stored in school lockers at the high school because they have been removed. The school staff decide the locker area causes disturbances amongst students and their solution is to remove the lockers altogether. The student's bag is always heavy as they travel to and from school every day. They carry their backpacks throughout the day, classes and break times. As they become more and more disengaged from school, giving up on keeping up, their backpack becomes lighter, whereas others, who are trying

desperately to do well, increase their load of heavy books. Pick up one of these packs, says Senge and see how heavy it feels.

It offers a material measure of workload. In most secondary schools, which children start between ten and twelve, teachers are limited to one group of subjects each. They don't work together in a way that co-ordinates their day-to-day efforts, and thus they often don't know the workload assigned to all students. (2000, p. 28)

Thus melodies become more separate, losing their sweetness as students begin to either work so hard they develop anxieties and illness or they detach themselves from the joy of learning altogether. As Senge acknowledges many parents and teachers argue that we should be preparing our students for the real world and that the heavy backpack is just a load we have to learn to bear. On the other hand they believe that students, sometimes by the age of ten, are aware of the loss of balance in their parent's lives and are choosing not to have that life. As students decide to have more balance in their lives, we as parents and teachers continue to increase our expectations.

Meanwhile, the pressures keep growing, and the backpacks keep getting heavier. Driven by public demands for increased performance on standardised tests, schools and teachers find themselves forced to boost workloads continually while also taking more and more class time to prepare students for the tests on whose outcomes their budgets, and even positions, may depend. (Senge et al., 2000, p. 28)

In many western countries there is increasing emphasis on measuring performance and outputs of education, threatening us with the prospect that the backpacks will become heavier or be discarded altogether. Is our performance, as teachers and students, measurable in the same way as the mass-produced 'innate' object, the backpack, an item

that came out at the end of a production line to be sold as a ‘consumable commodity’? I intend in this thesis to show that what lies at the heart of teaching is not a commodity nor is it a utility. It rests within the philosophy of understanding that each can be illuminated in the narratives of our everyday working lives. Leslie’s story illustrates a system that did not suit the heart of his life world and therefore was of no use to him. Should teacher standards be bereft of a philosophy of understanding, the heart and quality of teaching? We must not/cannot believe in their utility for a nation’s strategic plan for productivity.

As Robinson suggests, teaching within an old paradigm, the industrial paradigm is to teach in a system that increasingly values the importance of productivity. Senge discusses the ‘Industrial Age Heritage’ of schools and how this heritage has trapped us into a system that divides students into smart kids and dumb kids. It has created an education system that assumes all students learn the same way and recognises a teacher-centred rather than learner-centred environment. They describe ‘Industrial Age’ education as a system where,

Motivation became the teacher’s responsibility rather than the learner’s. Discipline became adherence to rules set by the teacher rather than self-discipline. Assessment centred on gaining the teacher’s approval rather than objectively gauging one’s own capabilities. Finally, the assembly-line model tacitly identified students as the product rather than the creators of learning, passive objects being shaped by an educational process beyond their influence. (2000, p. 32)

What Senge is saying converges with Charles Taylor’s notion of instrumental reasoning, detailed in *The Ethics of Authenticity*, where productivity is more highly valued than the well being of community members. Taylor introduces a certain philosophy of understanding that aims to elevate the dignity of being human: through instrumental reasoning we are in

danger of losing our moral and authentic being. In an educational environment that elevates an industrial model of productivity and commodity, we must be cautious and not omit understanding of what it is to be human, to relate to others and the world from the articulations of the quality of teaching.

It could be possible to attribute a path of instrumental reasoning and heightened productivity to the *No Child Left Behind* Policy invoked by President George Bush in the United States. The consequences were disappointing. When this policy was developed and became mandated across the country many struggling schools in poor areas were reported as ‘cheating the system’ or helping their students on the tests. Lisa Snell, a director of education policy at the Reason Foundation believes that “the *No Child Left Behind* was sold as a way to make the schools more accountable. Instead, it has encouraged and abetted them as they distort the data and game the system. That may be the worst deception of all” (Snell, 2005).

How could the performance of the teachers in these schools be measured? Online, we can view some of the New York tests that students are expected to complete where the content seems to reflect nothing of the lived experiences of these students, nor does it appear suitable for their age group. One group of sixteen to eighteen year olds were expected to read a story about ‘Pebble People’, a tale that appears to be written for a much younger audience within a soundscape far removed from what they may know (see Appendix 1). Must teachers be responsible for ineffective teaching because the mandated curriculum is narrow and the testing regime reveals nothing of our students’ perceived reality? Senge quotes the words of New York Times education reporter Michael Winerip:

...There are many ways to measure a successful school...But at this point in American history, the one that gets printed in all the newspapers, the one that individual schools and entire school districts are measured by and all the politicians talk about, is performance on standardised tests. And as long as that is true, those backpacks are likely to be full each night starting in grade one and maybe earlier. (2000, p. 28)

Do the full backpacks account for 'good' education and life-long learning? Senge views the factory model of education as increasing the load in already heavy backpacks.

Seeing school as an assembly line for producing graduates illuminates the reasons for the ever-weightier backpacks. The assembly-line education system is under stress. Its products are no longer judged adequate by society. Its productivity is questioned. And it is responding in the only way the system knows how to respond: by doing what it has intensified...educators are responding to the extra-ordinary anxiety and stress they are experiencing by turning up the speed of the assembly line. While this might produce a bit more output, all of us – students, teachers, and parents - should be asking whether it produces more learning. (2000, p. 32)

Our Australian Federal Government looks toward the United States for guidance in educational policy. What happens in education in American schools often influences what occurs in our Australian schools. It is with these facts in mind that we as Australians, along with American communities, look toward the presidential change and wonder what lies ahead for educational change. Alyson Klein, a staff writer for Education Week who covers federal policy and politics, reported President Barack Obama as saying in his inaugural address, "We will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age" (Klein, 2009). We could justify some optimism in that Linda Darling-Hammond has headed President Obama's transition team on education. As co-

author of the book *What We Know About Teaching for Understanding*, Darling-Hammond demonstrates her commitment to ‘heart’ teaching, to the connection between reality and learning, and to the need for schools to meet the intellectual demands of the twenty-first century. Or we could continue to doubt education will still be dictated by notions of productivity, bolstered by assumptions held by a collective education consciousness left over from our past.

Taylor says we cannot stop this push toward maximum efficiency and best cost-output ratio but we can ‘retrieve’ the ‘rich moral background’. He suggests we might do this through understanding,

...we are embodied agents, living in dialogical conditions, inhabiting time in a specifically human way that is, making sense of our lives as a story that connects the past from which we have come to our future projects...that means that if we are properly to treat a human being, we have to respect this embodied, dialogical, temporal nature. (1995, p. 106)

Our past soundscapes, the melodies we create as we grow could help us to play new melodies into our future, or they could hinder our ways of moving forward. If we were to suspend some of the assumptions we have collected we may come to understand that some of our past melodies no longer speak to our hearts, we might see more clearly how others live in this world, thus creating a space to make sense of our lives and the lives of others. To care for our students’ hearts we must determine the connections between our past and their past. In listening to their melodies, without enforcing our own melodies upon them, we may come to understand how different their worlds are from ours. If we do not listen we may not respect our students’ embodied, dialogical and temporal natures.

Without respect do we become teachers of only the 'subject', becoming the english teacher, the mathematics teacher, the science teacher?

Taylor articulates the malaises he sees in modern society and the constant need to objectify ourselves from each other, moving us further away from the 'rich moral background' of which he speaks.

Runaway extensions of instrumental reason, such as the medical practice that forgets the patient as a person, that takes no account of how the treatment relates to his or her story and thus of the determinants of hope and despair, that neglects the essential rapport between cure-giver and patient – all these have to be resisted in the name of the moral background in benevolence that justifies these applications of instrumental reason themselves. (1995, p. 106)

Parallel to the medical practice in danger of forgetting that the patients are people is the teacher who forgets the lives of her students, teaching for the test and maybe teaching only the subject. What ways of being could help us avoid becoming a subject teacher to get students over the 'testing line'? Are there quality teaching attributes that could support and enhance life-long learning and prevent teaching of a 'discipline' in isolation from 'teaching to a test'?

It will be time in the next chapter to suspend the questions, assumptions, fears, doubts and hopes that I have collected and revealed in this section of my chapter, to suspend judgement, away from instrumental reasoning and turn to the narratives of teaching in my lived experience, with which my thesis is concerned – to find that rich moral background in which teachers can teach without losing moral and authentic being, to attempt to hear

in the educational soundscapes some tonal qualities that can be attributed to teachers who practise quality teaching.

First, an overture...

An overture is a musical symphony; an instrumental composition and performance that introduces the extended work of say an opera or an oratorio. Often the overture encompasses the melodies presented in a musical piece to give insight into what is to come. We have brief encounters with each melody. An overture of a narrative of teaching could introduce us to some of the themes of teaching, inscribed melodies of the teaching soundscape and the songs of the school.

As teachers, we are surrounded by information telling us how to teach, giving us ideas pertaining to the best attributes of an effective and inspiring teacher. If we scour the many papers and books written about preferred qualities a teacher should possess we will find some commonality but many of these compiled suggestions fail to identify with the heart of teaching. Michael Scott Cain writes of the *Ten Qualities of the Renewed Teacher*, an article written from concern for the many disenfranchised teachers in American schools. He proposes ten qualities renewed teachers possess. They have

a philosophical spiritual centre, a commitment to students, to life-long learning, and to the school, are aware that they are an integral part of the school, have a sense of personal responsibility, have a strong sense of love for all aspects of life, have the ability to see all people as individuals, have the ability to communicate, exhibit a sense of collegiality, have a strongly developed sense of leadership, and separate their egos from their work. (Cain, 2001, pp. 703-705)

As we read through Cain's list of attributes we might feel a strong sense of connection to the characteristics he notes as important. Within his extended descriptions of each quality, we might find notions of the 'good teacher' that we may not have experienced as a training teacher.

The last written *Tasmanian Professional Teaching Standards Framework (2007)* speaks of quality teaching with quite a different voice. There are no references to spirituality, love and the separation of ego like in Cain's ten renewed qualities.

Accomplished teachers are self-empowered, astute, reflective practitioners and learners who plan and evaluate their practice and have the capacity to make a difference to student learning. They strive for professional excellence and continuous life-long improvement. They are able to weave multiple strands of professional knowledge flexibly into their practice in order to optimise student learning. (*Tasmanian Professional Teaching Standards Framework, 2007*)

The language echoes the voice of a training manual, phrasing selected to suit a list of training competencies: For one I cannot believe that we can reduce the humanistic nature of teaching and filter it into a training manual. In my thesis I wish to show those who teach from the heart of teaching will read the manual critically, respect the writers and make up their own minds up about the goals they set for their teaching practice.

The establishment and development of the teaching standards framework is an endeavour to raise the professionalism of teaching, an attempt to bring the role of teacher to the standards of other professions such as doctors and lawyers. The documentation requires a rigorous and academic approach. Unfortunately many teachers view these documents as

too general or so far from 'plain English' they find them difficult to interpret and assimilate into their classroom practice. The framework provides a good overview of the professional practice expected of our teachers but might it be missing a vital element of the teaching process?

Does the standards framework aim for excellence in teaching without our hearts? If a musician endeavours to reach a certain skill level after many sessions of practice, does that make him a brilliant musician? If he follows a set 'recipe' to become the best musician he could possibly be would that mean he would reach the hearts and minds of his listeners? The standards framework may fail touch the heart of our teaching. The competencies do not articulate that enigmatic quality of the 'self', a quality that is present in those teachers we recognise as being special, who speak to the hearts of their students. The teaching life is full of complexity, paradoxes, and heartache. If we are guided only by a set of competencies might this fail to awaken the teaching heart? Could Cain's list of attributes be interpreted as being more humanistic in nature than the competencies of our Tasmanian framework? Are his suggested characteristics more closely aligned with the hearts of our teachers, encouraging them to include these qualities within their teaching soundscape, renewing their faith and motivation in a profession that requires not only excellence in teaching skill, but also love and commitment?

Imagine if each of us fully embraced the ten teaching attributes Cain describes. Envisage the possible counter-melodies such a school might play. Maybe our teaching community could become like the sound of an orchestra playing a 'touching' symphony, an assembly of musicians, all playing their own harmonious melodies, with their conductor leading from the front, creating a heartfelt tune.

In our early years of teaching we might not consider how to transform ourselves into that 'good teacher' or wonder if we are teaching from our hearts. Often, we are busy worrying about doing this teaching thing 'right'. We struggle with advice from older and wiser teachers who recommend we should never become friends with our students. Our colleagues would say, "They don't have to like you", "you must always be in control" or "show them who's boss...never let them know who you *really* are!" We may have heard teachers say they have their teacher personality and their 'real' personality, and it is none of their students' business to know who they really are! Are we teaching from our hearts when we hide our 'real' selves? As McCourt realises from his own teaching experiences,

You can fool some of the kids some of the time, but they know when you're wearing the mask, and you know they know. They force you into truth. If you contradict yourself they'll call out, "Hey that's not what you said last week." You face years of experience and their collective truth, and if you insist on hiding behind the teacher mask you lose them. (2005, p. 203)

The suggestions we receive from many of our colleagues might not *feel* right. We might not understand how to be someone else, a false persona with our students. If we ignore their advice might we feel in harmony with our teaching space? To show students ourselves, that we like them and have a real desire to help them learn may increase our teaching ability and help us relax with our students. We might feel our own learning continue to grow. On the other hand, we could be constantly worried we are not doing the 'right' thing.

Unlike many professions, teaching is always done at the dangerous intersection of personal and public life...A good teacher must stand where personal and public meet, dealing with the thundering flow of traffic at an intersection where 'weaving a web of

connectedness' feels more like crossing a freeway on foot. As we try to connect with ourselves and our subjects with our students, we make ourselves, as well as our subjects vulnerable to indifference, judgment and ridicule. (Palmer, 1998, p. 17)

This is perhaps the moment to find a mediating method that stretches between lived phenomena and an ideology of teaching life. As Palmer says, showing our real selves leaves us vulnerable. Some teachers feel uncomfortable about students knowing who they are, even to the point of knowing their first name, with teachers viewing this as an invasion of their privacy. Is it a sign of respect to call a teacher by their title of Mr, Mrs, Miss or Ms and a lack of respect to call them by their first name? Do teachers choose not to be called by their first name because they believe it is disrespectful or is it because they believe it a requirement in their role as teacher? We might wonder about the meaninglessness of this tradition, left over from our teaching heritage, and question its validity in the twenty-first century school soundscape, a tradition that appears to create a clear division between teachers and students, children and adults. Does it not distance ourselves as teachers from our students to lessen the vulnerability we are afraid to show?

To reduce our vulnerability we disconnect from our students, from subjects and even from ourselves. We build a wall between inner truth and outer performance, and we play-act the teachers' part. Our words, spoken at remove from our hearts, become 'the balloon speech in cartoons' and we become caricatures of ourselves. We distance ourselves from students and subject to minimise danger – forgetting that distance makes life more dangerous still by isolating the self. (Palmer, 1998, p. 17)

It is refreshing to read McCourt's *Teacher Man* and realise we are not alone in our feelings about the well meaning advice from a past generation of teachers. As he writes of the counsel from his older and wiser colleagues he says their words never felt right for him.

“In the teachers’ cafeteria veterans warned me, “Son tell ‘em nothing about yourself. They’re kids, goddam it. You’re the teacher. You have a right to privacy...They are not, repeat not, your natural friend” (2005, p. 19). And from his university professors,

The best move of all is to establish yourself as a presence and to do it outside in the hallway. Outside, I say. That’s your territory and when you’re out there you’ll be seen as a strong teacher, fearless, ready to face the swarm. Never let them invade your territory. Never. And remember: teachers who sit or even stand behind their desks are essentially insecure and should try another line of work. (2005, p. 40)

In McCourt’s book it becomes clear that he, the author, developed into an amazing teacher only after he started listening to his own melody, sharing his stories with the students, listening to theirs, helping them to learn what they needed through the music of their hearts rather than the music mandated by the curriculum and the subject.

“What are we teachers of?” The question echoes throughout this thesis. Are we teachers of students and learning or are we teachers of a subject? McCourt, at the beginning of his career, believed that he was not suited to the profession. He was trying to fit into an institution that did not share his beliefs about how people learn best. They wanted him to be a teacher of subjects, teacher of the ‘lesson’. McCourt was a square peg trying to fit into a round hole.

It was clear I was not cut out to be the purposeful kind of teacher who brushed aside all questions, requests, complaints, to get on with the well-planned lesson. That would have reminded me of that school in Limerick where the lesson was king and we were nothing. (2005, p. 24)

McCourt had his own ideas about why we teach and how we might go about doing it.

I was already dreaming of a school where the teachers were guides and mentors, not taskmasters. I didn't have any particular philosophy of education except that I was uncomfortable with the bureaucrats, the higher-ups, who had escaped classrooms, teachers and students. I never wanted to fill out their forms, follow their guidelines, administer their examinations, tolerate their snooping, adjust myself to their programs and course of study. If a principal had ever said, the class is yours, teacher. Do with it what you like, I would have said to my students. Push the chairs aside. Sit on the floor. Go to sleep. (2005, p. 24)

Many of us would want a classroom such as McCourt describes above but the reality is that we live in a fast-paced, instrumental society, focused on results and products that are publicly scrutinised. Today we continue to fight the bureaucracies and governments about the validity of mass testing, teaching to the test, teaching the subject, filling students up with information presented out of context rather than helping our students to become successful citizens of a global community, and to develop a strong sense of self in an ever-changing and confusing world. Palmer acknowledges this drive by society towards productivity and what governments believe will ensure society's survival and understands how this impacts on the hearts of teachers.

Education is the slave of an economic system that wants to master and manipulate nature, society, and even the human heart in order to gain profit and power. So teachers who try to create a space in which obedience to truth is practiced must do battle with a host of external enemies. (1993, p. 107)

Palmer warns us not to lay blame upon society's institutions for our problems, as these institutions are projections of what goes on in our hearts. Instead, we must discover the inner self and our own educational dilemmas or else we might "objectify the problem – and thereby multiply it" (1993, p. 107).

We might yearn to listen to our own melodies, to act upon our intuition and teach in the way we feel most at ease. Working in a different environment, away from school, may allow a different perspective to be revealed. Once I accepted a secondment to a mining community. It helped clear my confusion about teaching and strengthened my resolve to be more of who I am with my students rather than being how we assume through 'heritage' we should be to other teachers, principals, parents and students. In a different world, I discovered freedom from the constraints of my heritage and learned that we can be free to be the teacher we chose to be and of 'real life', not of the perceived 'teacher world'.

People outside the profession of teaching may occasionally comment: "Teachers live in another world, not the 'real world'." Many teachers who have worked in other careers away from school often say the classroom is like no other working environment. McCourt knows of this 'real world' experience having worked on the Hudson River docks in Brooklyn, New York. He later understood when he became a teacher, how different it was from the world of the docks.

Is this what it's all about? Is this to be your world for twenty/thirty years? Remember, if this is your world, you're one of them, a teenager. You live in two worlds. You're with them, day in, day out, and you'll never know, Mac, what that does to your mind.

Teenager forever...you'll never grow old, but the danger is you might have the mind of an adolescent forever. (2005, p. 32)

McCourt says somebody should have told him about the world of teaching. They should have asked him some questions and revealed the reality of spending a lifetime with teenagers.

That's a real problem, Mac. You get used to talking to those kids on their level. Then when you go to a bar for a beer you forget how to talk to your friends and they look at you. They look at you like you just arrived from another planet and they're right. Day after day in the classroom means you're in another world, Mac. (2005, pp. 32, 33)

Is there a line we have to draw between our personal and public lives (social and school) changing our conversations according to whom we are speaking? Are the lives of children and adults so far removed from each other that neither side understands the other?

Potentially we may, as teachers, help to heal the rift that occurs between students, particularly adolescents, and adults by constantly making adjustments to our dialogue in these two seemingly different worlds. The questions, what is 'good teaching' and who are 'good teachers', linger. We need to consider the intentional harmonies and rhythms within an inspiring teacher contemplating the melodies of good teaching that reside within our hearts. If we are 'speaking' from the heart when we are in our teaching 'space' will we make that vital connection with our students?

Taylor tells us that we live in a world of dialogical conditions. If we believe this to be true what is the influence of our conversations, our discussions, our narratives and our dialogues on the hearts and minds of our students?

CHAPTER 3

WAXING LYRICAL – A MELODY WITH A MESSAGE

(When cruel words are spoken they may be remembered for a lifetime)

The Lyric

The word lyric comes from the Greek word lyrikos which means "singing to the lyre." It is not uncommon for lyrics to be regarded just as highly, if not more so, than the music itself. Often, people will identify songs solely by their lyrics as opposed to their melody. So much so, in fact, that it is rare for instrumental songs, or songs without lyrics, to achieve popular hit status on mainstream radio stations or billboard charts. (Holli-Wood, 2008)

Exploring the lyrics

Lyrics could be described as poetry in music. Lyrics are the language of musicians who wish to express their feelings, emotions and observations of life. The lyrics of songs, as articulated in the definition above, can sometimes be the most important aspect of a favourite melody, speaking to our hearts and evoking our emotions.

Our spoken language could also be characterised as being musical, a melody of words where we share our conversational soundscapes of experience. If we take notice and listen to the sounds of our conversations we will hear the nuance, the cadence, the intonation, the inflection, the modulation, the tempo, the timbre, the accent or the pitch of our voices. It can be a symphony of words, a place where resonance or dissonance, harmony or discord reveals meaning.

Which words and sounds highlight the meaning of our spoken language? Active listening is often mentioned in professional learning circles but what part does active speaking play? Do we question the significance of what we say within our classrooms every day? Are we aware of the subtlety of our language, mindful of how we speak with others? “What is appropriate and what is less appropriate action in teaching children? What should one say? In what tone of voice? When to be silent?” (van Manen, 1994, p. 147). What compositions of melody do we create with lyrics that come from our hearts and what of the words spoken without heart?

Gadamer considers the importance of language and how the interpretation of our words is dependent on how we use our voice in the context of our conversations. “The spoken word interprets itself to an astonishing degree, by the manner of speaking, the tone of voice, the tempo, and so on, and also by the circumstances in which it is spoken” (2004, p. 395).

Through the following soundscape we can see the significance of the words spoken and the effects of intonation upon the listener. This distressing soundscape, played in a minor key, is a dramatic, yet sad and mournful melody,

A Moment of Dissonance

Imagine two classrooms, in 1971, without a wall in between, creating a huge expansive space. The exciting innovation of open plan classrooms had finally arrived and was a revelation to students, parents and teachers alike. From a child’s point of view it was thrilling, one of Jodie’s most memorable years of school, except, maybe, for one particular incident which was unforgettable but far from exciting.

Jodie was eleven years old. She remembers sitting cross legged on the carpet at one end of the vast classroom looking up at her teacher, Mr P. He seemed very tall. Mr P had ginger hair and a moustache. When Mr P was angry or frustrated his face went fiery red. It was fiery red right now. His students were not giving him the answers he wanted.

It was the time of day for learning mathematics. Jodie was sitting in the 'top' mathematics group. The 'bottom' mathematics group was at the other end of the classroom across a huge expanse of 'standard issue' education department carpet.

Mr P was firing mathematical questions with startling rapidity at individuals in the group, expecting the right answers to come out of their mouths instantly. Jodie sat in fear and trepidation. She probably knew the answers but she needed think time and when under pressure her mind usually went blank. She could gradually feel the panic rising from her stomach, just as the colour was rising in her teacher's face. He suddenly came to the point of no return, and lost his temper. If they couldn't answer the question they were sent to the other end of the room, to join the 'bottom' mathematics group. He pointed to a child and blurted out a question, the child stammered and stuttered, unable to answer the question. "Go! Go to the other end of the room with Mrs R. If you can't answer the question you don't deserve to be in this group!" Slowly the child rose and walked to the other end of the room, eyes cast towards the floor. Mr P then turned to Jodie. She could feel the fear turn cold in her stomach and slowly creep up to her face and down into her legs. The feeling had taken over her whole body and she could not give him the answer he required! If he had asked for the answer to $1+1$ she believed she would have struggled, the fear was so great. She cannot remember what he asked or even what mathematical concept they were exploring but she does remember his fiery red face, his bulging eyes and his pointing, accusing finger. She remembers the slow walk to the other end of the room. It was as if it was an

insult to him that they could not recall the facts that he had taught in previous lessons. She felt she was not worthy of his time because she could not perform.

This is one of Jodie's hidden stories. A story that until now was locked away beneath her conscious thought. Jodie is now aware of its underlying melodies, its ponderous, droning qualities. She hears its subtle tones.

This soundscape highlights the importance of our teaching 'voice' in the lives of our students. Is it Jodie's responsibility at eleven years old to have developed the resilience and control to remain calm when confronted with challenging questions or situations like this, particularly when the teacher had become angry and demanding? Did Mr P realise the impact of his behaviour on her thoughts and beliefs about mathematics and how this would affect her for a lifetime? Did he not recognise her absolute fear of failure and face amongst her peers? Did the other students sent across the room feel like she did? Do they still remember?

Might it be reasonable to assume that it is our responsibility to manage our temper in the classroom and to understand the implications of our moods upon the students in our care?

In chapter two, *Melodies of Teaching Life*, Palmer's ideas of how distancing ourselves from the students in our class potentially disconnects us from our students, our subjects and our self. Palmer asks us to accept vulnerability as part of the teaching life. He believes that "If I want to teach well in the face of my students' fears, I need to see clearly and steadily the fear that is in their hearts" but reminds us, "we cannot see the fear in our students until we see the fear in ourselves" (1998, p. 47). Did Mr P recognise his own fear as he

spoke in anger? Can we acknowledge the fear in our own hearts as we speak to our students?

What of the words spoken to us as pre-service and beginning teachers. Were we not told to ensure a 'distance' remains between our students and ourselves? Palmer describes the guidance we often receive from our older, more experienced colleagues, advice similar to that given to McCourt. "The standard advice to teachers, at least by implication, is: "Never show the students you are afraid, or you will lose control"" (1993, p. 84).

It seemed that Mr P was not fearful, just very angry. Was his anger more about his own fear? His students had not received his teaching message; they had not learned what he believed he had taught them. Did that make him a failure as a teacher, or was it the failure of his students?

This raises the question, "Could we be ineffective teachers if we are fearful of revealing our true selves?" In that moment of dissonance we might consider that Mr P was ineffective. What if he had taken some responsibility for what he had said and thought about his words before he spoke in rage? What if he had understood his own fears about teaching and chose to speak calmly and thoughtfully? Palmer says, "Teaching and learning are human enterprises, and we must use human emotions in the learning process rather than letting them use us" (1993, pp. 84, 85). Maybe Mr P was letting his emotions use him and he forgot about his students in that moment of anger, only being aware of his own frustrations. If Mr P had known the words of Palmer he may have understood his students fear. "I will take the lead in this so that you will feel encouraged to follow. I will try to respond to your feeling with an understanding that comes from knowing my own" (1993, pp. 84, 85). His students did not see understanding, they only saw anger.

As Jodie observes what she feels and what she remembers she may be able to establish a renewed contract with her original experience, make the experience public and somehow restore her world, restore what she has lost and in turn become conscious of her voice in the midst of her teaching day.

Attentive Moments to the Lyric - Possible Ways of Being

When we verbalise our thoughts without being aware of what we say we could emotionally hurt our listeners, especially when we speak in anger or fear. Learning to be attentive gives us the opportunity to understand how we interact with others, particularly with our students in the demanding classroom where we do not have time to carefully choose each word that is spoken, identifying where our frustrations, anger and even happiness lie.

Bohm leads us through ways of *being* that support intentionality and attentiveness.

If one is alert and attentive, he can see for example that whenever certain questions arise, there are fleeting sensations of fear, which push him away from consideration of these questions, and of pleasure, which attract his thoughts and cause them to be occupied with other questions. (2004, p. 4)

As we become conscious of these thoughts we push away what disturbs us and we subtly defend our ideas without listening to what others have to say. Bohm suggests we could “be aware of the subtle fear and pleasure sensations that ‘block’ the ability to listen freely” (2004, p. 4). If we do not raise our awareness in this way, what we are conversing about will have little meaning and we may disconnect from our

students, pushing them further from us, disengaging their learning experience. “If each one of us can give full attention to what is actually ‘blocking’ communication while also attending properly to the content of what is communicated, then we may be able to create something new between us” (2004, pp. 4, 5).

van Manen suggests we look beyond the traditional moral concepts of the Good, Equality and Justice to help us become attentive and intentional in our everyday communications.

Educators...need to point to richer and more concrete norms such as acting in ways that are thoughtful, tactful and sensitive to the child’s experience, understanding a learner’s difficulties, knowing how to listen, seeing each child as unique and different, understanding fears and vulnerabilities, encouraging success, remaining patient and supportive, and being reliable, trusted by, and available to children. (1994, p. 148)

The Power of the Lyric

As the definition of ‘lyric’ states at the beginning of this chapter, often, people will identify songs solely by their lyrics as opposed to their melody. Is this an indication of how important words and their meaning are for us? Is not the melody that accompanies the words a vital component for the whole message, the *tone* in which the words are spoken? We may identify with the lyrics of many songs and listen to songs that suit our mood. If the lyrics are not compatible with the melody the song might not resonate. The lyrics and melody are integral to each other; they interweave to create a magical soundscape, speaking to the hearts of listeners. If the lyrics and the melody do not ‘harmonise’ then, as the listener, there is something missing in the message.

If our ‘teacher lyric’ is not in tune with the melodies of the classroom, or indeed the melodies of ourselves, discord could play loudly within our teaching soundscape. When disharmony occurs in the classroom, what happens to the students’ learning environment?

As we listen to the disharmony in the mathematics class we hear the dissonance of melodies played between teacher and students. We may wonder what impact Mr P’s lyrical style had on Jodie’s mathematical ability. She is now conscious of this experience and believes it has profoundly affected her perception and capacity to confidently engage in mathematics. Was Mr P aware, at the time, of the ‘concrete’ teaching norms of thoughtfulness, tact and sensitivity that van Manen advocates?

Wake Up

All the hunger, all the yearning

With the lifeline that you're burning

Poison lessons that you're learning

The road ahead is turning

Suicidal education

It got sold to our generation

Wake up to the manipulation

Wake up to the situation

Suicidal education (Cheney, 2006)

Mr P may not have known that Jodie had missed most of her grade three year at school due to illness. Grade three, in the sixties, was a significant year for the building blocks of basic mathematical concepts. The composition of her mathematical melody was weak, there were integral notes missing from her tune, she was bound to go off key, hit a wrong

note, find herself in dissonance. If Mr P had noticed the gaps in Jodie's development and addressed these so that she could understand the basic mathematical concepts she had missed, those vital foundations, he could have possibly scaffolded positive structures for her future learning in mathematics. In the words of the song above, is the way he reacted to his student's inability to answer "suicidal education" for students like her who did not succeed. Does this negative experience contribute to the way she sees the world and how she feels about herself?

As the child, Jodie had yet to learn the lesson spiritual writer Anthony De Mello teaches us. He believes we are not responsible for what others say to us. But De Mello does not let us off the hook completely here! We may be responsible for our response and reaction to the words we hear but we are also responsible for the words we say. He sees us as responsible for each other. "...it is frightfully important that I listen to me when I'm listening to you...obtaining awareness" (1990, p. 71).

At school, students are still learning about our language, understanding its nuances and hidden meanings. It would hardly seem fair to expect them to have learnt to ignore hurtful comments and demeaning observations about themselves when they are still learning to read, write and understand the powerfulness of our spoken and written language. Many students of primary school age find it difficult to grasp the meaning of sarcasm, although adults may use it regularly as humour. If we use this sarcasm in our communication with students they often misunderstand what has been said to them and thus become confused, hurt or anxious. As adults, we are often confused ourselves between what is considered amusing and what is meant to be insulting. When we look at the difference between sarcasm and irony we find the two are often blurred, merged together in their use.

Sarcasm can be defined as bitter and cutting, intending to taunt its target, whereas irony is

defined as pointing out the incongruity of a given situation and saying the opposite of what is meant. How are our students able to learn these differences unless we explicitly teach speech in all its different forms and explain the ‘types’ of communication that exist in our language? We would like to think an educator would model appropriate use of language, helping students articulate what they mean in their conversations.

If we are ‘conscious of’ what we say, how we feel when we say it and why we say it then maybe we can identify the nature of our own lyrical style and subtly adjust it to suit the melody of our being, modelling a positive and supportive way of being for others.

The Intonation of our Melodies

During 1993 a teacher came to visit Jodie to ask advice regarding teaching younger students. Jane had been a grade six teacher for the first ten years of her teaching career and was now moving to a school where she was required to teach grade two. She was terrified at the prospect and felt inadequate. Of most interest to her was the way Jodie spoke with her students. Jane was surprised and commented, “You speak with them as if they were real people.”

How peculiar our language is when we use words in such a way where it would appear we do not consider children as real people!

Jane shared her experience of a visit to another class where the teacher instructed her students to “sit up tall like soldiers” and “lock your hands in your laps.” Jodie explained to Jane that she could never speak that way. She felt that it would be condescending and patronising to speak to any student in that manner no matter their age! Jodie suggested that Jane speak to them as she

would an adult but maybe make the language more simpler, giving them fewer instructions at the same time and so on.

van Manen highlights how we make assumptions about people, and especially about children. He uses an example from Dutch author, Simon Carmiggelt, who offers short stories and observations about ordinary people who appear in various media platforms to demonstrate how often we assume certain beliefs about how we should speak with people and especially in the case of children.

In the following example, van Manen shows how Carmiggelt uses one of his short stories to illustrate the way adults change their voice to suit a particular circumstance, in this case, speaking with a child:

Carmiggelt has been asked to return a call to a Mr Verdemann. He dials, and he hears a small voice answer.

“This is Annie Verdeman.” Carmiggelt guesses that the voice belongs to a four year old and he adds some sweetness to his voice.

“Well, Annie is your Daddy home?”

“No sir.”

“And your Mummy?”

“No sir.”

“So who is at home then?”

“My brother sir.”

“Well, let me talk to your brother then.”

“Yes sir.”

Next there is a sound of crashing and banging, and muttering.

Finally Annie comes back to the phone, "Sir"

"Well, where is your brother?" asks Carmiggelt.

"I'm sorry sir," Annie answers sadly, "I cannot get him out of his crib."

van Manen asks

How does one talk to children? Why is there an immediate assumption of incompetence?

Why the sweet voice? How to avoid misunderstanding children who only try to please us?

(1994, p. 137)

Why do some teachers, and some parents, insist we speak with children differently than how we speak with adults? What do children think when they hear adults speaking to each other then suddenly hear a change in the language when adults are speaking to them? Many of us appreciate films where they show what the baby or small child is thinking when people start the 'baby talk'. The film *Look Who's Talking* portrays a baby growing up and contains a 'voice over' to capture what the baby is thinking throughout the film. Apart from making us laugh, they remind us of the possible thoughts of toddlers and young children and what they may think when we babble in their faces and make up words that are not normally part of our conversations with adults. The film could be a fairly accurate commentary of a small child's thoughts, especially when they have a firm grasp of language, which seems to happen sooner than we think. Many children become confused when learning to speak, read and write and it would seem hearing a language that is contrived and contorted would be less than helpful. Older students are insulted by the insistent way some adults talk down to them just because they are children. We may have witnessed many teachers talking at their students rather than with them, after which

the teacher becomes distressed and offended when the student has ignored them, caused disturbances in the classroom and abused them and other students.

The idea of speaking to children respectfully is constantly portrayed in the media, showing how effective mutual respect between an adult and child could be beneficial in developing positive relationships. Films such as *Big Daddy* and more recently *Love Actually* depict the ways adults and children could communicate.

In *Big Daddy*, Sonny, a thirty two year old bachelor is required to look after his friend's son Julian for a few days. He has no experience with children or how to act as a 'father'. The movie moves through various scenes where he learns to become a parent by trial and error. Throughout the film there are references to the absurd way some adults speak to children. Sonny questions this and ignores advice from others. He decides the best way to communicate with Julian is to speak with him as he would anyone else.

In *Love Actually*, Daniel is stepfather to Sam. They have both just lost their partner and mother a few weeks before Christmas. Sam becomes reclusive and Daniel is concerned Sam is grieving for his mother and does not want to talk about it. He soon finds out that Sam is in love with a girl at school. In the first moment of their heart to heart conversation Daniel trivialises Sam's love because he is only ten years old. He quickly realises he will lose his close connection with Sam if he is not empathetic. Daniel instantly changes his attitude, reviving his relationship with Sam. Throughout the rest of the film Daniel and Sam are just two guys trying to understand the frustrations of romantic love. This relationship could have disintegrated but Daniel recognised that Sam needed someone to talk with who would not put him down; someone who would believe what

Sam had to say was true. Daniel had to put his own assumptions and beliefs aside so that he could actively listen and respond.

Some scriptwriters, like Carmiggelt, appear to be very perceptive about the motives of people and include these subtle messages about life in their stories.

...when Carmiggelt told his little stories, one never had the impression that one was taught something specific, and yet he would leave each a touch more perceptive, a bit more inclined to wonder and reflect about the significance of people's actions and life's little tragedies and circumstances. (van Manen, 1994, p. 137)

How might Jodie's experiences as a student changed if she had been spoken to with respect and understanding? As teachers are we and should we be as perceptive as Carmiggelt? Is this a necessary pre-requisite for the teaching profession?

Her Soundscape of Dissonance Continues...

Jodie continued to struggle with her fear of mathematics throughout high school. During her last two years, in grade nine and ten, she barely managed to pass at the highest level in both the standard mathematics class and the advanced mathematics class. Mathematics was no longer practical and the gaps in her past mathematical experiences contributed to her lack of understanding. The teacher set problems on the board then left the room for long periods of time. He would return to check the answers just before the end of the lesson. Jodie went to him at the front of the room one afternoon, asking for help with a problem. He chastised her for not understanding because it was so 'obviously' simple. He didn't explain anything to her, he just attacked her lack of understanding. In the grade ten external exams Jodie failed to pass at the

higher level and to this day continues to live in constant fear that she cannot answer a simple mathematical question when put on the spot.

Where might Jodie's resolution occur, where is her harmonious chord? Will it be in the comfort of knowing that she does have some basic understanding in mathematics after all? Is overcoming her fear of the world of algebraic logarithms and quadratic equations the answer? Will she be able to release herself from that fear of failing? Might it be like waiting on the edge of a musical progression expecting the tension to be relieved, waiting for that final chord to provide the resolution?

Although Jodie's mathematics soundscapes were often humiliating, the experiences have somehow assisted her in creating thoughtful narratives in her consciousness of understanding. Her experiences contribute to the empathy she needs when teaching students who struggle to understand. She is sensitive of the need to recognise the student who finds his work difficult, no matter how easy she may think it is. On the other hand, she wonders whether she has been mindful when speaking with her students. Has she said something that a student has painfully taken to heart and destroyed their confidence? We hear the echo of Gadamer's words, what we hear we cannot avoid.

In the following regretful soundscape we can identify a certain inability to "hear away".

Nita, a close friend of Jodie's for the past forty years, who was also in that grade six class, recently shared her story. Nita's memories of Mr P were, unfortunately, the comments he made to the pre-service teacher about particular students in the class. Their discussion occurred as the class quietly worked at their desks. When Nita's name came up it drew her attention toward them. She heard Mr P say to the pre-service teacher "ob, Nita is virtually dumb." She is not

'dumb' but she is painfully shy and at that time was still suffering enormous grief with the death of her mother just months before her grade six year. Nita lives alone, has no job due to the downsizing of a department she worked in for ten years, suffers from depression and rarely socialises. Nita believes the comment from Mr P has had an enormous effect on her life and she still remembers it with sadness and anger today.

There are many circumstances that may have contributed to Nita's life, not just Mr P's observation, but words spoken by others can have a compounding effect, potentially building a wall of disillusionment and sadness. We do not know what has happened to our students before they come to school. When we chastise them, put them down or speak in anger or frustration at them are we compounding a belief about themselves that could already be negative? Maybe Mr P did not intend any of his students to overhear what was said but then as a professional, should he have said it at all?

Todd often follows the philosophies of Levinas, whose work is based on the ethics of the Other, to explore the ideas of her writing. She suggests, in this instance, that we recognise something from Levinas' idea of the Other that might help in our understanding of educational relationships.

The Self-Other relationship is crucial for understanding how profoundly teachers can be implicated in the lives of their students...often unwittingly, of course...and enables teachers to reflect on how their everyday responses are always already ethically laden.
(Todd, 2001a, p. 445)

In the 'regretful' soundscape above the teacher's desk was sitting in the classroom and the students were all expected to work without speaking. Nita could not help but overhear.

Do we not always look up or turn around when someone says our name? Mr P would probably say that she should have been concentrating on her work and not eavesdropping on conversations that do not concern her. That tended to be the way teachers spoke in the seventies. Did Mr P realise the ethical consequence of his comment? We might be hopeful that now Nita has shared her private world, made her thoughts public, she may be able to reclaim what has been lost.

Todd says that once teachers understand how profoundly they affect the lives of their students they can reflect on the things they say and become more ethically mindful. Do we all wonder if we have said something to a student we would like to take back if we could?

“How can I coexist with him and still leave his otherness intact?” (Levinas, 1969, p. 13).

These words from Levinas speak to my heart. His words may create anxieties for us as we desire to be there for our students and help them preserve their individuality. How do we honour and sustain each student’s integrity? In Levinas’ book *Totality and Infinity* the introduction gives us a possible response to this question.

According to Levinas, there is only one way, by language. The questioning glance of the Other is seeking for a meaningful response. Of course, I may give only a casual word, and go on my own way with indifference, passing the Other by. But if communication and community is to be achieved, a real response, a responsible answer must be given. This means that I must be ready to put my world into words, and to offer it to the Other.
(Wild, 1969, p. 14)

In our classrooms do we put our worlds into words and offer our worlds to our students, or do we hide ourselves away behind our ‘teacher mask’, inattentive to the language which we use? If we do not bring ourselves to the classroom and share our own stories are we in danger of talking at our students rather than speaking with them?

Let us think for a moment about the near impossibility of reflecting on each interaction that happens and every word that is spoken within our classrooms.

In the rush of daily interactions with children in classrooms teachers rarely do have opportunity to step back, as it were, in order to ‘reflect in practice’ on what is the next thing that they should say or do. It appears that larger moral and critical social issues become ethereal and largely irrelevant to their everyday tasks. (van Manen, 1994, p. 148)

As teachers, we make a myriad of decisions every day in the classroom and although they may seem insignificant and irrelevant at the time, a passing comment, or a dismissive handling of an incident could have a lifetime impact on a particular student in any given moment. If a former teacher, a colleague, principal, parent or friend makes dismissive remarks about ourselves we can carry those words with us for a lifetime. David Gemmell, a best-selling British author of heroic fantasy, whose untimely death in 2006 shocked the Science Fiction reading fraternity, explored themes of honour, loyalty and redemption in his books. Within a conversation between two characters in his book *White Wolf*, old and wise Molaire gives advice to young Olek about the effects of the words we speak to others. “Best you learn from this. Never, in anger, say what you don’t mean. Words can be sharper than knives, and the wounds sometimes never heal” (2003, p. 125). It would seem there is no doubt words of anger will be spoken to us during our lifetime as not everyone abides by the insightful advice offered by Molaire through the stories of

Gemmell. How do we deal with these hurtful words and turn them around to teach us constructive lessons about ourselves and others?

Language is the way of accessing and understanding experience. By naming and renaming experience, we bring it to awareness, (re)interpret it and come to particular understandings or misunderstandings. (van Manen, 2000, p. 316)

Through the soundscapes Jodie accesses and understands her lived experiences from her point of view. She now brings awareness to particular instances in her life revealing parts of herself previously unknown and unrealised. As Jodie reinterprets her soundscapes she can understand and maybe misunderstand what these experiences in reality mean for teaching. Bohm asks us to recognise how we bring our own assumptions to our experiences and that “An opinion is an assumption” (2004, p. 8) of an event and is based upon our past. He says it is important to see that the different opinions we have are the result of our past thought, all our experiences and “what other people have said, and what not” (2004, p. 9). This is all programmed into our memory.

In our day-to-day activities we may not think of how our past affects our present. Those concealed horizons may remain hidden unless we bring awareness of our assumptions to our conscious thoughts.

Normally we don't see that our assumptions are affecting the nature of our observations. But the assumptions affect the way we see things, the way we experience them and, consequently, the things that we want to do. In a way, we are looking through our assumptions; the assumptions could be said to be an observer in a sense. (Bohm, 2004, p. 69)

We know that our assumptions about teaching are based upon our experiences of school and what people have said or not said to us. We understand our interpretation of events is guided by our 'collected' assumptions. When working with others we need to be aware that we are hearing their voices and actions through our 'collected' assumptions. If we agree with van Manen and Bohm, we must be conscious of our conversations with others, particularly our students, knowing we are contributing to their own 'collection' of assumptions as well as the fact we are making decisions in teaching based on our own 'collection'.

By further investigation of the term of 'awareness', of which De Mello speaks of in his book, aptly named *Awareness*, we may consider its importance for our daily interactions with students and for revealing our gathered assumptions. If we were to become diligently conscious of the language we speak with others could we then teach from our hearts and maybe lessen how often a misguided remark could occur?

Be aware of what you're saying, be aware of what you're doing, be aware of what you're thinking, be aware of how you're acting. Be aware of where you're coming from, what your motives are. (De Mello, 1990, p. 67)

De Mello says this awareness is not about concentration. If you concentrate too hard on what is going on around the classroom you can become distracted. De Mello's metaphor of the car driver helps us to understand his concept of awareness. He speaks of the driver who participates in conversations, even arguments, whilst she is driving, yet she is still aware of other motorists, notices if the back door of the car is shut properly and responds correctly when the traffic lights change. De Mello uses this example to show how our

attention is more diffused and how we take in all kinds of things. He suggests that it is about being “aware of where [our] attention goes” (1990, p. 72) rather than concentrating.

De Mello tells us of how he learnt the importance of awareness and the impact of his lyrical style on another. As a Jesuit Priest he was expected to counsel members of his congregation. De Mello taped these sessions for a number of reasons: so that his clients could listen back over the session, De Mello himself could revisit the session and share critically with his colleagues, learning to become a better counsellor. In one particular incident De Mello interviewed a female client. He shared the interview with his colleagues. After listening to the tape, the others made some observations around the conversation he had with his female client. The group identified questions and nuances of the conversation that De Mello was not aware of, even though he had conducted the interview, listened to the tape before the group meeting and then listened to the tape again at the meeting. He was shocked that he had been unaware of the content of his conversation and particularly upset that the group had recognised his dislike for the female client just from his tone of voice. De Mello had not even realised he disliked the client!

How many times in a classroom have we made a statement, a passing comment or judgement without being aware of the content of what we have said? How many students do we treat differently because we dislike them or find them difficult? If we create opportunities for reflection amongst teachers maybe this will assist us in becoming aware of the effects of our use of language in the classroom.

van Manen's writing from 1994 describe some developments that were happening in education at the time, which would hopefully lead to a more intentional, positive teaching model.

One development is the emergence (or re-emergence) of virtue ethics and the other is the awareness of the function of narrative or story in moral reflection and action. These developments are suggestive of a fresh way of conceptualising the relations between virtues, narrativity and thoughtful pedagogical acting in classrooms. (1994, p. 148)

About six years ago our curriculum at the time, the *Essential Learnings*, presented opportunities for teachers to engage in narrative writing to inform their teaching practice. This was visible within and across different schools. When our government changed our Education Minister the *Essential Learnings* evolved into a new phase of curriculum development, taking away the many planned group opportunities for teachers to engage in thoughtful conversations and narrative writing with their colleagues. This is not to say that some teachers do not continue this practice to help them understand their teaching practice, but it is no longer an explicit requirement of our Department.

The action of narrative writing encompasses De Mello's concept of awareness by revealing to us what is actually happening on a day-to-day basis in the classroom. When the narrative writing is focused on the vocal interactions of the classroom we can collect soundscapes of conversation, helping us to recognise and reflect upon the effects of what we are saying. This may help us address what appears and what is hidden in our conversation with students.

van Manen says that “Questions of how one is to act with children are more often dependent upon context and on the pedagogical thoughtfulness of the personality of the teacher”, and that the recall of our experience through story gives us a way to identify “the pedagogical moment of each incidence” (1994, p. 148). Thus we can then develop awareness of our pedagogical practice and take note of where our attention goes when working with twenty five or more students each day. If we practice this awareness it could become part of our nature, thus ensuring positive engagement with our students is more likely and automatic in our hectic classrooms.

As De Mello realised in his own reflective practice with his group, there are many ‘hidden’ conversations that can reveal much about ourselves and our relationships with others.

Let us return to the grade six classroom as we contemplate the concepts of awareness and reflection. If Mr P had been aware of his reactive nature and his verbal barrage would he have changed his tune next time? Did he go home that evening aware that he had lost his temper, lost control of his emotions and maybe damaged some of his students’ sensitive egos?

It is not just the content of what we say that is important, it is also the essence in which we say those words that can be powerful. In the community of learners that a school supports there are many opportunities to come together and speak. Bohm discusses at length the importance of dialogue. His concerns are for the future of our world and the lack of effective communication amongst its inhabitants. Bohm examines ways of interacting in groups that could improve our connections and create something new together rather than trying to convince others of our point of view. He presents us with

some ideas leading towards meaningful conversations with our students. Each of us has to be

...interested primarily in truth and coherence, so that [we are] ready to drop [our] old ideas and intentions, and be ready to go on to something different, when it is called for.
(2004, pp. 2, 3)

Bohm says that it is critical to suspend our assumptions to allow the expansion of our communication with another. We could consider the possibility that this suspension of assumptions may help us enact the thoughts of Levinas where he asks us to create a place where we co-exist with others (our students) whilst leaving their 'otherness' intact. We see our students' ideas and thoughts through the screen of our own thoughts and because we identify with our thoughts, which we may do unconsciously, we might not be able to effectively communicate with them. We could, potentially, remain divided from our students in our conversations. Do we give our students the opportunity to speak together showing them how to be attentive to one another and to suspend their assumptions? Do we model this practice and give students examples of effective communication?

If we look at the classroom environment, how often do we remain divided from our students because of the way we speak with them? Although Bohm does not directly speak about teachers and education, he certainly alludes to some of the practices that happen in education.

...if people are to co-operate (literally 'work together') they have to be able to create something in common, something that takes shape in their mutual discussions and

actions, rather than something that is conveyed from one person who act as an authority to the others, who act as passive instruments of this authority. (2004, p. 3)

In many classrooms, especially where the students are older, we are seen as the authority figure and many teachers are reluctant to let this role of authority go. As Palmer's comments about the fearful teacher earlier in this chapter say, it could be a matter of losing control of our class! If we read further into Bohm's ideas around dialogue we might see that this is not necessarily the case.

Lyrical Dialogues

There is a distinct difference between discussion and dialogue and they are used for different purposes. Bohm explains the difference by referencing the root meanings of both words.

Dialogue comes from the Greek word *dialogos*. *Logos* means 'the word', or in our case we would think of the 'meaning of the word.' And *dia* means 'through' – it doesn't mean 'two'...it suggests a *stream of meaning* flowing among and through us and between us. This will make possible a flow of meaning in the whole group, out of which may emerge some new understanding. (2004, p. 6)

We can have a dialogue with one other person, a group of people or even with ourselves as long as the essence of dialogue is understood.

...contrast this with the word 'discussion', which has the same root as 'percussion' and 'concussion'. It really means to break things up. It emphasises the idea of analysis, where

there are many points of view, and where everybody is presenting a different one – analysing and breaking up. (2004, pp. 6, 7)

Bohm explains the main difference between these two ways of communicating is that when you are engaged in a discussion you are usually trying to win. You want the others to see your point of view. In dialogue, no one is trying to win, no one is trying to coerce someone else into seeing their point of view. In dialogue we are creating an environment where everyone participates, not against each other but with each other. Both discussion and dialogue have their specific purposes in the classroom but if we want to effectively communicate with students, treat them respectfully and encourage them to grow, dialogue might be a more effective option. Dialogue gives students a decisive way to achieve deeper understanding and considerations in many areas of the curriculum. It also encourages an environment of honouring and nurturing the other. In *On dialogue*, Bohm's book around this subject of communication, he clearly states concern for our interactions with others in our community and the future of our society. Bohm describes our need for dialogue groups, which should ideally be between twenty and forty people, to create a microcosm of our society.

In that size group, you begin to get what may be called a 'microculture'. You have enough people coming in from different sub-cultures so they are a sort of microcosm of the whole culture. And then the question of culture – the collectively shared meaning – begins to come in. That is crucial, because the collectively shared meaning is very powerful. The collective thought is more powerful than the individual. (2004, pp. 13, 14)

Classrooms provide our own ready-made dialogue groups; they are microcosms of society, our own mini worlds. Students come to the classroom every day learning how to relate in

groups, relying on us to show them how to interact, responsibly interact, within this mini society so they may become effective citizens of our global communities.

Engagement in the type of dialogue Bohm describes seems to be uncommon within most educational soundscapes. Discussion appears to be more common. In a discussion Bohm says we identify personally with our assumptions and want to defend them. When someone else makes a judgement about our assumptions we feel they are judging us. "...if someone doesn't listen to your basic assumptions you feel it is an act of violence and then you are inclined to be violent yourself" (2004, p. 46). We might recognise the usefulness of discussion but also understand the potentially violent nature of this type of conversation where we provide another competition in which we have winners and losers. Schools often have debating teams between classes and other schools in the district, where students learn to argue effectively against each other. We might consider also having dialogue groups where the collective thoughts of students solve important issues in our community.

If we practice classroom conversations in the spirit of dialogue, we give students the opportunity to understand conversations are not just about their assumptions and opinions. We could develop skills in attentiveness and purposefulness, scaffolding environments of meaningful, respectful conversations with each other, skills they could use throughout their lives. As Bohm say, there is concern for our future society, and Bohm believes dialogue used in its true sense is a way to collective consciousness, working towards creating a 'world' that honours nature and the preciousness of humanity. "To make a 'world' takes more than one person, and therefore the collective representation is key" (2004, p. 60). If this is the case, it appears that it is our responsibility as educators to ensure students experience and understand how to use our language in a way that brings

us together as a whole, whilst preserving our individuality. Bohm declares the survival of our humanity is dependent on this collective consciousness. He is not alone in this view of our future worlds.

Antonia Darder explores the legacy of Paulo Freire, in her book *Reinventing Paulo Freire: A Pedagogy of Love*. She tells us that Freire often referred to the importance of dialogue and “its role in the process of...‘conscientisation’ of students – the process of their becoming conscious – and the transformation of life in schools and society” (Darder, 2002, p. 103). This dialogue brings us together, thus we are no longer alone or in isolation. “Within a dialogical educational practice, students are expected to reflect on that which they know, their lived experiences, and on how these impact the way we read their world” (2002, p. 103). When students are engaged with dialogue often it gives them opportunities to “problematise the conflicts they experience” and “teachers create conditions for students to reflect on their lived histories, so they may consider what needs to change and what actions need to transpire in order for that change to become a concrete reality in their lives” (2002, p. 104).

What about the home life of our students? Is it possible to have dialogue in the home? Bohm points out that the nature of family is hierarchical and this creates difficulty regarding engagement in authentic dialogue.

Sometimes people feel a sense of dialogue within their families. But a family is generally a hierarchy, organised on the principle of authority which is contrary to dialogue. The family is a very authoritative structure, based on obligation, and that sort of thing. It has its value, but it is a structure within which it might be difficult to get dialogue going. It would be good if you could – perhaps that could happen in some families. (2004, p. 42)

So, where do our students learn to use dialogue effectively? It would appear our schools are the perfect environment, if some teachers could shed the hierarchical nature of their teaching. In the mathematics experience, Mr P was using his authority to express his frustration. What if his students had been able to have a dialogue about the situation and discuss the difficulties arising for them? We may consider eleven year olds have the capacity to be involved in meaningful dialogue with their teachers. Mr P might have had a whole range of assumptions that he drew upon that day to make the decisions he did, the decisions he made in anger. We can only guess what his assumptions may have been. Did he believe they had not completed their homework, they did not understand the mathematics? Did he assume they were not paying attention in class? Did he know how completely terrified the students were and for some, not a single thought remained in their heads as he leaned over them in his threatening manner?

As we read through Bohm's writings we may realise the mathematics soundscape was a win/lose situation, a situation of 'I am right and you are wrong!' When we are not in competition with another it is much easier to be accurate in our response because it is not dependent on being right or wrong. As soon as it becomes a win/lose situation we lose sight of the answer or the intention and instead concentrate on the prize which highlights all manner of fears and anxieties. Palmer cites the poem. *The Need to Win* by Chuang Tzu, the influential Chinese philosopher, to capture what happens in the win/lose dilemma,

When an archer is shooting for nothing

He has all his skill.

If he shoots for a brass buckle

He is already nervous.

If he shoots for a prize of gold

He goes blind
Or sees two targets-
He is out of his mind!
His skill has not changed. But the prize
Divides him. He cares.
He thinks more of winning
Than of shooting -
And the need to win
Drains him of power. (as cited in Palmer, 1990, pp. 61-62)

Lyrics that Reveal Emotions

Our difficulty in embracing a collective consciousness, an engagement in dialogue, arises from our attachment to some of the emotions identified within our experiences. The mathematics episode in the grade six classroom was an extreme physical experience that has taken up permanent residence in Jodie's body. She can guarantee the physical feeling is recalled with absolute clarity every time she is required to answer a mathematically challenging problem. The experience has created a whole range of assumptions of her own which influence her discussion, not dialogue, with others about mathematics.

You may identify with those opinions and react to defend them. But it doesn't make sense to do this. If the opinion is right, it doesn't need such a reaction. And if it is wrong, why should you defend it? If you are identified with it, however, you do defend it. It is as if you yourself are under attack when your opinion is challenged. (Bohm, 2004, p. 9)

Jodie knows that her paranoia and fear regarding mathematics disclose themselves when she speaks with another who, she has determined, has a 'mathematical brain', someone who cannot comprehend her fear of mathematics. In the discussion, each person wants their point of view heard, one wants to win. "Opinions thus tend to be experienced as 'truths', even though they may only be your own assumptions and your own background. You got them from your teacher, your family, or by reading, or in yet some other way" (Bohm, 2004, p. 9). A reverberation of the words from Bohm play in our minds, reminding us to take notice, pay attention to our autobiographical histories as we engage in conversation with others, helping us to understand that it is not a 'truth' about mathematics but an opinion we have collected from our personal experience. It tells us to consider how we speak with our students whilst teaching them, helping them to understand the nature of their own assumptions.

It is unfortunate that two teachers in Jodie's life have perpetuated her lack of confidence in mathematics but these fears have given her insights into how she is attached to her assumptions. As her feelings of fear are so enormously overwhelming when she is confronted, in conversation, with a mathematically confident person she can now clearly recognise those feelings come from her assumptions. "What is required then is that we notice the connection between the thoughts going on in the dialogue, the feelings in the body, and the emotions" (Bohm, 2004, p. 20). Bohm suggests we notice what is going on in our body when identifying with our assumptions to help us intentionally suspend them.

The point of suspension is to help make proprioception [self-perception] possible, to create a mirror so that you can see the results of your thought. You have it inside yourself because your body acts as a mirror and you can see tensions arising in your body. (2004, p. 25)

Jodie is continually surprised as she takes notice of the feelings in her body when she takes part in conversations with others. When she is speaking about a topic close to her heart, a topic she is passionate about, her body becomes engrossed in the experience. Bohm has identified that “when people are in really close contact, talking about something which is very important to them, their whole bodies are involved – their hearts, their adrenalin, all the neurochemicals, everything” (2004, p. 31). Is Bohm referring only to the physical heart here? We could also take him to mean the spiritual heart. When we ‘take something to heart’ we are attached, totally immersed in what has happened. It would seem Jodie has taken her dissonant mathematical incident to heart and she believes it will remain there for the time being. Her mirror reflects these tensions in her body and she can clearly feel the sensations as she relives and rewrites about her mathematics experience. Her distressing feelings are so deeply embedded that having a dialogue with a group of people who understand the nature of dialogue could potentially help lay her fears to rest. Is this where a resolution to her heartfelt dilemma may lie, through dialogue, bringing her private world into the public arena?

A Possible Melodic Resolution - Cognitive Coaching

Many school leaders are involved with the effective coaching method of *Cognitive Coaching* created by Arthur Costa and Robert Garmston. The two, four day intensive workshops, include many practical activities woven with some of the thoughts Bohm has about effective communication. Garmston acknowledges Bohm’s theories around authentic dialogue and recommends the reading of Bohm’s book *On Dialogue* to fully understand the basic concepts supporting Cognitive Coaching. The three core values of Costa and Garmston’s *Cognitive Coaching* methodology are offered as the foundational beliefs and guiding principles for the *Center for Cognitive Coaching*.

Doing Our Work:

1. Humility in Continuous Learning

Life's encounters, events, and circumstances become invitations to improve ourselves when we have humility in continuous learning. While it is human to defend our biases, beliefs, actions and knowledge, it is also human to transcend the instinct to protect ourselves with the courage to learn and change.

2. Self As Service

Our ego needs are set aside in the pursuit of service to others. We devote our energies to enhancing their resourcefulness. We serve to capacitate and derive satisfaction when others excel and are recognised.

Through Our Work:

3. Human Potential

We dedicate ourselves to maximising human potential. We are committed to amplifying five states of mind as resources to realise cognitive modifiability, and transformation of individuals and organisations. Efficaciously we strive to bring our own and other's consciousness to intentions, thoughts, feelings, behaviours and their effects on others and the environment. (Costa & Garmston, 1999)

In the first few days of the *Cognitive Coaching* workshop, the activities bring to the surface personal assumptions and beliefs. Following on from this there are a number of strategies for listening to the other in different scenarios, sometimes for planning activities and outcomes, sometimes to solve a problem. Coaches are expected to withdraw their autobiographies and pay attention to the story of the person sitting opposite. Over the entire workshop program, with personally organised coaching sessions in the weeks between, participants practise the process to embed this practice in their daily interactions

with others. These workshops intend to raise awareness within conversations with others, by paying attention to what each one is saying, not caught up in personal autobiographical thoughts.

Bohm emphasises the need to pay attention to the physical sensations and movements of our bodies, and these workshops provide activities to observe body movements of two people engaged in dialogue and also record personal sensations when engaged in dialogue.

What's required then is that we notice the connection between the thoughts going on in the dialogue, the feelings in the body and the emotions. If you watch, you'll see from the body language, as well as from the verbal language that everyone's in much the same boat – they're just on opposite sides. (2004, p. 20)

We may notice that within a phenomenological inquiry our descriptions of possible experience reveal the 'universal character' of our lived experiences.

Some of the Cognitive Coaching exercises may be confronting at first, admitting to feelings not previously identified and acknowledging the deep attachment we may have to these feelings. Some people are reticent to acknowledge these feelings and need more time than others to build trust required.

Bohm says,

This is what I call dialogue – for people to realise what is on each other's minds without coming to any conclusions or judgements. Assumptions will come up...but we are all suspending them and looking at them all, seeing what they mean. You have to notice your

own reactions of hostility, or whatever, and you can see by the way people are behaving what their reactions are...you become more familiar with how thought works. (2004, p. 21)

A philosophy of understanding asks us to focus on experiences as we experience them and to leave aside any consideration to the cause of the experience or whether we are 'getting it right'. As we suspend assumptions and avoid coming to any conclusions or judgements we may have the opportunity to explore possible meanings of each experience and understand how our thoughts work in different situations.

Contributing to the Composition - Understanding the Melodies of Others.

Cognitive Coaching could potentially help our school communities learn awareness and non-attachment to assumptions. Maybe through providing a dialogical soundscape we have the chance to talk things through, acknowledge we have assumptions and engage in conversations where students and teachers understand each other without having to convince each other we are right.

If we look to Gadamer and his description of language as the medium for interpreting, we see using language as a way of understanding others. All experiences are open to interpretation according to Gadamer. He uses the term conversation rather than dialogue but from his description about "conversation" his interpretation seems to align with the meaning Bohm attributes to dialogue.

Conversation is a process of coming to an understanding. Thus it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself to the other, truly accepts his point of view

as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extent that he understands not the particular individual but what he says. (2004, p. 387)

In classroom conversations we may not always acknowledge a student's opinion as valid. If we were to see their views as valid, valid for them, could we not understand what they might be trying to say, honouring their being, teaching and learning with them from their own lived experiences? "What is to be grasped is the substantive rightness of his opinion, so that we can be at one with each on the subject. Thus we do not relate the other's opinion to him but to our own opinions and views" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 387).

If we model, for our students, this way of being Gadamer pertains towards, could we create a community of dialogue, a truly harmonic and rhythmic soundscape of conversations? How often are our exchanges with a student negative because we fail to make a connection with them and do not recognise the full value of difference? We fail to understand their melodies, the soundscape of endless possibilities in which they live. They quickly retreat to their own worlds, through silence, verbal and violent abuse and avoidance. What if we adhere to Gadamer's words and practice Bohm's philosophies? Could we then engage in conversation with our students and model worthwhile examples of authentic dialogue? Could this possibly transform our conversational soundscapes with students, colleagues and parents?

"Thanks to the verbal nature of all interpretation, every interpretation includes the possibility of a relationship with others. There can be no speaking that does not bind the speaker and the person spoken to" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 399). In conversations with our students we are asking for their attention, binding them to ourselves. If our words are unaccepting of their point of view are we at risk of not only damaging their self-esteem but

also modelling a way of being in our worlds and the worlds of others that is destructive and alienating? Is this what we want to achieve in our teaching soundscape?

Musical Meanings – Interpretative Melodies

As we consider the words we use and the manner in which we say them we should also keep in mind how these words may be interpreted by the listener. Our interpretation of what has been said may be different to what the speaker intends. When a translator attempts to transfer meaning from one language into another his own interpretation may influence the original text. Many languages are difficult to translate and Gadamer speaks of this in his book *Truth and Method*.

However faithful we try to be, we have to make difficult decisions. In our translation if we want to emphasise a feature of the original that is important to us, then we can do so only by playing down or entirely suppressing other features. But this is precisely the activity that we call interpretation. Translation, like all interpretation, is a highlighting. (2004, pp.387, 388)

As we read through the writings of various philosophers who are French, German or Polish most translators acknowledge the difficulty of interpreting what they have said in one language into another whilst staying true to the author's message. Many wish to apologise if they misinterpret the author's intention. Our different cultures show how our language can separate ourselves from the other. There are even variations within a common language, the words moulded from the culture of the group, the community or the country.

We could say that here in the twenty-first century a new culture of language has been arising in the form of ‘texting’, the shorthand that people, mostly young people, use to talk to each other quickly and efficiently. There is an excess of articles on the internet about texting, supporting both negative and positive points of view. Do we ignore this new language, the common language of our students, or do we use it to our advantage, a learning opportunity where we have the chance to understand the lives of our students? Amanda O’Connor, a graduate student in Educational Technology at the University of Washington says that “IM [texting] is becoming an important literacy in kids' lives, and consequently one that needs to be recognised by teachers” (O’Connor, 2005). This is one way our students communicate with each other and it plays a significant part in their personal soundscapes.

Through the ideas of Humboldt, Gadamer explores some thoughts about how language could reveal our personal perception of the world.

Humboldt taught that every language should be seen as a particular view of the world, and he investigated the *inner form* in which the originary event of human language formation is, in each instance, differentiated. (2004, p. 437)

Our students are living their own lives and sometimes it would seem the lives they lead are completely alien to us. How do we come to understand the lives of others and particularly the lives of our students?

Humboldt sees the main significance of human languages as mirrors of the individual mentalities of the nations; nevertheless he thereby limited the universality of the connection between language and thought to the formalism of faculty. (2004, p. 438)

We might say then that ‘texting’, the current voices of our students, and other variations of the language our students use are mirrors of their individual mentalities, creating insights into their worlds.

Humboldt sees the main significance of the problem when he says that language is “really situated in relation to an infinite and truly boundless sphere, the epitome of everything that can be thought. Thus it must make an infinite use of finite means and is able to do so through the identity of the faculty that generates thoughts and language.” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 438)

When our students are part of this infinite and truly boundless sphere, then through texting, the finite means, they are revealing their thoughts, being in community with others just as they would in any other form of language.

The problem with this different way of communicating is society’s concern that students are becoming illiterate and poor spellers. Could we assume, however, that without basic knowledge of English taught in primary school students could not use texting effectively and be understood? This observation might reassure teachers who are concerned for the future of our formalised English language. A leading linguistic academic, David Crystal, tells John Crace in an interview for *The Guardian* newspaper in London, that

...there is no evidence that texting teaches people to spell badly: rather, research shows that those kids who text frequently are more likely to be the most literate and the best spellers, because you have to know how to manipulate language. (Crystal & Crace, 2008)

Could there be a place for many forms of language in our schools, dependent on the purpose at the time? As O’Connor found in her research regarding “Digital Literacies”,

teachers should be teaching students the importance and purpose of audience, helping them to use appropriate language in the appropriate setting and understanding how their style of writing [and style of speaking] will be dependent on who they are writing for [and speaking to].

IM-speak [texting] is perfectly acceptable when instant messaging with someone; on the flip side it is completely unacceptable when writing a formal letter. The same thing is true of formal writing – it is appropriate in an official document, such as a school paper, but would be inappropriate in-for example-an online chat room. (O'Connor, 2005)

Texting could be described as a kind of 'text-speech'. Students use texting because it is cheaper than calling a friend on their mobile phone, but it is still their voices that communicate their message. We observe students writing their messages using predictive text, their words streaming from their thoughts before they think carefully and mindfully what they are saying, just as we often do in conversation. If this is part of the 'chattering' soundscapes our students inhabit are we not bound by, justified by, the purposes of our vocation to maybe experience their melodies ourselves? Finding out about the harmonies and rhythms of their worlds, as well as being responsible for teaching appropriate ways of speaking with others, as in formal situations, conversational situations and so on, similar to O'Connor's suggestions for styles and types of writing?

If we are to interpret the nature of our being, our experience of the world, through discourse as Gadamer's title *Language as Horizon of Hermeneutic Ontology; Language as experience of the world* in *Truth and Method* infers, is it not our responsibility as teachers to consider the far-reaching consequences of our words in the interpreted lives of our students, and the effect of their words in our own lives?

We converse with our students for around two hundred days of the year. Our words are heard and maybe responded to or reacted to by our students over this time and vice versa. Would we not want those moments, those words to be meaningful, uplifting and in connection with each other? Would we not want to create an atmosphere of dialogue, a soundscape of conversation where we could share understanding of our worlds even though we are teacher and student?

...it must be emphasised that language has its true being only in dialogue, in *coming to an understanding*...Coming to an understanding...does not need any tools in the proper sense of the word. It is a life process in which a community of life is lived out. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 443)

Through our words, as teachers, a sense of community can be created with our students but only if we are in authentic dialogue with one another. "...language is a medium where I and world meet, or rather, manifest their original belonging together" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 469).

If students embrace the soundscape of dialogue, learning they are not their assumptions and opinions, we might begin to hope they will come to understand something of the nature of Bohm's proprioception or the awareness in De Mello's teaching and thus become more confident and empathetic beings. How can we underestimate the effect of what we say to others when we wish ourselves to be honoured, valued and in community with others?

Let us remember that understanding what someone says is not achievement in empathy in which one divines the inner life of the speaker. Certainly it is true of all understanding that

what is said acquires its determinacy in part through supplementing of meaning from occasional resources. But this determination by situation and context, which fills out what is said to totality of meaning and makes what is said really said, pertains not to the speaker but to what is spoken. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 483)

What Gadamer speaks of here may cause us to recall how often we say, “I didn’t mean what I said, I wasn’t thinking at the time, it just came out.” The words we regret are the words spoken in anger, irritation and most significantly without awareness. If Mr P had been aware of his anger, paid attention to his mood, his words may have been different. Jodie’s moment of dissonance did not pertain to him as a person, the speaker. What was spoken that day was the totality of meaning for Jodie and made what was said, *really said*. Melodies of words sing in our minds forever. The words we hear and the words we say to the other hover in our personal soundscapes and often come back to haunt us. We cannot take back the words we say. As Gadamer says,

When we understand text [words], what is meaningful in it captivates us just as the beautiful captivates us. It has asserted itself and captivated us before we can come to ourselves and be in a position to test the claim to meaning that it makes...In understanding we are drawn into an event of truth and arrive, as it were, too late, if we want to know what we are supposed to believe. (2004, p. 484)

When we have spoken harshly to our students, how do we take those words away when they have already been captivated by our words before we have realised what we have said? What does this mean for the hearts and souls of our learners?

CHAPTER 4

SOULFUL MUSIC – PULLING THE HEART STRINGS

(Soul-less teaching may lead to a soul-less community)

Part One: Soul Music

Soul music is a music genre originating in the United States that combines gospel music and rhythm and blues. (Wikipedia, 2008c)

It is a diffuse, almost mystical concept and its emphasis on subjective qualities - 'you have to feel it' - encourages emotional commitment to it...The listener is invited to identify on all sides, thus making moral judgements difficult and painful because the quick of emotion is all too raw...the soul singer has experienced what he is singing about. The experience of poverty and hardship and of being black is seen as an essential apprenticeship for the soul singer, and conversely, this experience is seen as reflected in the music itself...soul songs state the ideal. Moral principles are laid down, rules of conduct advocated, right and wrong clearly delineated...Gospel songs are the songs of hope. When you sing gospel, you have the feeling that there is a cure for what's wrong. (Towards a definition, 2008)

Soundscapes of Soul

Every day, our students carry not only the heavy backpacks filled with notes, books and laptops to school. They often come laden with heartbreak, sadness and disillusionment. We are faced with the soulful music of our students, their melodies of despair and pain. Our society's culture asks us to teach these students from the same pages of education, an

education created by people whose experiences appear in no way to mirror the lives of students.

We, as the listeners of our students, could create gentle soundscapes of care and safety, a place where students can begin to sing gospel songs of hope and believe there may be a cure for what is wrong in their lives. When we recall Cain's ten renewed qualities of the teacher from chapter two, *Melodies of Teaching Life*, we may remember one as the ability to see all people as individuals, not just individuality in what we are teaching, but also in whom we are teaching. Our schools can easily categorise, judge and stereotype students, just as we do in the worlds outside of education. Freire invites us to embrace humility as teachers, to avoid this lapse into labelling and to accept and respect difference, listening to our students' soulful melodies. Without this humility we cannot enter into "progressive pedagogical practice" (2001, p. 108). When we accept and respect our students' differences, understanding how different their lives are from ours, we no longer speak at them or down to them.

If I consider myself superior to what is different, no matter what it is, I am refusing to listen. The different becomes not an 'other' worthy of any respect, but a 'this' or 'that' to be despised and detested. This is oppression. (Freire, 2001, p. 108)

Soul Songs - Is that Child Evil and Sinful?

Jodie first met Dan in 1995. He was in the grade two classroom across the hall and he was seven years old. In a school of nearly eight hundred students Dan earned himself the reputation as being the 'worst' student. What a status at age seven! Teachers who did not have him in their class avoided him. Dan spent much of his time meandering through the playground terrorising

students, especially students he thought would be particularly vulnerable to his ploys. He was rarely, if ever, physically violent. He was a master of manipulation and used his talent to full advantage. Dan quickly discerned if his targets were weak before he embarked on his 'fun'. He never 'picked on' anyone who could fight back. Was he, in reality, a coward, outrageously insecure and afraid?

As with all students, Jodie wished to ensure her first meeting with Dan would be positive. Therefore she met with Dan before any confrontation occurred but she had to admit she found him intimidating without really knowing why. Her encounters with Dan were far and few between until June 1997 when he entered the grade three/four class she was teaching. The first part of the year Dan spent with a teacher named Gordon, a former football player who used intimidation and domination tactics to maintain control of his students. For Dan, it was a dismal failure.

Dan's personal history was appalling. Sexually abused as a young child, he was also exposed to the many assaults his mother and his older sister experienced. As these assaults were perpetrated by males he was uncomfortable in the presence of most male teachers. Many of the teachers were not surprised with his unsuccessful placement with Gordon.

When Dan joined Jodie's class he settled quickly, relieved to be away from his previous classroom down the corridor. As she came to know Dan Jodie found he was quite a different person from the one she encountered in the playground. He was interested in learning and could write the most amazing stories for a ten year old. Dan also loved music and was delighted that she played guitar and sang with the class often. The following year he joined the guitar group and practised with the group during the lunch time break. This was a relief for many teachers as it stopped his playground antics!

Inclusive Harmonies and Rhythms – A Soundscape for All?

A few months after Dan came into Jodie's classroom a student with severe Autism enrolled in the school and became a member of her three/four class. Kale was dependent on a carer twenty four hours a day. Before he arrived, his parents assured the school principal he could talk and use the toilet independently. This was not the case, as it turned out, and the school took him in under false pretences, but once he was enrolled there was little they could do. He was an average size, nine year old child who couldn't talk, sit still or participate fully in the classroom program. Jodie's class spent a great deal of time preparing for his arrival, watching videos of him as a three year old and learning about the Autism spectrum and the nature of the disorder. She was impressed with her students' patience and compassion once Kale arrived in their classroom.

The class experienced many challenging instances with Kale. Often when he came into the room with his carer after lunch he would pick up a container full of beads and throw them in the air. Everyone was usually silent reading at that time of the day and the beads would scatter across the room and onto the students. They ignored him although the beads probably hurt. Kale was so fast, no one could stop him. When he was settled by the carer one of the students would silently volunteer to pick up the beads and put them back on the shelf. Having Kale in Jodie's class was a life-changing experience. Parents, at first, were concerned their own child's education would be compromised because of the disruptive nature of Kale's actions. They later conceded it was a worthwhile experience for each student, teaching them compassion, fearlessness of a disability, and most of all patience.

Kale's arrival into Jodie's classroom became an important part of Dan's life. Dan warmed to him immediately and eagerly volunteered to be Kale's student carer. This was particularly crucial for Kale's safety in the playground. Kale could never be left alone. He would run onto the road

and sit down, steal other children's food or destroy a room by throwing the contents around. Dan was very firm with him, chastising him if he attempted to steal food from other children, leading him away from temptation and keeping him occupied, diverting his attention. For Jodie, it was a powerful partnership, which benefited both students, probably with life-long memories, especially for Dan. For a few other teachers in the school it was as though Jodie was rewarding Dan with a special experience that he didn't deserve. In their opinion, Dan should not be given the responsibility to take care of another child, especially one with a disability; he might lead Kale into his 'sinful and evil' ways. As she watched Dan work and play with Kale Jodie wondered how he could be labelled sinful and evil. Dan was caring and understanding of Kale's differences, always mindful of his disability and the dangers Kale could expose himself to. Jodie did not understand why these teachers were upset with her decisions. They were good teachers, all with a variety of teaching experience. Some were male, some were female, some were young and some were old. There was no identifiable 'type' of teacher that rejected Dan. It was just this small group of teachers, including his former teacher Gordon, who categorised, judged and stereotyped Dan. They saw Dan as a 'thing' to be despised.

Terry Pratchett, a satirical and entertaining writer of tales from his *DiscWorld* series provides us with a possible glimpse of what might be the nature of sin from his book *Carpe Jugulum*.

What is Sin?

Oates: There is a very interesting debate raging at the moment on the nature of sin, for example.

Granny Weatherwax: And what do they think? Against it, are they?

Oates: It is not as simple as that. It's not a black and white issue. There are so many shades of gray.

Granny Weatherwax: Nope.

Oates: Pardon?

Granny Weatherwax: There's no grays, only white that's got grubby. I'm surprised you don't know that. And sin, young man, is when you treat people as things. Including yourself. That's what sin is.

Oates: It's a lot more complicated than that--

Granny Weatherwax: No it ain't. When people say things are a lot more complicated than that, they means they're getting worried that they won't like the truth. People as things, that's where it starts.

Oates: Oh, I'm sure there are worse crimes.

Granny Weatherwax: But they starts with thinking about people as things...

(Pratchett, 1999, pp. 313, 314)

Paul Tillich was concerned our society ignored the meaning of humanity. As an influential Protestant theologian, he was alarmed at how many citizens were unable to see others, particularly those who belonged to different 'groups', as people, people with thoughts and feelings similar to their own. During the 1960's he wrote that

Treating others as things profoundly and negatively affects the state of one's soul: if one uses a person one abuses not only him but also one's self...If I use a person as a thing I myself lose my dignity as a person. (1967, p. 95)

It would seem our society has a habit of reducing people to things. It happens in business, industry and schools. Is it a symptom of progress, the gradual move toward the 'globalisation' of our communities? Freire says of our current predicament of globalisation,

In order to achieve humanisation, which presupposes the elimination of dehumanising oppression, it is absolutely necessary to surmount the limit situations in which men [and women] are reduced to things. (1970, p. 93)

Does the reduction of a person into a ‘thing’ begin in our schools? A small group of teachers at School-On-The-Hill made derogatory statements about Dan in the staff room, they ignored him in the playground if they could and rarely spoke kindly to him. The only words he heard from these teachers were reprimands. They did not treat him as a person; they treated him as a ‘thing’ and continually endeavoured to disassociate with him. If we resonate with the words of Granny Weatherwax, Tillich, and Freire, were those teachers the ones who were evil and sinful? Were they void of humility, failing to acknowledge the humanity of every child in their care? Were they in danger of losing their dignity?

In his desire for the democratic-minded teacher, Freire states his concern for the teacher who emotionally abuses her students. This violence, originating from the conditioning of her class and culture and revealed in her language, becomes an obstacle to the learning possibilities of the student. Freire’s hope for education is for it to become the key for social transformation. He believes education is not “simply meant to reproduce the dominant ideology” (2001, p. 110). Freire sees the “coherently democratic and competent teacher” as a teacher who is “full of life and hope for a better world, who has proven capacity for struggle and for respect for what is different” (2001, p. 110). She understands the need for authenticity in those special and important moments with her students and can modify situations through her consistent and committed presence. If she objectifies her students the situation is no longer authentic and the connection with them is broken.

Freire's fear for teaching is that we may become caught up in the rhetoric of teaching practices where we objectify our students for the sake of political policy and state curriculum demands. He openly admits that we might find it easier to do this and maybe even pleasurable but as he reminds us, we are working with students, not things.

I am dealing with people and not with things. And, because I am dealing with people, I cannot refuse my wholehearted and loving attention, even in personal matters, where I see that a student is in need of such attention. And giving this attention is essential, even though it would be easier and more pleasurable to indulge in theoretical and critical reflection on the subject of teaching and learning. (2001, p. 128)

van Manen reminds us of the words from Levinas where he suggests it may be part of being human to objectify the Other, "...we are cohabitants, fellow human beings who live in reciprocal relationships. In these relations, each of us cannot help but see others as objects of our personal perception and thinking." As Levinas surmises, this is not the only option open to us if we are willing to recognise their 'Otherness', the 'Other' being different from ourselves. "But this is not the only possibility. It also may happen that the other person bursts upon my world and makes a claim on me outside of my own intentional cognitive orientation" (van Manen, 2000, pp. 319, 320).

When that person bursts upon our world and we see their vulnerability we feel a response that is unintentional, unmediated by our thoughts and immediately go to help them. As when we see someone fall in the street, our response is to go and assist, we do not think about it, we just do it. As soon as we 'cognitise' it, we hesitate, which delays our response. What if the teachers who were afraid of Dan let him make a claim outside their own intentional cognitive orientation? If teachers had not objectified Dan or viewed him as a

‘thing’ to be avoided, accepting this claim from the Other, we could hope their relationships would have been different, positive. Could this ‘claim’ on ourselves from the other help smooth the harmonies and rhythms of our personal encounters? Is this what the teacher does when working with her ‘difficult’ students, does she allow them to make a claim on herself?

Damaging Tunes – The Violence of Teaching

Today, we might wonder what fears and motives drove some teachers towards such violent emotional abuse. Maybe it was the emotional blindness to their own fears and motives that prevented them from seeing the reality of Dan’s responses. Revisiting the thoughts of Palmer in chapter two, *Waxing Lyrical*, where he says we need to understand our own fears to understand the fears of our students could explain the actions of these teachers and why they could not see Dan as the ‘other’. It would seem they were unwilling to let him be, preferring to coerce and bully him into being the ‘same’, adhering strictly to school rules and conventions of the past.

Poet Rainer Maria Rilke has this to say about the rules and conventions of society in the early twentieth century:

Why, by god, does one spend one’s life according to conventions that constrict us like a tight costume and that prevent us from reaching the invisible soul, this dancer among the stars! (Rilke, 2005, p. 68)

Might we assume that life’s conventions continue to constrict us here in the twenty first century? For Jodie, it appeared some teachers failed to reach Dan’s “invisible soul”. She

found solace in the fact that the number of teachers who emotionally abused Dan were few amongst the large staff of over sixty. Many teachers supported Dan even though they were often frustrated and annoyed at his antics. They understood that some of the school's rules were petty and insignificant in the life of this severely traumatised student. Primary school suited Dan. Having one teacher most of the time allowed him to build close and meaningful relationships. It was difficult for him to share his melodies with teachers he did not know well and so, predictably, relief teachers were often reticent to take Jodie's class. She was concerned for Dan's future as she knew he would face some seemingly insurmountable challenges once he left the relative safety of primary school. van Manen notes a teacher's concern when two of her students were leaving primary school to move up to the next level, high school.

Every day I know what is going on in their lives. These are kids who thrive on personal contact. And now they are leaving I wonder: Who will take my place? Will there be some teacher in that large impersonal high school whom they can talk to? (2000, p. 326)

Jodie felt sadness and disappointment when, in grade seven, Dan was led away from the high school in handcuffs. He did not even survive his first year. It would appear there was not a teacher in that large impersonal high school to whom he could talk to. Dan spent much of his time wandering the neighbourhood and causing disturbances. The teachers from his primary school who were fearful of Dan said "What did you expect?" "We always knew he would turn out that way!" and "He was an evil child, he deserved to be suspended."

The teachers accused Dan of the verbal and emotional violence he displayed but what violence did they do to him? The language teachers used to describe him had the

potential to damage him further and he often heard what they said. Jodie recalls that Dan, in his more reflective moments, could clearly articulate how he felt about the way teachers treated him. He would say they didn't like him and they wanted him to be something he was not. Dan spoke of his angry feelings when confronted by teachers and how he could not "make the anger go away" and that "some people were just stupid". Dan couldn't be bothered talking to people he perceived as stupid. He often pointed out the unfairness of many situations he was placed in and the following soundscape of discontent and inequity is an example of a missed personal development opportunity, an experience Jodie felt he needed, desperately needed, more than anyone else. The principal developed goals for Dan that Jodie thought were impossible for him to achieve.

In the second year Dan was in Jodie's classroom she was acting as a senior staff member, referred to as an Advanced Skills Teacher (AST), for first term. Every Wednesday she had the day off her class. As a result of the school fire in the previous year many of the classes were relocated to City Centre Primary School along with one of the primary assistant principals. Her role was to spend the Wednesday morning providing pastoral care to the students housed at City Centre Primary. That required another teacher to take her class back at School-On-The-Hill. Dan didn't deal with change easily but it was the worst kind of scenario Jodie could possibly imagine. Her replacement was James, one of the Physical Education (PE) teachers. James disliked Dan and had not developed a positive relationship with him. James was a stocky, red headed man who told students what to do and expected immediate acquiescence, without question. Dan was a student who liked to ask why. James had only taught within the subject area of PE at this early stage of his teaching career so teaching other subjects would be a new experience. At School-On-The-Hill the senior staff supported the view that each teacher was a teacher of students not subjects and assumed James had the capacity to learn the content and use his teaching skills to communicate with Jodie's class. When they were planning together, James appeared not to be

interested in a collegial approach. As he and Jodie sat together working on the classroom program he would sit on the edge of his seat ready to make a hasty 'get away' when they had finished. James felt threatened by Jodie no matter how hard she tried to be professional, considerate and helpful. James did not like suggestions of what he could do with her class, and Jodie noted that he did not accept advice from his other teaching colleagues either.

As De Mello might say, James was responsible for his own reactions and feelings towards the advice they tried to give him.

And Bohm might say, James identified with his assumptions, making it almost impossible to break through his protective armour.

There was never a dialogue with James, it was always a discussion and he wanted to win. He used text books with Jodie's students most of the time, particularly with mathematics. The students shared their distress with Jodie, saying class was boring and how they did not feel they could speak up and ask to work with friends and use the mathematics games stored on the shelf.

Dan, with James as his teacher for the day, was forced into circumstances that were unsuited to Dan's learning style every Wednesday. Dan excelled in literacy but was terrified of failing in mathematics and needed a carefully planned and practical approach to the subject. To entice Dan to engage in mathematics required skill, patience and a lot of wheeling and dealing from the teacher! For mathematics on Wednesdays James copied out sheets for the class to complete and Dan, along with a few other students, found the lack of games and group activities confronting. Eventually it came about that every Wednesday after lunch when Jodie returned to School-On-The-Hill, the principal would ask her to find Dan as he was no longer in the classroom. Usually she found him somewhere in the playground. They would sit together and spend most of the

afternoon talking about why he should not run away. Dan would say James didn't like him, James was stupid, James picked on him. Dan wanted her back in his classroom.

To try and 'fix' the situation the principal decided a plan of action. As the class were going on a school trip to Maria Island for a week at the end of March, Dan was told if he could get along with James on those Wednesdays Jodie was absent he could go on the trip. It was an impossible task for Dan: James was not asked to change, as Dan was expected to, and Dan could sense the injustice. He didn't go to Maria Island and his mother was very angry. After that Jodie's relationship with his mother was never the same, although his mother knew the principal had made the decision, a decision he based on the care of other students. His mother thought Jodie should have been able to change the principal's mind. The relationship between Dan and Jodie survived, but he never quite trusted her to the same degree again.

It was a difficult first term for Dan, not just because Jodie was away from the class once a week but also because Kale was no longer in his class. Kale had been so traumatised by the school fire at the end of the previous year he was barely able to participate in a classroom environment. He now belonged to a new class and attended for only short periods of time. Dan and Kale still caught up in the playground when they could but were no longer able to work with each other on classroom activities. The following year, in grade six, Dan was placed with a teacher who valued him as an individual. He quickly settled into a reasonable year.

Kale, on the other hand, was removed further away from the classroom environment. Kale became a recluse in the school system, rarely leaving that small room next to the principal. In the second half of that year, Jodie became the 'inclusion support person' for the whole school. That meant she had to take care of Kale some lunch times while his carer had a break. Kale was over six feet tall by then and very strong. He escaped from her one day and raced into the staff room across the

hall and took a relief (replacement) teacher's lunch before anyone could stop him. The inclusion support team decided they needed to revise his care from then on as he was becoming physically stronger every day. These days, at twenty-two years old, he lives with his original carer twenty-four hours a day, rarely visiting his parents who live in another part of the state. There were some teachers in the school who thought Kale should not have been in a mainstream school. His teachers disagreed; it was more a system problem that created the difficulties in supporting Kale rather than whether he should have been included in mainstream education. The school did not have the facilities in place required to take care of a child with the degree of disability Kale had. These were early days for the Department's policy on inclusive education for all, an attempt at creating new opportunities to integrate high-needs students seamlessly into mainstream classrooms. If Kale's parents had not misled the school in the first instance they may have been able to ensure what they needed to support Kale was in place. The system, in 1997, demanded schools must have what is required to support the student in place before the student arrives. There was a belief that if the student is there before the necessary preparations are completed the student and their carers did not require them.

The relationships that occurred over the three years Kale was in this school made the inclusion of a student with Autism an invaluable learning opportunity. The experience helped students, teachers and carers grow in their understanding of a disability and to be fearless of a person who is seen to be different. For Kale, the time in a mainstream school gave him the opportunity to engage with many different people, situations and activities. We would like to hope Kale's experiences were positive and that he recalls some of his time at the school. Jodie certainly approached his arrival in her class as a new learning experience. Kale taught her about Autism, something she knew little about at the time, and something about patience, resilience and compassion.

The principal had selected Jodie specifically to teach Dan and Kale. He believed her teaching practice suited the needs of these particular students. As we consider the reasons he chose her, rather than one of the other three teachers available, we might wonder how her teaching practice differs or is more suited to students with high needs. Jodie had observed some teachers who cling to an old paradigm where the child must “Do as I say not as I do,” and “Respect their elders.” She believed this would not have suited either Dan or Kale. One teacher, who was the daughter of a retired and well respected ‘old school’ teacher, mimicked some of her mother’s treatment of ‘naughty children’. She failed to connect with her anxious and angry student, she communicated her need to control and, as a result her student ran away. Was her mother’s ‘behavioural methodology’ helpful for this individual child?

...one can certainly say that good parents as much as bad parents, and good schools as much as bad schools, are in the wrong with regard to the child. They all fundamentally misrecognise the child by starting from the false premise of the adult who feels superior toward the child. They ought to recognise instead that the greatest individuals have always sought at specific moments to become and equal to and someone worthy of the child. (Rilke, 2005, p.70)

van Manen, as he discusses teaching as a virtue, explores teacher actions and what may or may not be helpful in different circumstances with individual students.

Which techniques and what evaluation approaches are pedagogically more appropriate in particular circumstances? What type of experience is good for children here? And what material is less good for them? Should this difficult subject matter be taught? Should it be made easier? How easy? What kind of difficulty is good for this student? How much

pressure is too much? What kind of discipline is right in this situation? And what expectations may be inappropriate? (1994, p. 147)

During Jodie's early days of teaching she struggled with her own heart, wondering how she should be teaching. What was the right thing to do? Should she teach according to the traditions perceived by our society? Standing in the middle of her own classes she would occasionally recall her time as a child, where some of her teachers did not believe in mutual respect between teachers and students. As she compared them with teachers she remembers with fondness, the teachers who practised mutual respect, she began to understand her own discomfort in respect to certain practices she was expected to adopt from other 'wiser' teachers. By the time Jodie reached School-On-The-Hill in 1995 she felt she knew how she wanted to *be* with her students, not a copy of another teacher's practice, but bringing her own self and heart to her teaching practice.

Todd shares with us the difficulties of becoming a teacher and the possible violence we impose on our students when we are 'acting' as teachers. In her example, Todd exposes a pre-service teacher's pain, where a student is denied a basic human need, such as going to the toilet, by the host teacher. In this example the school tradition required students to stand still for the entire playing of the national anthem no matter the needs of any particular student. The pre-service teacher was in crisis, splitting the role of teacher between "an institutional figure"...and a "compassionate person" (Todd, 2001a, p. 434). How does she resolve this crisis in sight of her host teacher who is her mentor, the one privileged to guide future teachers? "Learning to be a teacher...is akin to learning to act like a teacher," and sometimes an act requires learning that places "certain (undesirable) demands on who she is" (2001a, p. 435). Some of these undesirable teacher personality traits, or 'acting' for the sake of certain demands, could take us further away from the

values and beliefs embedded within our being. If this is true then we are not only violent to the other, we are also violent ourselves.

Palmer says we cannot reduce teaching to technique, something we often provide for our pre-service teachers, the 'training manual' on how to be a teacher. He believes teaching is about "identity and integrity...evoking authentic selfhood...rejoining soul with role" (Palmer, 2008). If we become 'institutional figures' or 'act' as teachers we cannot hold on to our identity and integrity.

van Manen says that our lives should be a part of the way we teach and not about a separate personality that could be brought into the classroom, an 'act'.

Each teacher expresses in his or her active relations with children the qualities that make up the ethical sphere of teaching as professional practice. As in the...acceptance of the pedagogical virtues as one's own, that is to say as the true normative motives of one's personal acting. If certain qualities do not belong to ourselves then they do not belong to the 'durable properties of our character,' then we do not live in and through these virtues, and vice versa they do not live in us, do not touch us, and do not constitute the soundboard of our emotional life. (1994, p. 153)

When we are 'acting' as teachers and not from the "true normative motives of one's personal acting", we could assume that we are not teaching from our heart. Some actors present as real, authentic people that are not themselves but they do this for a short time, until they move on to play another character. The teacher could come into the classroom and act for a short time then return to her 'real' life when she leaves the school each day. There are many teachers who do this but somehow, maybe intuitively, students are able to

identify this falseness or difference in personality. The actor's success in each role is dependent on how well the character development has been written into the script as well as their ability to act. Could it be the 'role' of teacher is seen as such an artificial persona that no matter how good the teacher 'acts' the actual teacher 'character' written for the part falls short of an authentic personality? Students immediately recognise a teacher who is pretending, who is unsympathetic to their needs and who does not fully bring herself totally into the presence of her students. Our actions become non-actions because we do not live through our personally embodied virtues. Our heart and soul are not present in what we are doing. They remain out of reach for our students.

If Jodie could have listened closely to the clues, what she felt was the right thing for her to do in a given situation, she might have spent less time wondering about her authenticity as a teacher. She may have recognised the value of her tacit or somatic awareness earlier in her teaching career and understood the contribution her own personal life makes in the lives of the students she teaches.

If we are to believe James or Gordon were authentic with their students, bringing their own identity to the classroom, why were they unable to establish effective and positive relationships with some students, students like Dan? Why might we perceive their actions as emotionally violent? Maybe if we look to Cain's renewed qualities we might find clues to the difficulties James and Gordon experienced. Jodie observed that they were both concerned with how other teachers viewed their teaching practice. Could we then say their performance in the classroom soundscape would seem to be most often connected to their egos? Cain suggests we separate ourselves from our egos when we teach as stated in his *Ten Qualities of the Renewed Teacher* scribed earlier in this thesis.

Would this have made a difference in the relationships between Dan and his emotionally violent teachers if they were not teaching from their egos and chose instead to teach from their hearts?

Soulful Teaching – The Perceptive Heart

Does a certain identity or personality suit a teaching career more than another?

van Manen discusses the Dutch term that describes people who have the talent of perceptiveness. The term *mensenkennis*, although difficult to translate into English, “literally means people knowledge, that is, to have a perceptive understanding of people” (1994, p. 136). For van Manen famous writers come to mind as he considers people who may possess this special knowledge, such as the great author Dostoevski “because they probe the human soul so deeply and with so much understanding”, and “even,” he says, “a thoughtful friend, some wise aunt, or an old grandmother may be respected as a person with *mensenkennis*” (1994, p. 136). Some teachers from our time as students may have seemed to

...possess more of this sensitive insight into human nature than others...a kind of wisdom about how people are and how they tend to act or react in specific situations – the significance of people’s frailties, strengths, difficulties, inclinations and life circumstances. (1994, p. 137)

Following van Manen, *mensenkennis* might be considered desirable in many professions, including teaching, but we may also acknowledge it is not always found.

If we are to recall our best or favourite teachers, could we attribute this *mensenkennis* to their identity? At School-On-The-Hill Primary could we say some of the teachers possessed something of this *mensenkennis* and that is what kept Dan interested in school for long periods of time?

The most difficult times for Dan at school were his one term with Gordon and the Wednesday's with James in the following year. That first term with Gordon eventuated in Dan attending school part-time by Easter and not at all by the end of the term. Dan's time with James also failed to encourage him to stay in class. Both Gordon and James had problems with students and parents alike and were observed to be dominating in their relationships with students. Could we say neither understood the significance of people's frailties, strengths, difficulties, inclinations and life circumstances? As they were in different stages of their teaching career it also seemed that being a younger or an older more experienced teacher did not have any significant difference on their approach to teaching disengaged students.

If we consider the home soundscape of each student we meet we might find that some students come from abusive backgrounds, they may have been treated disrespectfully all their short lives. To come to school and still be treated as if they are not worthwhile human beings with needs and feelings that should be attended to must be devastating. As a result, when students from these backgrounds are placed in classes where teachers are the archetypes of 'masters' and 'mistresses' they become defensive and contrary. Gordon and James continued the verbal abuse Dan received daily in his home life and Dan decided he had had enough.

We may see amongst the qualities of the teachers with whom Dan connected positively the kind of wisdom van Manen speaks of, the wisdom we might observe lacking in Gordon and James. Each one of his responsive teachers was open to what interested Dan and truly wanted to understand him as a person. As for Jodie she thought the more she understood about Dan's life, past and present, the more meaningful learning opportunities she would be able to offer. She came to appreciate that "A teacher who does not understand the inner life of a child does not know who it is that he or she is teaching" (van Manen, 1994, p. 138).

Cloned Melodies – Monotonous Music

To understand this inner life of our students might we be required to view them as individuals? This may seem to be an impossible task. Do we choose an easier option where we expect all students to adhere to a particular way of being? Do we choose teaching *en masse* because that is the way we have always done it, the way we have always 'educated' our students?

...schools continue only what the parents had already begun. It is a systematic battle against the child's personality. It despises the individual, his wishes and desires, and it considers its task to push this individual down to the level of the masses. One need only read the life-stories of all great individuals; they became great always *in spite of* school and not because of it. (Rilke, 2005, p. 72)

If we are truly teaching students from our hearts would we treat our students as things or objects, would we attempt to reduce them to the same as everyone else? What is the 'right' and 'ethical' way to interact with our students?

Todd explores the notion of ethical behaviour through Levinas' idea of 'Otherness'. She says, "This view of how we relate across difference disrupts any comfort we may have in the hope that our knowledge *about* Others will point the way to ethical action" (2001b, p. 60). Jodie thought she had connected with Dan because she understood to some extent his past life and experiences. But reading the words of Todd and her interpretation of Levinas we might ask this question, "Do we really have to 'know' our students well, understand their lives, their loves, their fears, to inspire them to learn and to act ethically in our interactions with them?"

Levinas proffers that it is susceptibility, rather than knowledge, which is key to ethical interaction and he identifies that susceptibility as 'pre-originary'...His project is concerned, therefore, with the *traces* of susceptibility which are to be found in the qualities of relationships we have to other people and in our capacity for response to them. (Todd, 2001b, pp. 69, 70)

Though teachers had some knowledge of Dan's background and his current circumstances it did not make any difference to their attitude towards him, unless they were susceptible to his needs. We might say that Dan's most effective teachers were susceptible to his needs. Dan may compel them to be touched by his life experiences and in turn felt a sense of compassion toward Dan's situation. They accepted Dan as he was, attempted to understand his inner life, and did not try to manipulate him into being the persona of the 'perfect child'.

van Manen suggests,

We cannot simply learn these pedagogical sensibilities and sensitivities as ‘knowledge’ applied to our external behaviour. The teacher who only knows intellectually or cognitively that he or she must be patient and understand the child’s experience, but who is not really patient and interested in the child’s subjectively is not really affected by the child’s difficulties. In contrast, the teacher who feels ‘addressed’ by children’s situations and difficulties discovers in this experience his or her pedagogical nature and the need to be patient and understand the child’s experience. (1994, p. 157)

Unless we *want* to be patient, we are not truly going to be patient.

As we read the philosophies of Levinas we might begin to comprehend why other teachers knew his background but still could not show empathy towards him. Levinas says it is not even just about us wanting to be patient, it is about being with the Other and not imposing *our* wants upon them.

The idea of transcendence signifies a specifically transcendent relation to the concrete Other. Located in the immediacy of the relation between Self and Other, transcendence is about being fully open to the other in a way that one’s ego (one’s conscious ego) is not at stake in the relation. (Todd, 2001b, p. 70)

We might assume that James and Gordon would not have been unable to emulate what Levinas or van Manen suggests. It appeared that control was extremely important in order to be seen as a ‘successful’ teacher. Were both teachers striking out at Dan because of their own fears? Were they unwilling to be susceptible or ‘open to the Other’? Did they think these traits were a sign of weakness in their teaching? Could James and Gordon establish a genuine relationship with any of their students if they were not willing to show their susceptibility and vulnerability?

People who act from ego try to control other people because they are afraid of the power they sense within them. This need to control is seen daily among powerless teachers: “I know this stuff. You don’t. Shut up and write down what I say.” Renewed teachers have no need to control by coercion. They do not suffer from the fear that drives the ego-centered. (Cain, 2001, p. 705)

Within the pages of Martin Heidegger’s paper, *Basic Writings*, he says that “if the relationship between the teacher and the learner is genuine there is never a place for the authority of the know-it-all or the authoritative sway of the official” (1977, p. 356).

What if James and Gordon had taken the more fearful pathway of susceptibility, ignoring the historical idea of the teacher as ‘master’?

McCourt tells us about the advice given to him from the ‘older and wiser’ teachers. These teachers advised him to teach the curriculum, be the ‘master’ and teach within the accepted ‘en masse’ model. He poignantly articulated this was *not* what he wanted to do.

The advice was wasted. I learned through trial and error and paid the price for it. I had to find my own way of being a man and a teacher and that is what I struggled with for thirty years in and out of the classrooms of New York. (2005, p. 20)

McCourt showed courage and heart in his teaching soundscapes but not without his self-doubting and troubled mind threatening to overtake his belief about education. After deciding his class would read from recipe books in his English class, along with the students accompanying this reading with musical instruments and singing, McCourt becomes uncertain about his decision of not teaching as directed from the rest of the faculty. “On the A train to Brooklyn I feel uneasy over the direction this class is taking...How can all this be justified to the authorities who keep an eye on the

curriculum?” (2005, p. 209). He then concedes “Why not? What the hell. What are schools for anyway? I ask you, is it the task of the teacher to supply canon fodder for the military-industrial complex? Are we shaping packages for the corporate assembly line?” (2005, p. 211).

Another Brick in the Wall

When we grew up and went to school

There were certain teachers

Who would hurt the children in any way they could

By pouring their derision

Upon anything we did

Exposing every weakness

However carefully hidden by the kids

But in the town it was well known

When they got home at night

Their fat and psychopathic wives would thrash them

Within inches of their lives

We don't need no education

We don't need no thought control

No dark sarcasm in the classroom

Teacher, leave those kids alone

Hey, teacher, leave those kids alone

All in all, it's just another brick in the wall

All in all, you're just another brick in the wall (Waters, 2007)

The lyrics of Pink Floyd's song *Another Brick in the Wall* suggest the experience of many students, where teachers treat students as factory items. Teachers are the machines that mould and control students as factory products. Schools are the factory soundscape. A similar message is found in the concerns articulated by Senge earlier, where we are reminded how our education system still resides within the industrial age. If this is the case it would be easy to follow a 'recipe' handed down from teacher to teacher, following closely along with each step of the 'cooking' process. Isn't teaching a far more complex task than just following a recipe? Why do we keep our schools as factories and our students as an assembly line of products, turning the students and teachers virtuous natures aside?

Virtuous Sounds – Can We Hear Our Heart Songs?

Levinas says we may not think the same, have the same virtues as one another, however, we could meet with the Other, in this case the student or teacher, without seeing them as the same as myself or wanting to manipulate them to be like myself. In meeting with the Other, accepting their virtues as different from mine, we might struggle with thoughts that some virtues may not harmonise with our teaching soundscapes. How could Levinas' idea of meeting with the Other, accepting them as being different from me become a melody of teacher qualities or virtues common to us all?

Are our expectations of what all teachers should be for students set too high, thus judging others such as Gordon and James too harshly? When faced with as many as thirty students every day in a primary classroom or hundreds of students over a week in high school classrooms is it possible to honour and respect each and every individual student's Otherness?

van Manen's paper, *Moral language and pedagogical experience* refers to the work of Levinas in regard to our responsibility for others in our care, our students. van Manen delves into this dilemma we have as teachers, the dilemma of relating to everyone in our class. If we care for students, we worry about them, a response van Manen describes as "caring-worrying...a very human response to vulnerability in others" and what Levinas sees as "the moral ground of human existence" (van Manen, 2000, p. 319). van Manen recapitulates the words of Levinas saying our caring-worrying nature is pre-originary and if we can just 'be' for others we transcend our egos and naturally care for the Other.

...it is only in the direct and unmediated encounter with the Other that we can gain a glimpse of the meaning of the ethical impulse that he [Levinas] describes as the human responsiveness to the appeal of the Other who needs my care. (2000, p. 319)

We may attend to each student's need as required. Rarely do we need to worry about every child in our care every moment of the day. The most important part of teaching is to be aware and attentive to all our students. In this way we can attend to their needs when it arises.

In everyday encounters in the classroom soundscape "the call of the Other [each student] is contingent and particular. Every situation like that is always contingent. I can only be here and now...it is the singularity of this person, this child who addresses me in my singularity" (2000, p. 324). This requires the teacher to care for her students, which in itself can be overwhelming but surely a pre-requisite for becoming a teacher in the first place. Even though this caring can cause a person to worry and it is "sometimes painful and troubling...it is also necessary. Why? Because worrying keeps me in touch with the presence of this other" (2000, p. 325). van Manen calls upon Levinas to support his

argument for caring further. “Levinas says the presence of the Other touches me” (2000, p. 325). Could we say that Dan’s presence did not ‘touch’ Gordon and James, he did not speak to their hearts, and so their caring-worrying response as his teachers was not forthcoming?

In an early paper of van Manen’s he investigates quite a different point of view in the writings of Hermann Giesecke who believes we cannot expect too much from teachers as we will be biased about what is good for children, based on our “authoritarian presumptions”.

Giesecke argues that the institutional circumstances of professional educators are such that they can realistically only be expected to have an effect on children in very particular and limited ways...Giesecke proposes that the essential task is quite simply that of instruction in subject matter knowledge...Since educators are ill-equipped to know what is appropriate or good for children their task is reduced to the more technical domain of being helping professionals in neutrally perceived learning processes. (van Manen, 1994, p. 10)

The words of Giesecke seem to assume we are teaching objects, empty vessels to be filled with ‘subject matter knowledge’. We might be disappointed with Giesecke and his narrow view of the educator’s role in student learning. He provides too easy an option for some, as caring for our students is a time consuming and often heartbreaking role. What is even more disappointing, as van Manen points out, is that “ rather than setting the sight high, Giesecke orients to the lowest common denominator” (van Manen, 1994, p. 10). It appears Giesecke forgets we, as teachers, are working with human hearts and souls.

Human hearts and souls contain passions, aspirations and desires. Where does his view fit for the teacher connecting with her student's hearts and minds?

We continue to consider, "Is it possible to care for *every* student we teach?" It would be difficult not to be addressed by the needs of our students and many teachers would consider leaving the profession if they no longer felt responsibility and caring towards *all* their students. "It is because a teacher feels addressed by the 'faces' of particular students, about whom he or she worries, that the teacher can remain sensitive to the sometimes 'faceless' multitude of all the students for whom he or she is responsible" (van Manen, 2000, p. 326).

In many classes students with personal problems or disabilities require more caring than the others. This does not mean we ignore the others. Through the knowledge that some students require more caring than others *all* of the time and that some students need more caring than others *at particular* times it may be possible to ensure each and every student is cared for in their own way. This caring is at different levels, different times and different intensity for those contingent situations where we meet each student as a single personality. All students require our attention and our empathy. Jodie did not ignore the other students when Dan was in her class. She still worried about each and every one of them at different times and cared about how they were feeling and managing the class work.

With our caring-worrying natures as teachers we bring the question of what this caring actually entails. Can caring create imposition and violence within the relationships of our classroom? Are we honouring our students or are we inflicting our assumptions, virtues, values and beliefs on to them without thinking about their own? Sometimes when we care

for someone we think we know what is best for them and try to embed our own values and beliefs into their lives. Is this what our governments do for our society, our education systems for our teachers and our teachers for our students? Is this what we do as parents, adults of the community, for our children? Would 'true' caring-worrying place everyone into a group that conforms to one way of being?

Part Two: Society Soundscapes – Caring Melodies

Honouring the Melodies of Everyone

Dear Mr President

Dear Mr. President, Come take a walk with me.

Let's pretend we're just two people and

You're not better than me.

I'd like to ask you some questions if we can speak honestly.

What do you feel when you see all the homeless on the street?

Who do you pray for at night before you go to sleep?

What do you feel when you look in the mirror?

Are you proud?

How do you sleep while the rest of us cry?

How do you dream when a mother has no chance to say goodbye?

How do you walk with your head held high?

Can you even look me in the eye

And tell me why?

Dear Mr. President,

Were you a lonely boy?

Are you a lonely boy? Are you a lonely boy?

How can you say

No child is left behind?

We're not dumb and we're not blind.

They're all sitting in your cells

While you pave the road to hell.

What kind of father would take his own daughter's rights away?

And what kind of father might hate his own daughter if she were gay?

I can only imagine what the first lady has to say

You've come a long way from whiskey and cocaine.

How do you sleep while the rest of us cry?

How do you dream when a mother has no chance to say goodbye?

How do you walk with your head held high?

Can you even look me in the eye?

Let me tell you 'bout hard work

Minimum wage with a baby on the way

Let me tell you 'bout hard work

Rebuilding your house after the bombs took them away

Let me tell you 'bout hard work

Building a bed out of a cardboard box

Let me tell you 'bout hard work

Hard work, Hard work

You don't know nothing 'bout hard work

Hard work, Hard work

Oh

How do you sleep at night?

How do you walk with your head held high?

Dear Mr. President,

You'd never take a walk with me.

Would you? (Moore, 2008)

In reading the introduction of Darder's book, *Reinventing Paulo Freire*, her words appear to echo the meanings that emerge within the lyrics of *Dear Mr President*. Darder asks us to think about how often the dominant class base decides what is best for everyone and to consider if their decisions are the most 'caring' way to help members of society who do not conform or 'act' like other people because they come from 'difficult circumstances'. This dominant class base Darder speaks of are the writers of our education policies, the curriculum and the test standards within our education systems. These are the people who decide what is important for our students to learn. Class teachers have assisted in the writing of educational policy and curriculum but many have not experienced poverty, violence or neglect in the ways many of their students have. Do we really know what the students from these backgrounds need in educational curriculum?

Public educational policy regarding poor students - often made by people who themselves have never seen a hungry day in their lives - continues to perpetuate false portrayals of the actual conditions that are responsible for poverty in the first place. (Darder, 2002, p. 4)

The observations of leading speaker in the field of twenty-first century technologies Marc Prensky, reminds us of how we never invite students to help us write these policies, informing us of the nature of their worlds with which we may be unfamiliar. Yet we are writing educational policy for their worlds!

I give presentations to educators at every level, all around the world. All of the teachers are earnestly trying to adapt their educational system to the twenty-first century. During my talks, however, I typically look out at oceans of white hair. Never - I can't even say rarely - is a kid in sight or invited to the party.

Is it a measure of the malaise of our educational system that these old folk - smart and experienced as they may be - think they can, by themselves and without the input of the people they're trying to teach, design the future of education? (Prensky, 2008)

How are these people with the 'oceans of white hair' Prensky speaks of qualified to know what is best for a future that they will possibly not even see? How are they qualified to know about the lives of students that are so remote from their own experiences of life?

Darder searches for reasons as to why our education system fails to support certain groups of our communities, the difficult student, the illiterate student, the poverty stricken student. Our governments continually develop and fund new programs assisting these perceived 'less fortunate' areas of our society. Darder tells us this is not the way to solve our current problems, the way forward is not by pouring money into new programs to create more equitable structures. Quoting the words of Stanley Aronowitz, Darder highlights the way society labels particular groups, leading us to thoughtful contemplation of where our problems may lie,

...social commentators psychologise, pathologise, or demonise the poor, then systematically categorise them as criminals, drug addicts, homeless people, juvenile delinquents, or the chronically unemployed. (2002, p. 4)

This may strike a chord within our hearts. Dan was demonised from the moment he first started school. Some teachers, over seven years, categorised Dan as a juvenile delinquent and kept this view of him alive by continually labelling him as bad or evil. He was not given the opportunity to change and grow. Dan was unable to shake off this disturbing persona because the school community insisted he was unable to become what we deemed well behaved children to be. He came from a home situation that helped to perpetuate his behaviour. We might like to consider that when society labels certain groups of people, it entraps them into a way of being that is difficult to escape

De Mello speaks of labelling and how damaging it can be. As a Jesuit Priest you would think that he valued the church and its teachings. His strong spiritual beliefs acknowledge the existence of Jesus and a higher power that we might call God, but on the other hand he reproaches the church for its dogma, its religious rhetoric, and its labelling of people, which ultimately excludes some members of society from its parish. De Mello reveals the absurdity of labelling people. To demonstrate this absurdity he tells a delightful story about a man who wishes to have his dog baptised in the Catholic Church. When he approaches the priest, the priest says he does not baptise dogs because they do not belong to the Kingdom of God. When the man says he will take his dog to the church of another denomination down the road the priest quickly retracts his previous words and says, “You didn’t tell me your dog was a Catholic, come in, I will gladly baptise him.” (De Mello, 1990, p. 49)

De Mello says labelling is concept building, and concepts are universal. If we talk about leaves, for example, we know what a leaf is but we do not know anything about a particular leaf. De Mello goes on to say concepts can be very useful when talking about scientific studies but not so useful when we are describing an individual person. When we

label, or categorise, to use Aronowitz's expression, a person to a particular group, such as Australian, poor, or disabled we turn them into a concept.

The concept always misses or omits something extremely important, something precious that is only found in reality...the moment you put things into concept, they stop flowing; they become static, they become dead...Concepts are always frozen, reality flows. Finally, if we are to believe the mystics...reality is whole and concepts fragment reality. (De Mello, 1990, pp. 121, 122)

If what De Mello says is true for us, when we label our students we stop seeing them as individuals and caring for their individual needs. The label could be considered good or bad, such as being 'bright', 'advanced', 'low ability' or 'Autistic' but it is still collecting our students together as a group overlooking their individuality. Their *being* becomes static, frozen and dead. We miss the specialness, the preciousness of their child-like qualities, qualities that we as adults lose all too soon.

How do we prepare education for students that we do not know and only understand from the labels they fit within, labels they are given by ourselves and others. How do we teach students who appear to us as only fragments of a concept of reality?

Ideas [concepts] actually fragment the vision, the intuition, or experience of reality as a whole. Words cannot give you reality. They only point, they only indicate. You use them as pointers to get to reality. But once you get there, your concepts are useless. (1990, p. 123)

It would seem that governments, schools and society stop at the notion of concept and forget, as De Mello suggests, that it is merely a pointer to get to the actual reality of the

situations for people who are poor, disabled and of a different race. De Mello believes we come to reality by observing, watching and being constantly aware. As educators do we observe and watch closely enough? Are we aware of the reality for each and every student within our care? If Jodie only saw Kale as the label 'Autistic' she would never have seen the gifts he brought to her class as an individual. As we label our students we enclose them in a group that may not allow them to move beyond the perceived limitations of that group. "Oh, he has Autism, he can't read", such an observation could press low expectations upon a student from teachers, and even low expectations of themselves. If we underestimate the ability of any student in our care we take away their opportunity to grow and reach their full potential as a learner.

In the broader picture, which appears to affect the smaller lives of individuals such as our students, we seem to sit with concepts and labelling rather than looking deeper into the lives of individuals. This could result in us contributing to a never-ending cycle of poverty, crime and unemployment. Within the sometimes chaotic soundscape of teaching we could be contributing to a student's never-ending cycle of failure, low expectation and violent lives. This 'cycle' can often continue for families over many generations.

In society generally and the 'mini' societies of schools, we see governments, school boards and teachers attempt to 'fix' the perceived social injustices and economic inequities that exist in our world by providing special programs and the funds to support these programs. These specially devised programs are often projected as 'caring' for the recipients, which in the case of schools would be the students who have challenging behaviours, lower academic ability and identified disabilities. Could it be the 'care' we think we are providing that sustains these injustices and inequities, a 'we can fix it' mentality sanctioned by

governments around the world? Darder refers to the dangers of ‘caring’, in her chapter entitled *The Age of Globalisation and Difference*. She describes

...the history of the US health, education, and welfare systems, where the dominant class-based, ethnocentric response to cultural differences and working-class sensibilities...often reinforced the loss of cultural identity...This is well illustrated by the experiences of Native American children who were taken from their families in the reservation and placed in boarding schools and foster homes, had their hair cut, and their language and cultural rituals prohibited by the interventions of well-meaning social service agencies - all done, of course, for the good of the children. (2002, p. 5)

This echoes the plight for our Stolen Generation here in Australia, where missionaries took aboriginal babies away from their mothers believing they could give them a better life. The *Poisonwood Bible* written by Barbara Kingsolver movingly depicts the consequences of well-meaning social service agencies and religious groups engaged with educating what they refer to as ‘primitive’ communities. Unfortunately, in this story of a village in the Conga, the missionaries idea of ‘caring’ was to change the villagers into Christians, which ultimately destroyed the community they were trying to help. These supposedly helpful people genuinely cared about others and believed they were doing the right thing. It was ‘God’s request’ and, as Darder says, “for the good of the children.” The Christians were doing what they believed to be ‘God’s work’ and it engendered actions within the local tribe that had never been present before. The villagers were oblivious to notions of indecency, theft and murder until these good Samaritans arrived.

De Mello speaks vehemently about the work of ‘well meaning’ missionaries who have destroyed the innocence of societies.

American missionaries who went to the South Sea Island with their wives were horrified to see women coming bare-breasted to church. The wives insisted that the women should be more decently dressed. So the missionaries gave them shirts to wear. The following Sunday the women came wearing their shirts but with two big holes cut out for comfort, ventilation. They were right; the missionaries were wrong. (1990, p. 181)

Listening to the Soul Music of Others

From the 'caring' soundscapes of the Native Americans, the village in the Conga and the South Sea Islanders we may feel Levinas' words continue to push upon us the urgency of our meeting with the Other, co-existing with them and leaving their otherness intact. In our state of confusion and tension for our 'caring' natures we might wonder how we can bring ourselves to stand face-to-face with our students yet still provide a safe and nurturing learning environment. It is a fragile balance between teaching them to be safe, helping them to understand their world, yet to not destroy their innocence or that pre-originary state of being. For Dan, he had lost his innocence before he came to school, his world of what is good had been turned upside down and he found it difficult to understand the perceived wrongness of some of his actions.

Musical Perfection? - Soul-less Structures

Do our educational practices and structured curriculum provide us with learning environments that have our students' best interests at heart and allow us to 'care' for our students?

It would seem that current practices and structures restrict the ‘listening’ within our teaching soundscapes. Perhaps teachers need to understand more substantially, today, the educational traditions that insist on a structured curriculum. Who designs these structures? Whose privilege is it to do this? The governments mentioned previously in this chapter? The people in the ‘oceans of white hair’ Prensky speaks of? Without structure, might we struggle in a world unknown, directionless and without purpose? Is it a certainty of structure that makes it safe to teach, protects us from harm, preserves our energy and at the same time risks the loss of our soul and humanity?

From our own teaching experiences the curriculum structure may have helped us plan for our students enabling us to provide opportunities for them to learn and grow. Many writers of curriculum would be aware how open to interpretation a curriculum document can be. Our concerns might be that having a structured curriculum could sometimes obscure the purpose of education. While we are working through this curriculum and helping students to achieve at the national benchmarks for testing are we violating our students’ individuality, their development of self, by not respecting the nature of their world? Many of us might believe we know what students require for their learning from our own experiences of education and what has been written about education in previous centuries.

There is a plethora of research on the World Wide Web in the form of papers, sound files and video saying that we do not know or provide what our students require for learning in the twenty-first century. Research in neurosciences tell us that students do not learn in the same way as we did, and that their brains are ‘wired’ differently to how we were ‘wired’ when we were children. Ian Jukes, who writes about twenty-first century technologies and education, says “Children today are fundamentally different from previous generations in

the way they think, in the way they access, absorb, interpret, process and use information and above all, in the way they view, interact and communicate in and with the modern world” (2008, p. 3). This latest phenomenon is called ‘the new digital landscape’. Many schools are struggling to keep up with this new digital age as it does not fit well with past educational paradigms. Our teaching practices and curriculum structures are not in harmony and rhythm with the soundscapes of our students. It would appear that our curriculum writers and governments take little notice of the research that comes from the lived experience of our students, preferring to hold tightly to the education systems of a bygone era.

We may tend to base our assessment of the needs of others upon our own needs, derived from our traditions, the cultural beliefs and values of our community or family or society, the prejudices we unconsciously adopt or the biases we unreflectively enact. But for Levinas, this would be to deny the difference of each of us, one from the Other. “He is not a mere object to be subsumed under one of my categories and given a place in my world” (1969, p. 13).

If we think of the sinfulness Granny Weatherwax recognises when we see people as things, the labelling De Mello says is a concept and not reality and the thoughts Aronowitz attributes to the term ‘categorisation’, maybe we can begin to see the value in looking at the Other as different from myself, not a thing, not a concept, nor a category.

Benjamin Hutchens writes an interpretation of the thoughts of Levinas in his book, *Levinas: A Guide for the Perplexed*. He describes Levinas’s notion of the Other being a mirror image of ourselves as the way of the Western world, the world’s need for ‘totality’ as opposed to ‘infinity’.

...there is a tremendous tension between totality and infinity. 'Totality' is the term used to describe the Western rationality's enormous project to attain a total synthesis of knowledge under rational themes, to 'reduce the Other to the same' and that 'Infinity' is the multifaceted term used to suggest the resistance that things pose to totalisation by virtue of their being more than what they simply are. There is an irresolvable conflict here: totality is always threatening to reduce the Other to the same, and infinite is always the other's resistance to this threat. (Hutchens, 2004, p. 57)

Education may be suffering from this tension. A video that accompanies Pink Floyd's song *Another Brick in the Wall* depicts students as clones in a factory and all are pushed through the machinery one after another. The words of the song "all in all, we are just another brick in the wall" echoes through the scenes of the video: we are all just the same. This might be just a parody of the notion of 'totality'. If Pink Floyd's song was meant to comment on our schools and education, there lies an accusation that schools and education aim for synthesis, totality and reduction of many to one. This song was recorded in 1979 and still, here in our twenty-first century, we are continuing to hold on to the factory model of education.

Levinas argues that philosophical theory seeks to "totalise all things, to have a total synthesis of existence, including the individual self, leaving us 'side-by-side' not 'face-to-face'" (Hutchens, 2004, pp. 36). This 'totality' concerns Levinas because it divests individual persons of their very individuality and individuals are "subordinated and neutralised by the universals of metaphysical reductionism and rationality" (2004, p. 38). As a result of 'totality', an individual can become violent to the self and to the situation he or she is facing. As Levinas explains

Violence is to be found in any action in which one acts as if one were alone to act: as if the rest of the universe were there only to receive action. Violence is consequently also any action which we endure without at every point collaborating in it. (Hutchens, 2004, p. 38)

Floyd's *Another Brick in the Wall* video ends in violence and destruction with students destroying their school. Are they demonstrating their frustrations, objecting to the totalisation of humanity leaving them side by side and never face to face?

Heart and Soul Music – Emotionally Intelligent

As we consider the words from Levinas we may begin to ponder the nature of people in our current society. If we do not meet face-to-face are we then more likely to be violent towards the other, encouraging manipulation and power over the other to make them more like ourselves, no longer caring for them? Hutchens cites Levinas as saying, "Human beings have been encouraged by philosophy to think of themselves as being detached from reality and empowered over it" (2004, p. 38). As we see in chapter one of this thesis Levinas's writing acknowledges responsibility in the sense of self and Other, self as responsible for the Other. Sokolowski believes it is unfortunate philosophy often closes the mind off from the both the body and the world in our time. He goes on to explain "one of phenomenology's greatest contributions is to have broken out of the egocentric predicament" (2008, p. 12).

Detachment or disconnectedness could be interpreted in a number of ways and maybe it is the misinterpretation of the term that has created the many problems in our current society. Sometimes we would disconnect ourselves from situations to feel safe or to keep

ourselves from becoming overwhelmed. In the everyday classroom many teachers might empathise with the troubled students in their classroom, as is part of their carrying-worrying nature, but they would have to maintain a certain amount of disconnection otherwise they could be embroiled in their students emotions and turmoils. This is where empathy becomes an essential part of our virtuous nature. Empathy helps us to be there for our students, yet lets us disconnect from their distress so we do not become ineffective. Disconnection might be about staying ‘in touch’ with another person, meeting them face-to-face but not identifying their feelings as our own. For others, this detachment may mean to detach from our community, where we do not stay ‘in touch’ and where we become cold and distant to the other. The latter explanation of detachment is the one which Levinas, Palmer and Bohm speak of with concern. How do we learn to understand our emotional intelligence, be in touch with our empathic natures, hear the voices of our heart and soul, avoiding the cold and detached life?

Some educational circles, like those that occur in online worlds, academic forums and school staff meetings, discuss intellectual intelligence but how often do we explore the nature of our emotional intelligence?

Daniel Goleman argues that our view of human intelligence is far too narrow and that our emotions are an essential part of our thought and decision making processes. His number one bestseller *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*, details why it is important to include emotional intelligence as an integral part of the learning program. He believes “emotional literacy goes hand in hand with education for character, for moral development, and for citizenship” and he voices his concern for those schools that do not embrace emotional literacy as part of the curriculum, “by leaving the emotional lessons children learn to chance, we risk largely wasting the window of opportunity presented by

the slow maturation of the brain to help children to cultivate a healthy emotional repertoire” (Goleman, 1996, p. 286).

Barrie Bennett and Carol Rolheiser, co-authors of *Cooperative Learning: Where Heart Meets Mind* and *Beyond Monet: The Artful Science of Instructional Integration* incorporate emotional intelligence into their investigations of the ‘artful science of teaching’. They conclude that emotional intelligence can have both useful and pathological consequences.

Fear is useful, but not when it turns into anxiety; pleasure encourages, unless it turns to addiction; love builds relationships, unless it turns into obsession; annoyance is a message—when not effectively dealt with it can turn to anger and hatred. (2001, p. 361)

With our students, it is important to help them understand their emotional intelligence and what it can tell them about situations they face. As we become aware of our emotions, when “we are cerebrally aware of them, we can decide to hit or not to hit.” Bennett and Rolheiser believe that “understanding emotions in order to increase our skills in interpreting and acting on them is wise” and that the “issue of emotional intelligence is important and teachers are in a position to nurture its development” (2001, pp. 361, 362). Jodie questions her teaching of Dan, wondering if she offered opportunities for him to explore his emotional intelligence, helping him to understand the nature of his responses and reactions to the ‘others’ in his life. Did she leave his emotional learning to chance?

Palmer speaks of the ‘new professional’ where basic skills of a job are not enough anymore. We need to be in touch with our emotional intelligence and begin soul work and inner journeying to be effective in our relationships with others. Palmer believes there

are two aspects of our culture that prevent us from embracing our emotional intelligences more fully.

Two streams in our culture contribute to our inattention. One is secularism, which regards the human soul as a social construct with no created core; the other is moralism, which regards all concern for self as 'selfish'...they both take us to the same place: a denial of true self. If we accept their distortions of reality, the journey towards an undivided life becomes a fool's errand. (2004, p. 35)

Our modern day society, a society that appears to be moving closer towards what Levinas refers to as 'totality', discourages us from listening to our hearts and entering into what Palmer calls 'soul work'. Levinas argues that because philosophy supports the notion of 'totality' it strengthens this detachment from reality or the living of a divided life.

Hutchens notes that Levinas believes this detachment creates power play situations in our world. "Instead of being beings different from one another, we are lumped together outside a reality as empowered beings. And, of course, those who are more powerful as a result of this violence done to them will utilise this power violently against those who are less powerful" (2004, p. 39).

What are some of the implications on our teaching if we maintain this detachment from reality, this living of a divided life? What influences our view and encourages us to disconnect from others, shedding our caring-worrying natures, particularly in our classrooms? Is it the need to conform to what 'western society' requires, especially with recent pressure to conform to standards of test results and productivity?

Connecting Tunes - Mutual Respect

Palmer speaks of the global forces and political thrust that drives our education systems. He voices his frustrations of policies written by politicians who rarely know anything about the business of teaching, pushing students through templates of standardised testing and hoping for a quick fix that will give points to their political party in the next election. He refers to research by the University of Chicago conducted in the early 1990's that studied what makes a school successful. They found it was not through governance, curriculum change, technique or more money. There was only one factor that created meaningful change and that was relational trust. Trust between teacher and teacher, teacher and administration, teacher and parent, teacher and student. Palmer stated in a radio interview with Australian ABC radio that the *No Child Left Behind Policy* in the United States had not worked because it undermined relational trust, it supported competitiveness, imposed standards, broke the hearts of teachers and had little to do with the lives of teachers and students (Toms, 2008).

Ministers for Education do what they think the community expects of them when taking care of their educational portfolio. If they do not they will be voted out, so as politicians, they face an immense dilemma: what is in their hearts might not necessarily be in their policies. Gadamer suggests that a person in such a position could be beset with this particular dilemma: "A bureaucrat, in spite of his personal insight, may be forced by rules under which he operates to make a decision he knows to be against humanity and good sense" (as cited in Taylor, 1991, p. 7).

With the force of the greater community driving politicians in what they do, how can we change our system to better support our students? Our current federal government talks

of education in terms of productivity. This is a concept that concerns educators such as Senge. Once again we are faced with this 'lumped together' notion without thought for the individual needs and situations. Is this the continuation of violent educational soundscapes?

Despite the productivity our government encourages we are still teachers of students not subjects or objects and when we walk into our classrooms every day we are mindful of our ethical actions and how we should embrace our relationships with students. This brings us back to our question of what qualities we need to have as teachers to enter into these ethical relationships.

Todd discusses the ethical relationship teachers have with their students. She says that "shifting social interactions" are more about implied ethics where the "uncertainty compels educators to develop thoughtful approaches to the Other, rather than carry out a set of pre-determined behaviours that tell teachers 'this is what you should do' " (2001a, p. 445). It would seem the 'recipe' approach would not be in favour here! How can we have a set of pre-determined behaviours of what we should do? Even if we respond to our students through caring interactions we are still not prepared for what the Other, the student, brings to us. "The kind of provocation and disruption to self-identity that the Other brings to the 'I' sets the conditions, in the form of anxiety and traumatism, for the profound alteration of the ego; anxiety itself becomes an otherness to which the subject has to make a relationship" (2001a, p. 445).

We are faced with a view of ourselves as a result of the interaction with the Other, the student, something that we cannot be prepared for, which causes a myriad of feelings to be exposed, both negative or positive.

Jodie ponders over the actions of the teachers at School-On-The-Hill Primary towards Dan and Kale. She wonders what sort of anxieties these boys brought forth in other teachers. Did all staff experience the same anxieties but respond differently? Would it have been useful to share these feelings in a dialogue? For the teachers who were afraid of Dan and Kale, were they avoiding their anxieties by seeking to reduce Dan and Kale to mirror images of themselves or indeed, to expect them to behave in a manner that suited their purpose in their classroom soundscape? Could they ever be troubled by Levinas's proposition: "I may simply treat the Other as a different version of myself, or, if I have the power, place him under my categories and use him for my purposes. But this means reducing him to what he is not" (Levinas, 1969, p. 13).

The role of the teacher requires consideration of all facets of our relationship with our students, the Other in our lives. How do we move our students safely forward in an unpredictable world in a positive and mindful manner whilst maintaining the identity and integrity of both our students and ourselves? Could it be by keeping in touch with our soul? What can take us away from our soul? Might it be the fear that underlies the everyday lived experience of the teaching soundscape?

CHAPTER 5

BLUESY TUNES – MELANCHOLY SONGS

(Experiencing fear and loss may lead to vulnerability, insecurity and incompleteness)

Blues Music

The phrase "the blues" is a reference to the Blue Devils, meaning "down" spirits, melancholy, and sadness...Early blues frequently took the form of a loose narrative. The singer voiced his or her "personal woes" in a world of harsh reality: a lost love, the cruelty of police officers, oppression at the hands of white folk and hard times. (Wikipedia, 2008d)

Part One: Fearful Melodies – The Heart in Conflict

Teaching can expose any number of emotions and sometimes our spirits are ‘down’ and feelings of melancholy and sadness threaten to overwhelm us. These feelings may come from fear: fear of losing control of our class, fear of the difficult student and her violent actions, fear of not being able to cope.

Jodie feels a sense of relief pass over her as she reads Palmer’s words on the subject of fear. Jodie thought she was unique, that she was the only one who became nervous at each confrontation or potential confrontation with her students. As teachers, most of us seem to hide our fears, tuck them away in our hearts hoping no one notices just in case they think less of us as a teacher, less of us as a person. By exposing fear in the teaching domain we may bridge the gap that exists between our private and public worlds assisting with the healing and acceptance process required.

Palmer describes education as a “fearful enterprise” (1998, p. 36) where students can be turned away from the initial love of learning they brought to the classroom. As a child, Jodie was fearful of her teachers, for reasons unknown to her. Her teachers, generally, were good people who cared about the learning of their students. A contributing factor to these fears could have been her incredible shyness, a ‘disability’ she did not shed till later in life. She embarked on a teaching career with amazing bravery, facing a sea of unknown faces at the beginning of each practical experience and later walking into a school, far from home, with no friends or family close by to allay her fears.

Even after many years in classrooms, we may feel unsure, doubting our ability to deal effectively with this fearful tension which lies hidden within our being. As the title of Palmer’s book *The Courage to Teach* seems to imply, fear is part of the profession of teaching and we need courage every day to face our students. Palmer admits, “...after thirty years of teaching, my own fear remains close at hand. It is there when I enter a classroom and feel the undertow into which I have jumped” (1998, p. 36). Some teachers, outwardly, appear to be more comfortable with fear than others. Is this a mask they wear, hiding their fear behind their teaching persona? How do we manage our fear, particularly in a school that is constantly difficult and demanding?

Another remarkable book written by Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*, speaks of how, as teachers, we may need to learn to accept and embrace fear as part of the teaching profession. “As a young man, I yearned for the day when, rooted in the experience that only comes with age, I could do my work fearlessly. But today, in my mid-sixties, I realise that I will feel fear from time to time for the rest of my life” (2004, p. 105). How many teachers admit to this fear? Gordon and James never exposed their fears, they never said they were unsure about how to teach Dan, or shared how nervous they were each day

when they encountered him. We might observe their actions to be arrogant and aggressive. Where does arrogance come from? Could it be fear? “The more insecure I feel, the more arrogant I tend to become...The arrogant ego does not like it when we hold tension, fearful of losing its status if we lose the battle at hand” (Palmer, 2004, p. 178). James and Gordon could not, or would not disclose what they felt. Did they believe exposing their fears and sharing these fears with their colleagues would damage their status as teacher?

Most of us may feel that we should be ‘over it’ (fear, that is) and that we are not suited to the profession because we feel this fear. It is a revelation to read Palmer and find that he still encountered fear even after many years of successful teaching. “I may never get rid of my fear...I can learn to walk into it and through it whenever it rises up” (Palmer, 2004, p. 105). Walking through our fears can be difficult and there is no doubt that everything happening in our lives can have a profound effect on our performance as an effective teacher, influencing how we manage the fears that come with teaching. “The teacher’s fearful heart” (Palmer, 1998, p. 47) requires attention so that it may help us understand the true nature of teaching. We might ignore our failings as a teacher and blame the victims, our students, but Palmer sees deeper reasons for our “blindness to our students’ fears.” When we do not see the fear in ourselves “we deny our own condition, we resist seeing anything in others that might remind us of who, and how, *we* really are” (Palmer, 1998, p. 47).

Successfully understanding and working through our fears is often dependent on the many potentially difficult circumstances going on in our lives at the one time. The following dark and brooding soundscape tells a tale, a tale that plays the slow movement of a concerto. Listen to the gradual crescendo toward *fortissimo* (*ff*), where the melody

loudly signals the peak, that final recognition of fear, before beginning the journey downward to the *smorzando*, the dying away, the hiding away. This accumulation of emotion followed by the downhill spiral discloses how we can resist others, avoid the exposure of whom, and how, we really are.

A Soundscape of Despair, a Melody of Fear - The Downhill Spiral...

Four years before Jodie had Dan in her classroom she became severely depressed and did not return to school for four months, then only gradually coming back to school, finally returning to full time teaching near the end of the year. She almost abandoned the teaching profession.

Jodie attributes the cause of her severe depression to a number of instances that were occurring in her life at the time, many personal; however there was a particular student in her class that may have contributed to her breakdown. She sees him as the catalyst to something that had been building towards a crescendo for some time. He was the mouse that tipped and finally sank her boat, a build-up of circumstances, followed by a gentle slide into oblivion.

In 1992 Jodie had two small children of her own and she was starting at a new school, Facing North Primary School. She had also recently moved house to remove herself from a difficult situation with her husband's family. His mother was dominating and she had yet to find her own confidence to deal with this domination. She was tired and lacked confidence in her ability to be a good wife and mother. She allowed her mother-in-law exacerbate this lack of confidence, resulting in her feeling worthless. On a positive note, Jodie was looking forward to starting a new school as she finally felt a capable, caring teacher.

At her last school, before her son was born, her teaching experience was uplifting and she was becoming confident. She had been interviewed to teach in this new school, not just placed there – as is the usual practice. The school was establishing a new unit for students who were deaf and one deaf boy would be in her grade preparatory (prep)/one class. She was delighted that the senior staff believed she had the skills to work alongside this student and his interpreters. Now she felt confident that she could be a good teacher, and she was not going to let her mother-in-law take that away from her. What Jodie hadn't anticipated was having a series of the most difficult classes she had ever encountered or how fragile her self-esteem really was.

The most demanding student in Jodie's prep/one class, Andy, who was aged five, came from a family who suffered major drug abuse and had a long criminal history. The safest environment he knew was school. Andy was small for his age, with short brown hair and a scatter of freckles across his cheeks. His grin was mischievous and would melt her heart when he looked up at her. More often than not he would come to school angry and nothing could quell the angst he was obviously feeling. He would sit on Jodie's lap, after a tantrum, with two fingers in his mouth for comfort.

This year was also difficult because of the inclusion of the student who was deaf. He was also named Andy and was often difficult to work with, not because he was deaf, but because he liked to get into mischief!

Jodie worked through the year without feeling her teaching capacity was compromised although she was physically and mentally exhausted by the time December arrived. The following year Jodie moved to a grade two/three class, giving a reprieve from Andy's tantrums. This turned out to be an equally demanding class with her first experience of a volatile student who was diagnosed with

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Again she managed to work through the year.

The Peak of the Crescendo – Dark Times and Dark Tunes

In the third year at the school Jodie volunteered to have the grade four/five class with the seven older students of the deaf. She enjoyed working with these students, their interpreters and the teacher of the deaf and she had learnt Auslan, the Australian language of the deaf, to help improve her communication with the large group. This was her first experience of teaching upper primary and she was looking forward to working with older students.

In that third year Jodie also had Cane, the older brother of Andy. He was stockier than Andy but had the same mischievous grin and affectionate nature. She did not witness this side of Cane very often. He was a troubled child with a difficult home life. As he was older than Andy the adults that surrounded both boys at home had had more influence on his actions.

The year began.

After the six weeks summer holiday with his mother, who was addicted to various drugs, Cane arrived to start the new school year. During his holiday he was exposed to drugs, sex and violence at aged ten. When he came to school he displayed the drug-enhanced behaviours of his mother, see-sawing from happy and affectionate to rage and violence. Jodie never found out if he had actually been given drugs, but now suspect that he may have been taking some. He broke into a chemist only a year later to steal some drugs for himself. The school could not help him. Cane climbed on the roof many times and often threatened to throw chairs through the classroom window. He could change from a happy member of class to a swearing and aggressive student in

a matter of seconds. There was never any warning as to when Cane would change his mood. Sometimes there would be causes, such as frustration with his schoolwork or someone had looked at him the wrong way. Other times it would be hard to identify what caused the outburst and Cane was unable to articulate why he was so angry. Once an outburst happened he could not communicate or participate positively in the classroom for the rest of the day. So the morning sessions were important and Jodie tried hard to ensure his learning experience within the classroom would be as happy as she could possibly make it.

Unfortunately Jodie failed. The school was small and there were three families, including Cane and Andy's, who did not get along together. It was a difficult year for everyone in the school. She was the first of four to go off on stress leave.

The school had a new principal that year and it could not have been easy for him. As well as these difficulties Jodie's fear of mathematics came back to haunt her, compounding the fears she had already accrued with Cane and her home life. They had planned for the teacher of the deaf to take care of the mathematics program at the beginning of the term. The teacher of the deaf had taught upper primary mathematics before. What they did not anticipate is that Andy, the deaf student from the prep/one class who was now in grade three, called the teacher of the deaf away often, leaving Jodie with no preparation for their mathematics program!

The downhill spiral was complete by week six of first term and at the end of that week Jodie left the school never wanting to return.

The combination of Jodie's poor self-esteem as a wife and mother, along with the failure to appeal to Cane's better nature, sent her into a space that she would share with no one.

She was shattered that she could not reach this child who was in so much need of love and comfort.

My melancholy is a method of suppressing the obligation to look for new ways, by transforming the present structure of the world, replacing it with a totally undifferentiated structure...lacking both the ability and the will to carry out the projects I formerly entertained, I behave in such a manner that the universe requires nothing from me.

(Sartre, 2002, p. 44)

These words from Jean-Paul Sartre's book, *Sketch for a theory of emotions*, capture the essence of Jodie's state of despair. She completely withdrew from her local community, not shopping, socialising or communicating. She lowered "the flame of [her] life to a pinpoint" (Sartre, 2002, p. 44), spending her time only with herself and the escapism of her favourite books. It would seem, for a time, no one could reach her heart, helping her to climb out of this dark hole she had placed herself in.

Jodie's psychiatrist's report contained comments regarding Cane and his behaviours, and basically he was held responsible for her break down. In her interview with the psychiatrist, she remembers he coerced answers from her through intimidation, asking her to find a cause for her condition. Cane had already been labelled in the small community as troublesome and the psychiatrist was vehement to make Cane the scapegoat in this disturbing soundscape. Jodie endeavoured to express her dislike for the blame to be pointed toward Cane; however, her state of mind did not allow her to argue against this view effectively. This was just compounding, for Cane, a life toward disconnection and persecution. In the previous chapter, *Soulful Music*, it is explained how people can become entrapped in their circumstances, caught in a 'cycle of behaviours', their lives becoming a

self-fulfilling prophecy, perpetuated by people's responses to them, or the categorisation the community places them in. Cane and his brother Andy were victims of this cycle.

Andy stood up in court when he was older and said in reply to his criminal conviction of stealing cars, "Well, just look at my mother, what hope do I have?" The family history was a cycle of crime and drugs. The adults in the boys' lives provided different sorts of role models, models many of us had not experienced. Their drug addict mother, Tablia, whose own mother Susan was the local prostitute while Tablia was growing up, spent most of her time in the town's main street swearing at people passing by or falling asleep on the footpath. Tablia's father had committed suicide when she was young as a result of his wife Susan infidelities and had written a note specifically detailing this. The Child Protection Agency was alerted to the fact that Cane and Andy were roaming the streets and were exposed to drugs. The court decided they could no longer see Tablia their mother and they would be in the custody of their grandmother, Susan.

Jodie wanted to rescue these boys and did not understand why the Child Protection Agency, social workers and ultimately, the Family Court Judge made the decisions they did. Her thoughts at the time were; "Surely it was Susan's behaviour that had created the situation in the first place, the prostitution, and the abandonment of her children." Is it Jodie's middle class values that have caused her to make this assumption? Thinking back to the idea of caring-worrying from van Manen, addressing the 'faces' of Cane and Andy and being sensitive to their needs, would they, should they have placed them in foster homes? The courts and child protection agencies consider family as being the first and best option but Jodie was unsure if Susan was the best role model for these children in view of Susan's past.

During Jodie's year with Andy, she understood Susan was trying to change and make amends. Susan's problem appeared to be that although the children were not to see Tablia, Susan could not help but let her daughter come home occasionally. It could be said that we have a very strong, invisible connection with our children and it would be incredibly difficult to dismiss them from our lives completely. Susan wanted to see Tablia, not only because Tablia was her daughter but also as part of the terrible guilt and regret she felt for her own past behaviour. Susan articulated this feeling of guilt with Jodie in the parent-teacher meetings. It would seem we cannot underestimate the power of family ties.

Through a recollection of another soundscape of family disconnection we might consider the importance of family in our lives and begin to understand that foster care for Cane and Andy may not have necessarily been a better alternative.

Brian, was bought up by his grandparents, believing they were his parents until he was in his late teens. It was revealed to him, when he reached eighteen, the girl he believed to be his sister was in fact his mother. He had a total breakdown at this disclosure. It took him many years to reconcile this information and accept his sister as his mother. A decision made many years ago by 'caring' family members had serious implications on his identity as a person within their family structure.

It is not only important to be honest with each other, which Brian's family were not, but also to honour the position within our families and understand how that position contributes to our identity. Brian was ripped away from what he believed to be his reality. William G. Tierney, writes that "The social, cultural and historical contexts in which individuals are embedded play an important role in the creation and substantiation of what individuals come to define as reality" (1993, p. 129). Brian was no longer familiar and

comfortable within his identity, he did not know where he belonged anymore. Traditionally, to have an identity has been described by Cate Watson, lecturer in Inclusive Practice, as “something well-defined about oneself, fixed and unchanging, something inside of us.” Alternatively, it could be taken to mean more than just an interior knowing “because identity is necessarily relational, to do with recognition of sameness and difference between ourselves and others. Identity only has meaning within a chain of relationships” (Watson, 2006, p. 509). Brian’s chain had been broken, resulting in loss and confusion about who he was and his place in the world of his family. As Darder points out as she speaks of the Native American children taken from their families by well-meaning social services, these practices “reinforced the loss of cultural identity” (2002, p. 5). In the case of Cane and Andy, Susan gave the boys the best of family she could, maintaining a ‘chain of relationships’, despite Tahlia’s comings and goings to the home. We would like to think that both Cane and Andy have wonderful memories of their grandmother, because she was their grandmother, not a stranger looking after them in an unfamiliar environment.

There was a court order to say that the boys could not see their mother but that order expired at the beginning of the year Jodie was to have Cane in her class. Cane spent the summer with his mother and as mentioned, he came to school angry and violent. Susan had no control over what was happening to Cane and she was devastated. She could see the path that Cane was heading down and was helpless to prevent it. While Jodie was on stress leave that year Cane’s mother, Tahlia, went on a drug binge and stole a Municipal Council vehicle. As she was driving along the highway she bent down to turn off the two-way radio, which was screaming at her to return the vehicle. Her attention was no longer on the road and she ran into an elderly couple, killing both of them instantly. Tahlia went to gaol for manslaughter. Susan died from cancer a few

years later, and to Jodie's disbelief, she was only fifty years old. Susan looked much older than fifty.

Seven years later Tablia, who was now out of gaol and living in Hobart, became trapped in a flat fire three storeys up and was burnt to death. The rumour was that she owed drug money and was purposely locked in the flat. Tablia had one death notice in the paper, just family, no friends had acknowledged her passing.

After that traumatic year of Jodie's breakdown she was transferred to another school, the principals in the area believing this was the best option for her at the time. At first she was unsure of the decision, throwing her into a new situation, a new school, new students, and new teachers. It soon became clear that it was the right decision. The principal of Jodie's new school was as caring as her previous principal and recognised her teaching potential. He gave her many responsibilities, gradually, over the next three years. It was a turning point of her career leading her to where she is today.

Different Melodies for Different Times

On reflection we may see Dan surfacing that same fear in Jodie that Andy and Cane did. Her personal life was still in turmoil when she was teaching Dan but she was now able to deal with the stress of teaching a student with extreme issues. The difference may have been the school environment. There was no family warfare at the school where Dan was, it was a very conservative school and most of the students were happy to be there and eager to learn. The orchestra had been well trained and the conductor was able to lead the music in a harmonious direction. Jodie was no longer sitting in that 'dark place of depression'. At School-On-The-Hill Primary she became the teacher she had always

aspired to be and she evolved into that teacher directly from the experiences of her depression. The implicit horizons of before and after were no longer hidden from Jodie. She was becoming conscious that her world of experience was “not a rigid boundary but something that moves with one and invites one to advance further” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 238).

Depression is a life-changing experience and although it may sometimes threaten to resurface, it could be seen as a positive experience in our life journey. Palmer’s therapist suggested looking at depression in a positive light, “...you seem to look upon depression as the hand of an enemy trying to crush you...do you think you could see it instead as the hand of a friend, pressing you down to the ground on which it is safe to stand?” (2000, p. 66).

Palmer realised he was living an ungrounded life, a disconnected life. Looking back on times of turmoil we may realise we are living an ungrounded life and as Palmer says when you live an ungrounded life you are “living at an altitude that [is] inherently unsafe” and that “we have a long, long way to fall” (2000, p. 66) and as we fall we further disconnect from family, friends and ourselves. Palmer sees depression as the ultimate disconnection.

...it deprives one of the relatedness that is the lifeline of every living being...not just between people but between one’s mind and one’s feelings...not only between people, and between mind and heart, but one’s self-image and public mask. (2000, pp. 61, 62)

As we purposely disconnect ourselves from certain aspects of our lives to escape from some of the harsh realities we have to face, they continue to threaten to bubble up to the surface. This purposeful disconnection could lead to our depression. A teacher’s life can

be one of purposeful disconnection, separating our personal lives from school life, something we were encouraged to do in our training. The words of particular colleagues and principals may ask us to do the opposite of our core beliefs and values. Is that why we may struggle with the authenticity of our teaching practice, believing disconnection was the way a teacher needed to be? Do we not understand that this disconnection tears us away from the melodies that live in our hearts?

Our Students' Fear

Palmer discusses how education often discourages us from living connected lives by distancing ourselves from our students and our subjects. “The external structures of education would not have the power to divide us as deeply as they do if they were not rooted in one of the most compelling features of our inner landscape – fear” (1998, p. 36). Could this be why the teaching profession suffers so much from stress related illnesses or even death soon after retirement?

Fear is what distances us from our colleagues, our students, our subjects, ourselves. Fear shuts down those ‘experiments with truth’ that allow us to weave a wider web of connectedness – and thus shuts down our capacity to teach as well. (Palmer, 1998, p. 36)

With Dan, Cane and maybe less so with Andy, the classroom atmosphere was always on tenterhooks, waiting for the impending explosion. A melody playing gently and sweetly but with a sense that it could change at any minute and when it did change, like a sudden jerk, the music would be jarring, dissonant chords. The feeling of dread would return as Jodie wondered how she was going to deal with this outburst and still manage to keep the other students safe from Dan’s savage tongue, Cane’s violent outbursts or Andy’s loud and

physical tantrums. Does she impose authority? Does she appeal to their better nature?
Does she send them from the room?

Palmer's chapter entitled the *Student from Hell* could be describing any one of these boys.
He supports the understanding we bring to the lives of Dan, Cane and Andy.

The Student from Hell is not born that way but is created by conditions beyond his or her control...students are marginalised people in our society...Implicitly and explicitly, young people are told that they have no experience worth having, no voice worth speaking, no future of any note, no significant role to play. (1998, pp. 44, 45)

Palmer acknowledges these students come from a world of fear and this fear controls the interactions between student and teacher. In chapter three, *Waxing Lyrical*, we explore the important role of language in our interactions with students and how we speak out in fear rather than being attentive to what we are saying. Repeating Palmer's words here emphasises this notion of fear, not so much in regard to language this time, but in reference to our being, our whole self. "If I want to teach well in the face of my students' fears, I need to see clearly and steadily the fear that is in their hearts" (1998, p. 45). The fear in those boy's hearts was immense and when Jodie was teaching Cane she was trying to comprehend her own fears and so could not see Cane's own debilitating confusion and fear. She could only see his anger and her inadequacies to manage his destructive actions. Jodie was caught in that trap of denial, fearing she would be seen as a teaching failure. She was losing heart. She thought she was supposed to be in charge of her fears and not let her students see her vulnerability! Regretfully she had begun to listen to those mentor teachers from the past who warned her *not* to be herself. Jodie left the acknowledgement of her fear too late. When she needed to feel safe she lost control of the voice in her head

and she ran away, hiding in her depression. Dan was a different time and place. She knew by this time she would not run away. She faced her fear and she “learn[ed] to walk into it and through it” (2004, p. 105). She listened to Dan and tried to understand him, learning about him, helping him to see school as a positive place to be. Jodie had to convince herself that she could do this and that Dan was another human being, not a monster placed in her classroom to make her life ‘hell’. Her dilemma was and may always be, how does she teach in a non-violent way when faced with the violence of her students?

Non-Violent Melodies – Letting Go of the Virtuoso

Listening to the melodies within the soundscapes of our different communities gives us the opportunity to come face-to-face with its members, acknowledging and embracing our cultural diversity. The article by Ann Hartman *In Search of Subjugated Knowledge* discloses the heart of the problem, the problem of being ‘expert’. She uses the example of social workers but it can easily be applied to teachers, who are seen to be ‘experts’ in the field of teaching. “Social workers [teachers] must reflect on the extent to which we may unwittingly and well meaningly disempower our clients [students] through our role as ‘expert’ through the authority of our knowledge” (1992, p. 483).

Hartman reminds us of the loss of voice for women, people of colour and class, exposing how disempowering and morally wrong this can be. The oppressed and marginalised populations have been historically silenced until recently, however it would appear it still goes on in our schools every day. As Palmer explains, our students are part of a marginalised population. Dan, Cane and Andy, labelled as ‘difficult’, are silenced, left to suffer the consequences of experiences pressed upon them as innocent, defenceless

children. As we impose our 'expertness' and authority over students like these boys we increase their fearfulness, further distancing them from our worlds. We are not listening.

Hartman says we must

...listen to honour and validate our clients' [students'] expertise. We must learn to bracket our knowledge, to put it aside so it will not shape our questions and our listening and cause a barrier between us and the people we would understand. Furthermore, we must not privilege our professional knowledge and we must let ourselves hear information from our clients that would challenge our views. We must attend. We have been mistaken before and we will be mistaken again. But we are only wrong when we continue to cling to our mistaken truths. (1992, p. 484)

If the words of Hartman speak to our hearts and become part of our melodies maybe we can begin to establish non-violent relationships with our students. Todd suggests that we listen to each other without bringing ourselves to the conversation as a dominant other or expert. She says non-violence is about our openness to the Other and believes it is "...our susceptibility to the Other's stories, our capacity to enter into a "veritable conversation" that places us on ethical ground" and warns us that "When I think I know, when I think I understand the Other, I am exercising my knowledge over the Other, shrouding the Other in my own totality." Do we truly understand the nature of our students' lives? "The Other becomes an object of *my* comprehension, *my* world, *my* narrative, reducing the Other to me. What is at stake is my ego" (2001b, p. 73).

At Facing North Primary School they endeavoured to understand the soundscape Cane and Andy lived within and the melodies that played throughout their young lives but were

they reducing them to be like themselves, a way of being incomprehensible for boys? Did they place them in a category, conceptualising them as ‘difficult’ students who were beyond help?

If we want to be in dialogue with our students we must avoid conceptualising them and placing them as an object within our existence. As Todd says,

But if I am exposed to the Other, I can listen, attend, and be surprised; the Other can affect me, she “brings me more than I contain.” And insofar as I can be receptive and susceptible I can learn *from* the Other as one who is absolutely different from myself. (2001b, p. 73)

Was this a possibility with students such as Cane and Andy? Is this a possibility for our classrooms? Todd believes that “...the specifically *ethical* possibility of education, this possibility for non-violent relation to the Other, can only ever emerge when knowledge is not our aim” (2001b, p. 73). Todd acknowledges the difficulty of meeting the Other in such a way while our education systems are focused on the acquisition and continual testing of knowledge. She asks us to move past the acquisition of knowledge as our aim in education and instead understand that

...learning *from* as opposed to *about* allows us an engagement with difference across space and time, it focuses on the here and now of communication while gesturing towards the future, it allows for attentiveness to singularity and specificity within the plurality that is our social life. (2001b, p. 73)

As the teachers attended to the soundscape of Cane and Andy, they learned *about* the boys lives but did not learn from them. Living with middle class views, the teachers might have

lacked understanding of the reality the boys lived experiences. As teachers, we cannot change lives but what if we learn *from* them in order to be attentive to their needs, creating a learning soundscape that is safe and enriching rather than sustaining an environment of fear and anger. The curriculum may perpetuate violent relationships for challenging students as we try to ‘teach’ them about knowledge when what they need first is love, care and trust. “It is only when we learn *from* the stories that Others have to tell that we can respond with humility and assume responsibility. When we teach with ignorance, we create a path towards an ethical horizon of possibility rather than a fixed destination” (2001b, p. 73).

van Manen describes the pure ethics that Levinas speaks of, as the ethics that calls upon us to respond to the Other *before* we have “involved ourselves in general ethics...a form of thinking, reflecting and moral reasoning” (2000, p. 321). Imagine if we could meet each and every one of our students in this way? How different might our interactions be? For Dan, Cane and Andy, it would seem many teachers had made up their minds about what to expect when meeting these students face-to-face before the students had entered the room. What if these teachers had left their assumptions and opinions behind and met these boys as they were in a given moment in time, seeing each meeting as fresh and new? Is this not what we do if we are to successfully teach difficult and demanding students every day? Do we not hold faith within our hearts that every encounter will be better than the last, forgetting past encounters that might influence our futures and believe today is a new day?

Palmer takes this further, suggesting we listen to the other before they have spoken.

A good teacher is one who can listen to those voices even before they are spoken – so that someday they can speak with truth and confidence. What does it mean to listen to a voice before it is spoken? It means making space for the other, being aware of the other, paying attention to the other, honouring the other...It means entering empathetically into the student's world so that he or she perceives you as someone who has the promise of being able to hear another person's truth. (1998, p. 46)

This means bringing ourselves to the other without expectation, without assuming that we know what he will say, without putting him into a category or type. As we express the fears we have of difficult and demanding students, students Palmer describes as “the students from hell,” we might worry about the labels our upbringing has instilled in us to use when describing others. Language is important in the way it creates meaning. What sort of meaning are we creating for these students when we use the terms we do?

Virtuous Melodies - Perception of Where Our Fears Lie

We endeavour, in our teaching, to come from a place of goodness, a place of virtuousness. We wish to hear our students' truth. How do their melodies of truth create a harmonious tune with our truths? Taylor speaks of our deeply embedded beliefs, our ‘hypergoods’ and how they belong to our own personal truths and virtues. We cling to these beliefs and often find it difficult to relinquish them. Taylor describes ‘hypergoods’ “as the fundamental, architectonic goods that serve as the basis of our moral frameworks.” He recognises the angst that ‘hypergoods’ can create within the individual, especially when they change and evolve over time as has the ‘hypergood’ of “respect for the other regardless of race, class, sex, culture, and religion” (as cited in Blattenberg, 2007, p. 802).

The highest good is not only ranked above the other recognised goods of the society; it can in some cases challenge and reject them, as the principle of equal respect has been doing to the goods and virtues connected with traditional family life...(Taylor, 1989, p. 65)

Taylor calls on Frederick Nietzsche to further explain our attachment to these hypergoods,

To have a hypergood arise by superseding earlier views is to bring about (or undergo) what Nietzsche called a 'transvaluation of values'. The new highest good is not only erected as a standard by which other, ordinary goods are judged but often radically alters our view of their value, in some cases taking what was previously an ideal and branding it a temptation. And as Nietzsche so well saw, a transvaluation is not necessarily a once-for-all affair. The older condemned goods remain; they resist; some seem eradicable from the human heart, so that the struggle and tension continues. (Taylor, 1989, p. 65)

How then, can we create an inspiring learning soundscape that honours so many diverse and deeply held truths along with the struggle and tensions that exist in our hearts? Could the way Gordon and James 'taught' Dan be derived from their 'hypergoods'? Their actions reflected the belief that the adult is the master and the child does not know and must be shown the correct or true way. Could their 'hypergoods' be superseded bringing about a 'transvaluation of values', creating struggle in their teaching practice, creating fear, anxiety and arrogance?

As we consider the teaching actions of James we might wonder about his deeply held beliefs and why he would say Jodie's class was 'horrible' and he wished he didn't have to be there. Was this because Dan was in the class or did he really believe all the students

were horrible or evil? Jodie tells us that James was always defensive about the way he taught her class. Jodie felt it would not be ethical to articulate her thoughts about his arrogance, lack of professionalism and knowledge of teaching pedagogy with her colleagues. She never criticized his teaching practice or spoke of him to her principal. There were no formal procedures in place for this. We might understand that for James there was no ownership of the class for him. It was Jodie's class. If his actions were different with the physical education classes he taught, where he did have individual ownership of the curriculum, we could assume this would be the case. Unfortunately he continued to act in the same way in his physical education classes making himself 'unpopular' with colleagues, students and parents.

Why was James fearful of Jodie and what she thought? Why didn't he want to learn how to work effectively with the class alongside her? If James and Jodie could have shared their melodies within the students' soundscape the learning experiences could have been more enriched and nourished. Instead it might be seen as a day where James had to do something out of his comfort zone and Jodie's students were expected to go through the motions of completing worksheets to settle James' fears as an inexperienced classroom teacher.

Palmer says that our fear is partly about "losing my job or my image or my status if I do not pay homage to institutional powers" (1998, p. 37), but admits that this explanation does not go deep enough.

We collaborate with structures of separation because they promise to protect us against one of the deepest fears at the heart of being human – the fear of having a live encounter

with alien 'otherness', whether the other is a student, a colleague, a subject, or a self-dissenting voice within. (1998, p. 37)

Jodie does not have an explanation for the way James interacted with students, colleagues and parents or the fears James may have hidden but she does, through a philosophy of understanding, see the shadows of her own teaching life including the depression that haunted her last year at Facing North Primary School. She realises her depression was fuelled by encounters with Cane infecting her self-dissenting voice within, a voice that became divided in itself. Live encounters with others became confronting, bringing forth realities she did not want to acknowledge.

We fear encounters in which the other is free to be itself, to speak its own truth, to tell us what we may not wish to hear. We want encounters on our own terms, so that we can control their outcomes, so that they will not threaten our view of world and self. (Palmer, 1998, p. 37)

Over the short time that Jodie worked with Cane before she left, she struggled to control the outcomes of his actions. He threatened her view of the world and she let him destroy what was left of her 'self' after years of low self-esteem and lack of confidence.

At School-on-the-Hill Primary, James seemed to rely on his ability to *control* his students to show his expertise as an effective teacher. Could this be his fear of losing credibility as a teacher? Where might this fear have been learned? Maybe James was taught this controlling teaching methodology as a pre-service teacher. Maybe as a child he lived in a controlling family environment. As no one could *control* Dan, James reactions toward Dan could be observed as negative. Jodie recalls other teachers described James as dominating

and angry with many of his students. It would appear James chose not to be empathetic to Dan's needs. Maybe James could not see that Dan was terrified every day and that Dan's actions were a result of his own fear. James may not have wanted to be reminded of whom, and how he really was, nor confront his own fear, denying his own condition.

Teaching Dan helped Jodie listen closely to her intuitions and become more confident about the way she was teaching. In 1994 she had learnt in a very painful and destructive way that acknowledging her feelings of fear and working through them was the only way she was going to become a better teacher. Now, as she responds to her students, reaching her students' hearts, she plays along with their melodies.

Spiritual writer and Counsellor Jessica Macbeth says,

Someone once said that courage is not the absence of fear but that which enables us to experience fear and not be stopped by it. It is also what enables us to do what we believe is to be right even when there is pressure from others around us to do otherwise. (2000, p. 66)

Jodie let the fear stop her and she tried to run away. She felt she was a failure and believed other 'good' teachers didn't fall to pieces as she did. In 1994 she thought the fear she was experiencing was intuitive, warning her that things were not as they should be. That self-dissenting voice in Jodie's head overtook her sensibilities and created a whole new belief system about herself that had no connection with her inner self.

As we read people like Palmer or listen to psychologists and psychiatrists we have to be careful not to confuse the messages they convey. Palmer speaks of the danger of counsel

from others. “My only real fear about publishing these reflections [about his depression] is that someone may take wrong counsel from them. Depression comes in many forms” (2000, p. 57).

Jodie did not tell the truth in her counselling sessions. She did not do this consciously. It was her fear, which she believed to be intuition that misrepresented the truth in her heart. Today she can see her confusion clearly and understand how depression can be so overwhelming and fearful that intuition lies hidden. Dr Judith Orloff MD describes the difference between intuition and fear.

Intuition usually comes from a neutral almost non-emotional place, simply information transmitted. Sometimes intuition is like watching a movie in a theatre, often a bystander quality involved. When there is too much emotion involved I'm suspicious that fear is involved, not intuition. (Orloff, 2009)

When we are experiencing depression we are immersed within the self-absorbed soundscape of our emotions and we are unable to hear the melodies of our intuition. To be in touch with the heart of our teaching we need to recognise where our fears lie and understand how to stay in touch with our intuition. In keeping with the philosophy of understanding we are required to distance ourselves from the emotions of the soundscapes. This inquiry enables Jodie to establish a renewed contract with her original experience, describing the phenomenon, her depression, through recall and writing. This allows her to become distant from those distressing events, viewing them with conscious mind, recognising the themes or essences that arise.

As we reminisce about our past experiences, we may become aware of the fears we had as children. Some of us remember where our fears originate but many fears are formed from such a young age or from such a brief moment in time we cannot remember. “Most people have decided by the age of three or four what they must do in order to survive. From this decision, this belief about how the world is, most of our fears and self-limitations grow” (Macbeth, 2000, p. 67). We may be unsure why we were fearful of our teachers when we were students. Maybe our fears of authority stem from that early age of three or four even though we may not remember any specific instances that may have sparked these fears. Intuitively it does not make sense to be afraid of them. We may not be able to remove our memories of fear but we can choose to learn from them and accept the gift of courage. “Have we the courage to discover and break through these limited beliefs, awaken to greater possibilities and go for our objectives? We need to transcend our fears and accept the gift of courage” (Macbeth, 2000, p. 67).

David Gemmell, the insightful Science Fiction Fantasy writer, describes fear as,

...like a guard dog. It warns you when danger threatens. But if you run from all your fears the guard dog becomes a savage wolf, and will pursue you, snapping at your heels. Fear, if unopposed by courage, eats away at the heart. Once you run you will never stop. (2003, p. 276)

As we recall our memories of fear we may bring understanding of the fearfulness our students might be experiencing. We might attempt to break down the barriers of fear that may exist for them, encourage them to embrace courage and help find the difference between their irrational fears and their inner voice that guides their intuition.

van Manen believes that intuitions often "...have their roots in personal life history. And so by reminiscing on one's own childhood experiences, and how one has become what one has become, it is possible to see how intuitions are related to particular family, communal, cultural, social, and educational experiences" (1994, p. 19). As we relate, we also learn what intuitions and pedagogical virtues are valued in our school community.

All our interactions with children are always already embedded in a cultural context where certain virtues are valued. And yet, in the end, the validity of our views becomes a matter of pedagogical responsibility for each and every one of us. This responsibility needs to be animated by moral experience of our encounter with the child, our pedagogical Other.
(1994, p. 19)

If we are aware, as De Mello asks us to be, we could recognise our fears, listen to our intuitions and understand they belong to us, as the fears and intuitions of our students belong to them. In this way we could preserve the pedagogical responsibility we should contain as teachers, caring for our students as themselves, not as carbon copies of ourselves. "The teacher can pedagogically touch or effect the whole person but only in his or her particular way and only for a limited time - yet with consequences that are infinite and life-long" (van Manen, 1994, p. 162).

van Manen acknowledges the research of agencies such as the Holmes Group, who were a consortium of deans and a number of chief academic officers from research institutions across fifty states of America. This group looked into reforms of teacher education and the teaching profession. They found that

The teacher is no doubt the most important element in the entire education system. The entire formal and informal curriculum of the school is filtered through the hearts and minds of classroom teachers, making the quality of school learning dependent on the quality of teachers. (1994, p. 164)

The heart and soul of the research here is to highlight this point that the Holmes Group put forward. If teachers are so important in the lives of students and partly responsible for the future of student attitudes towards life-long learning should we not consider and understand all aspects of our character, such as fearfulness, and how this may influence students?

Part Two: Fiery Melodies – Fear of a Different Kind

Changing Our Tune Un-expectedly! - When the Recipe Doesn't Work

Many of us take a lifetime to come to terms with fear of the unknown, when the unexpected happens, a shocking event we were not prepared for. How do we respond or react? In the face of fear and trauma, how do we manage? How do we ensure our intuition in a difficult or tragic situation is not crushed by fear, grief and sadness?

Most teachers would agree that teaching is an unpredictable profession. We never know what sort of day we are going to have in the classroom and it is that unknowable quality of teaching which makes the profession exciting and enlivening. It is one of the few environments where we have the licence to be engaged in learning every minute of the day and maybe not know what we are going to learn! Our lives are like classrooms, unpredictable, where at any given moment in time an event can change the direction of the day. When the unforeseen happens, particularly if it involves grief and fear, it immediately becomes more complicated when you are faced with sharing the unforeseen with twenty five or more students. The fear of being unable to manage can be overwhelming, but intuitively we know that we must care for our students, looking after their fears.

Forever After, is a collection of stories which tells us about how the New York schools survived the attack on the World Trade Centre on September 11th, 2001 (9/11). This book reminds us of how 'unexpected events' may happen in our teaching lives, events that are not detailed in any teacher- training manual.

As we read through the 9/11 soundscapes of the New York teachers and students we may find a connection with our own experiences of grief, fear and displacement. In the following example, the loss of one's school demonstrates the devastating effect it can have on students and teachers. Although on a much smaller and less frightening scale to the New York teachers, the loss of a classroom, along with three other classrooms and the school library, through a fire that was deliberately lit was a life-changing event. For a short time after the fire Jodie lost her place and purpose in the world. She started to lose her passion for teaching. She was displaced, along with the students in her class. It was like everything went up in the smoke – her confidence, her passion, her self-assurance. It became another one of those turning points in her life.

A Collection of Musical 'Notes' – Many Soundscapes from a Single Event

Setting the Soundscape – Losing Our Harmony and Rhythm

They left the classroom early Thursday morning, November 6th 1997 on their trip to the West Coast to visit Rosebery, the mining community Jodie had 'lived' in for two weeks the previous September. The classroom had been set up with all the paraphernalia she had collected from the mine, including her hard hat and the medal miners hung on the wall before descending into the mine. The class had an exciting time and returned to school at 3.00 pm on the Friday afternoon very tired and eager to go home. Jodie quickly placed all their folders of work, the first aid kit and her guitar in the classroom so she could catch a ride home with a colleague. Early the following Monday morning she was horrified by some shocking news on the radio. She heard the voice of the radio announcer echo across the dining room, "the devastating School-On-The-Hill fire last night burnt four classrooms and the school library." She felt herself go cold at the words 'school library' because her classroom was next door to the library. She knew then that her

classroom had been burnt in the fire. Her next thought was of her guitar, a guitar she had possessed for twenty-five years. She had never left her guitar at school over a weekend before! As she drove to school that morning, a sense of dread flooded throughout her body. What sort of destruction would she be faced with?

Arriving at school Jodie went straight to the staffroom where everyone was sitting, all in a state of shock and disbelief. They apologised for not calling her the previous evening but thought there was no point. Many of the teachers lived locally and had watched the fire, which started outside her classroom, move west along the roof line, burning each class as it went. The fourth classroom was only partially damaged and that classroom belonged to Gordon, Dan's teacher at the beginning of that year. Another fire was burning in the roof of Jodie's classroom and had suddenly taken a different direction; it started to move north towards the school library. The school library serviced eight hundred students so it was a substantial resource for the school. The firemen tried in vain to stop the fire but it took hold and severely damaged valued resources.

Jodie never expected the emotions she would feel when she saw her classroom black and charred. It was overwhelming. Parents, teachers and students stood in front of the classrooms crying, hugging and whispering words of comfort. As part of the grief process she wanted to see her classroom inside. She had a picture in her head of her neatly arranged storeroom, previously a school cloakroom, with all her precious teaching resources lined up along the walls. Were they really all gone?

Jodie was the first to catch a glimpse of the extent of damage the fire had caused. The firemen were trying to determine how the fire started. Part of the cause was fairly obvious where accelerant had been splashed across the walls of the little alcove, an entrance to the school between her classroom and the library. It was well hidden from the surrounding neighbourhood and an ideal

spot to start a fire without anyone noticing until it took hold. The firemen still wanted to investigate all possibilities and had noticed the bricks in her class storeroom. They asked Jodie to come up close to her storeroom from the outside and tell them if they were her bricks. As she walked up to the place where an outside wall used to be she could smell the burnt timber. The picture in her head of her neatly arranged storeroom was now faced with something quite different. The fire had been particularly fierce and nothing was left but the bricks she used to support her display boards in her classroom. Not a book, a poster or display board was left, it was all gone. Even now, in her mind, she can almost reach out and pull from the shelf a favourite book or a folder of precious research and planning. Everything was now a pile of ashes. This brief glance of her room was not enough, she still needed to see her whole room.

Three days after the fire, on the Wednesday, the teachers were allowed into the corridor with hard hats. As this part of the school was built in the 1950s the roof was made of clay tiles that were very heavy. The structure was not stable. If one of the tiles fell it would kill anyone standing below. The teachers were not allowed to go into the classrooms but they could look from the doorway. Jodie took her camera, to support closure for her students as they were not permitted in the building. She thought the photographs would help them. Her classroom was the first to be visited as they walked through the fire doors that led from a newer part of the building, which had been replaced in 1988 after a different school fire. She can clearly remember what her classroom looked like. Fire is strange in the way that it burns something to ash and passes over other items. Jodie spotted her guitar in the far corner against the wall where it usually stood, next to her easel. The assistant principal, Simon, stood beside her, an old high school acquaintance as well as a teaching colleague. He understood how she felt about the guitar she had played since she was twelve. He had been with her on their West Coast trip the previous week and knew how much her class loved to sing along with her guitar. From where they were standing her guitar

looked intact inside its vinyl cover. Of course it was too dangerous to walk across the room over the debris to retrieve it. So they continued their tour of the burnt classrooms without her guitar.

Fleeting Notes of Joy - A Small Window of Light

The next day a group of students hammered on the staffroom door with obvious urgency. When a staff member opened the door to see what all the commotion was about they said that the assistant principal had 'saved' Jodie's guitar. As she walked across the courtyard there was Simon coming from the other side with her guitar in his hand. The students were so excited and they weren't even in her class! It was if the students needed to find some joy in those difficult days that followed the fire. Sadly when they took her guitar from its vinyl case the back of the guitar was charcoal. The front was perfect! A guitar maker told her it was not worth fixing. It took Jodie four years to finally send it to the refuse tip.

As many of the students had watched their classrooms burn to the ground, they were fearful that the arsonist might come back and light more fires at the school, or even come to their homes. The sense of loss was enormous. This was the end of the year so the students lost their whole year's work. There was nothing to take home and share with families. Any moment of joy, such as the saving of a guitar, was appreciated and celebrated, giving them faith that everything would be okay.

Sympathetic Melodies

What Jodie remembers most about that time, the six weeks that followed after the fire, is the kindness of the community. Many local schools pooled together resources and sent them to Jodie's class, along with the other displaced teachers, so that they could teach for the six weeks left of

term. It was a difficult time for everyone but they got through it with humour and a lot of fund raising events organised by all community members. The demolition crew were amazing and empathetic to the needs of grieving teachers and students. They pulled the burnt structure of Jodie's classroom down around her rather large dress-up box. At the very end the crew and Jodie looked at it together to see if it was intact. It was burnt underneath and across the back where it sat against the wall. So she said another sad farewell to a precious resource.

The builders had to demolish the whole building, which meant that the classes on the other side of the corridor that only suffered minor water damage would also have to be relocated. The new home for the remaining weeks before Christmas was at Tree View College, about two kilometres along the road. The Grade Three/Four classes were housed in the 'terrapins', temporary class buildings, at the back of the college as the college students had completed their classes for the year and were now in exam mode. It was very stressful setting up new rooms on the Friday in readiness for the students' return the next Monday. When they did return, every morning they would all get on the bus at School-On-The-Hill Primary and travel up to Tree View College and every afternoon they would get back on the bus to come back to the primary school. It was important to stay part of the school even though they were physically removed during the day. So those short times in the mornings and afternoons of each day kept the connection alive.

Those six weeks were traumatic for both teachers and students. They were thrown into an unknown soundscape. Although Tree View College was a pleasant environment it was not their school, not their classrooms, not their playground. As they left the school each morning students waved goodbye to brothers, sisters, teachers and friends, regretfully leaving the safety of familiar school grounds. In the new environment the actions of many students changed and managing their fears and grief was difficult in this remote and unfamiliar space. Kevin Foster, author of *Are They Katrina's Kids or Ours?: The Experience of*

Displaced New Orleans Students in Their New Schools and Communities believes we should expect displaced students to be ‘different’ away from their ‘normal’ lives. “A range of inappropriate or difficult behaviours [are] to be expected of displaced children – not just cursing, but also fighting, crying disengagement from the classroom, and sullenness, among other behaviours” (Foster, p. 51). Some days the teachers would fall apart, letting the enormity of situation overtake them, but then they would pull together as a team of teachers facing the challenges together. Often they needed that inner voice, their intuition, to help them stand in that neutral, non-emotional place so they could help their students cope with the day-to-day disappointments they faced. As teachers they needed to “address students’ realities as [they] taught...subtly weaving the healing processes into the classroom communities that [they] shepherd” (Foster, 2007, p. 51).

Lost Melodies

Fire is an unpredictable beast. In Jodie’s classroom only some of the desks had their tops burnt off. Students’ belongings were collected from each desk if at all possible. Her students and Gordon’s were the only two out of the four classes where student books survived. The other two classrooms virtually melted in the heat and not a thing was left to retrieve. All Gordon’s students had their books returned. About half of Jodie’s class received their belongings. It was difficult to give out bags of belongings when some students would not get something back. The giving out of books from surviving desks certainly divided students from the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ and the one child who didn’t need this in her classroom was the one who didn’t get anything back! He was devastated and inconsolable for the afternoon. In hindsight Jodie believes that she should have insisted that the giving out of belongings be handled in a different way but she was so emotionally involved at the time she was not thinking very clearly. Dan was very philosophical about the whole process and just shrugged his shoulders when she did not give him a bag of smoky books.

The smell of smoke stayed with her for a long time and when she recalls the fire she can still smell the slightly singed resources she had returned to her, useless staff notes and folders full of old educational policies. Out of the four teachers, Jodie lost the most resources because she kept everything at school and she spent a lot of her own money on beautiful laminated posters, collections of music and favourite storybooks. All collected over fourteen years of teaching and destroyed in seconds. Even though the Department compensated for her loss it could not replace certain items, like the uniqueness of her guitar. She did buy a new guitar but as any musician will tell you, the player has a relationship with their instrument, it is part of them and when it is lost, it is like losing a friend or even part of themselves. It was sad to lose possessions but the teachers also lost a sense of place and belonging.

As teachers, they had to find a balance. They needed to share their fears and disappointments with their students but also stay in touch with their intuition, in touch with their worlds. Every moment of each day they were required to be aware of the right thing to do when caring for their displaced students.

Heidegger, in his book *Being and Time*, explores how fear, depression and bewilderment may force us to forget ourselves and our relation to the world.

When concern is afraid, it leaps from next to next, because it forgets itself and therefore does not *take hold of any definite* possibility. Every 'possible' possibility offers itself, and this means that the impossible ones do so too. The man who fears, does not stop with any of these; his 'environment' does not disappear, but it is encountered without his knowing his way about in *it* any longer. (2005, p. 392)

In the unfamiliar teaching soundscape they became bewildered, frustrated and fearful and there were moments when they lost their way. This in turn made them anxious, concerned that they were not able to help their grieving students. Heidegger explores the concept of fear further by discussing its relationship with anxiety. As Bennett and Rolheiser conclude in an earlier chapter, fear maybe a useful emotion until it becomes anxiety. Each day was greeted with trepidation and anxiety...thoughts of ‘what might happen today that we may not be able to manage?’ Heidegger observes that

...anxiety discloses an insignificance of the world, and this insignificance reveals the nullity of that with which one can concern oneself – or, in other words, the impossibility of projecting oneself upon a potentially-for-Being which belongs to existence and which is founded primarily upon one’s objects of concern. (2005, p. 393)

From Heidegger’s words we can see how, as teachers, it is critical to maintain awareness of our emotional intelligence, understanding the nature of the emotions that could arise most unexpectedly from ourselves and from our students. The smallest event may trigger steps backwards into bewilderment and anxiety, a student losing a personal possession, a teacher unable to find that special teaching resource. The teachers could become in danger of disconnecting or forgetting where they were and what they should be doing.

Heidegger’s notion of Dasein, explained as a state where we are always a ‘Being’ engaged with the world, constituted by its temporality and how it illuminates and interprets the meaning of ‘Being in Time’, describes how our moods change, exposing possibilities for new ways of being engaged with the world. This ‘forgetting’, however, which occurs as a result of fear, confuses Dasein, “letting it drift back and forth between ‘worldly’ possibilities which it has not seized upon” (2005, p. 394). In our state of forgetfulness we

may be unable to provide a soundscape of possibilities, a soundscape where we play harmonious and rhythmic melodies together with our students.

Sartre also speaks of 'losing our way' in terms of 'forgetting' the self in the face of fear. "It [fear] is a consciousness whose aim is to negate something in the external world by means of magical behaviour, and will go so far as to annihilate itself in order to annihilate the object also" (2002, p. 43).

As the teachers started each new day they were hopeful that by some 'magical' means the day would go well, knowing full well that their fragile states could potentially overwhelm them, causing them to distance themselves from each other, completely destroying any possibility of providing an enriched learning environment.

This displacement also threatened to disconnect teachers from each other and their school community. Senior staff and the teachers at School-On-The-Hill Primary did not abandon their colleagues. They included the displaced staff in whole school activities when they could. For some students the fire completely destroyed their confidence and took away the perceived safe environment of school so connection with their original school environment and population was vital.

Displaced Melodies

Jodie often wonders if the person who started the fire considered the far reaching consequences of a school fire. She finds it exasperating to hear the flippant remarks people make about a school fire. A couple of teachers once scoffed in response to a local school fire saying it would be nice to have a few days off and that the contents of their classroom were not important. Jodie assured

them they would probably feel quite differently if they actually experienced losing their classroom. The kindergarten students at School-On-The-Hill Primary were very upset because they thought the librarian had been burnt to death. At that age students often believe teachers live in the school. Kale was the student who had the hardest time adjusting to the school fire. With his Autism at the severe end of the spectrum, he had no understanding of what had happened.

Students with Autism need routine and cannot deal with change and the lower the student sits on the Autism spectrum the more difficult it is to help them live through and accept change. The book, *Challenging Behaviour and Autism: Making sense-making progress: A Guide to Preventing and Managing Challenging Behaviour for Parents and Teachers*, tell us that for students with Autism, “Changes to familiar routines, interruptions to rituals and repetitive patterns of behaviour or encounters with feared aspects of environment can all be very powerful triggers for challenging behaviour.” Change should be slowly integrated but the school fire did not give us this choice. “Changes need to be planned for and you must plan to introduce change and increased flexibility” (Whitaker, Joy, Harley, & Edwards, 2001, p. 61).

There was no opportunity to build a structure for Kale to cope with such a massive and sudden change. As his class was now at Tree View College, Kale would only come for an occasional visit. Even on those visits he did not manage very well. Kale would be happy to see his class mates at first, but they were in the wrong place and he would soon become confused and upset. He had lost two spaces he felt safe in, the classroom he shared with Jodie and twenty-eight other students and his little workroom. Even though his room was not damaged by fire it was in the same building and they had to demolish it all and rebuild. The new building, although beautiful, left no room for Kale and he had to relocate to a small room next to the principal's office. As mentioned in previously in this thesis, there was no money forthcoming for Kale because his parents did not give

the school a true indication of his disabilities before he arrived. The new plans did not include a room for a student with severe Autism. Kale spent the two remaining years in the school mostly in his 'new' small room. He continued to be unsettled and never seemed to enjoy being at School-On-The-Hill Primary after the fire.

Uplifting Melodies – Returning to Our Harmony and Rhythm

There are positive outcomes to devastating events. In this instance the teachers were given the opportunity to 'clean house' and maybe change life's directions. Everything that was in the building that housed eight classrooms, a resource room, and a library had to be taken out for the redevelopment. Everything went into the large gymnasium. As an AST the next year Jodie was in charge of deciding what was to go and what was to stay. The inclusion support teacher at the time, John, was quite reluctant to give up the resources he had used for the past thirty years. The school was fortunate he was moving into a smaller room so he really had no choice! It was an opportunity to throw away some educational materials that were no longer useful or relevant to the current cohort of students. John still did not change his teaching practice and continued to insist on withdrawing inclusion students rather than working with them in the context of their classrooms but he did have better resources to work with.

Tribal Tunes

There were many hurdles to face when trying to teach amidst a school redevelopment. The following year in 1998 the grade three and four classes were relocated to City Centre Primary. Simon, the assistant principal, also relocated to City Centre Primary to look after the eight classes.

When the students arrived at City Centre Primary they were faced with students from another school, dressed in a different school uniform. Duty in the playground was not an easy task. Even though the students were segregated they could still call out to one another or pass each other on the way to their own playing area. The territorial nature of the City Centre Primary school students created many dilemmas for Simon and the City Centre Primary principal. It was with relief in May that all the students moved back to School-On-The-Hill Primary. The students had suffered so much because of the school fire. Was it fair that they were bullied in another school because they had taken some of their space?

The students from New Orleans suffered fear and displacement from the consequences of Hurricane Katrina, as our students suffered fear and displacement from a school fire. Many of the students and teachers from New Orleans were forced to move from their homes to live in Austin, Texas. Some of their soundscapes tell us about the many families who were able to start new lives. Others tell of the alienation they experienced from community members and even teachers.

...teachers, parents and principals could barely hide their disdain for their new students. One administrator expressed that she “hated” the Katrina Kids. In classrooms across the district, teachers sought to have the kids from New Orleans moved out of their classroom...the trauma experienced by our displaced students was only deepened.
(Foster, p. 51)

It is incredible to think that a single event can make an impact on countless circumstances changing the direction of teacher and student lives. There were so many unknown problems that came up as Jodie and her colleagues travelled along the rocky path to recovery. Each day they would have something else to solve yet still manage to teach their

students meaningful content and keep the love of learning alive. In the awareness of their teaching they needed to consider not just what an unexpected event meant for them but how their students were affected. They did not have the choice of hiding away.

Creative Melodies to Bring Back the Song

A school fire is not something we expect to deal with as teachers. It is sudden, devastating and life changing. The melody changes so unexpectedly we do not have time to take a breath, reflect or prepare. It is an assault on our being, a door slammed in our face from a swift gust of wind, the jarring voice of sudden distress or the playing of a wrong note in a familiar tune. This change in melody wakes you up and requires you to pay attention as the tune you were happily singing is gone. You become more aware of yourself, more aware than you were just a second before!

Yet we become complacent again, sliding into that comfort zone so soon after the attack, singing along to the old, familiar melody and basking in nonchalant contentment until something spins us back to those previously forgotten moments in time. Reading *Forever After* helps us make a connection with those displaced days at the end of 1997 with a burst of insight.

As Jodie contemplates the events of that time she tries to recall how she managed those moments of discord for nearly six months. How did she help put the orchestra back together and smooth out the harmonies to allow teachers and students once again enjoy the counter-melodies that were played out in the school community? As we read the experiences of the students and teachers from 9/11 we might see similarities in the ways teachers at School-On-The-Hill Primary handled the meeting of grief and fear, embracing

them and sending them on their way. They talked together in their classrooms. They became communities of dialogue where students shared their feelings and thoughts of futures to come. The students played and created. Even though teachers helped their students deal with their loss, they may not have recognised the extent of their own loss and sense of displacement until they encountered stories of grief and tragedy, like those told in *Forever After*.

As Jodie watched the news cast of the terrorist attack in New York on that day in September she did not realise there were schools close by. As she visited ‘Ground Zero’ she had not given a thought to the danger, distress and disorder those schools and students situated close to the World Trade Centre suffered. Is it part of Jodie’s inexperience of what it means to live in a city like New York that prevented her from even contemplating the lived city soundscapes of those teachers and students was like on that day?

The New York teachers describe how their students had just begun to arrive at school and pack their bags away when the first plane hit. It was the fourth day back at school for many students after the long summer break. The teachers’ stories about their escape and their survival give examples of how creativity helped students cope with tragedy and fear and gave them the opportunity to express their feelings about what happened. Many teachers acknowledged their own feelings and did not try to hide these feelings from their students.

In one grade three class students wrote stories and poems and drew about what they did to make themselves safe after 9/11. Their teacher asked the question, “What about the

curriculum?” and then made the decision it was too hard to worry about what they were supposed to be doing.

...none of us had really got back to normal. None of us could handle a lot of pressure. None of us remembered what our best work looked like. Just getting from temporary homes via a crippled subway system to a temporary overcrowded school was a lot to manage. (2006, p. 13)

Another teacher explained why she organised a mammoth art exhibition, so big that they had difficulty finding somewhere to exhibit! It was to provide community action that would give agency to the children.

Children shared ideas about what they could do as children to respond to the attacks. The events of September 11 had created almost insurmountable isolation and helplessness. Individuals felt compelled to join with others. The mural project gave children that opportunity. Children began working on the mural that would become a collection of over 3,000 portraits. (2006, p. 91)

This mural was not a depiction of the terror that occurred on 9/11, it was a collection of children's portraits with children's messages for a hopeful future, drawn by the children themselves, not only from New York but other war torn countries such as Uganda, Kosovo and Columbia. The mural was a collaboration of hope and strength. Through creativity a new beginning could be envisioned. This resonates with School-On-The-Hill Primary's experience of displacement during their school fire. Their very inventive fund raising events, such as two teachers racing a greyhound at the local racetrack, provided an outlet for the grief and a coming together with the community to put back what had been

lost. A calendar the parents and friends group put together to raise money for the school library contains the creative visual art of students, including a fire smoked drawing from a student, a reminder that it is possible to survive such devastating events. The stories and pictures from the students of 9/11 told the world a great deal about the effects that day had on the city of New York. Obviously they are subjective and interpreted accounts of that day but the stories are real to the children and teachers who experienced 9/11 first hand. They tell us about life, the life of New York City residents, scared and confused, whose previously 'safe' world was changed forever. "The poetic narrative describes a universal truth...it is significant of good narratives that they tend to reveal universal aspects of human being" (van Manen, 1994, p. 160). The editors of *Forever After* hoped their book would fill the missing 'piece' of the 9/11 experience, five years after the event, and "remind us of the strength, purpose, and goodness of those who commit themselves to the teaching profession" (2006, p. xv). This storytelling, as Pinkola Estes tells us back in the chapter one "sets the inner life into motion, and this is particularly important where the inner life is frightened, wedged, or cornered" (1998, p. 19).

The permanent arrival back at School-On-The-Hill Primary was a relief and they revelled in the beautiful new classrooms and celebrated their school's complete return to a learning place rather than a noisy, untidy construction site. Their classroom experiences returned to 'normal' and they once more became immersed in the 'classic' curricula of the educational world with no excuses.

CHAPTER 6

A CLASSIC EXPERIENCE

SOUNDSCAPES OF EDUCATION: A CORRIDOR OF MELODIES

(A traditional education may not allow a student to become the person they aspire to be)

Classical Soundscapes/Commercial Music

Classical Music

The term 'classical music' originates from the Latin term classicus, meaning taxpayer of the highest class. (About.com, 2008, p. 7)

() indicates swearing

People like me are aware of their so-called genius at ten, eight, nine...I always wondered, "Why has nobody discovered me?" In school, didn't they see that I'm cleverer than anybody in this school? That the teachers are stupid too? That all they had was information that I didn't need? I got () lost in being at high school. I used to say to me auntie, "You throw my () poetry out, and you'll regret in when I am famous," and she threw the () stuff out. I never forgave her for not treating me like a () genius or whatever I was, when I was a child. It was obvious to me. Why didn't they put me in art school? Why didn't they train me? Why would they keep forcing me to be a () cowboy like the rest of them? I was different, I was always different. Why didn't anybody notice me? A couple of teachers would notice me, encourage me to be something or other, to draw or to paint – express myself. But most of the time they were trying to beat me into being a () dentist or a teacher. (Lennon, 1971)

The 'classic' experience of education could be perceived as the formal, traditional way of teaching. Within this 'classic' tradition we might say that we are expected to teach particular disciplines, and maybe lead students towards particular careers. We might interpret the leading of students through an expected pathway to a career as a commercial process. This commercial process appears to be generated and maybe even controlled by our 'classic' traditions of what society believes the purpose of education is. It appears to be based on what we 'think' students should become.

As indicated by John Lennon in his interview, transcribed above, for Rolling Stone Magazine in 1971, school was forcing him towards careers he did not wish to pursue, careers that would have failed to help him achieve his 'true' potential as one of the greatest writers of musical compositions in recent history. We could not '*imagine*' a world without Lennon's music here in the twenty first century.

Getting Better

I used to get mad at my school (no I can't complain)

The teachers that taught me weren't cool (no I can't complain)

You're holding me down (aah)

Turning me round (ooh)

Filling me up with your rules (full, full)

(McCartney & Lennon, 1967)

Lennon was determined to write and play his music and it would appear that he understood his potential at an early age but what of the students we fail to nurture whilst we push upon them the 'classic' educational experience?

Todd acknowledges that our curriculum is

...central in educating students to become certain kinds of people, individuals or citizens...there is an underlying assumption about what it means to learn and to be 'educated'; indeed, who educators think students should become frequently defines the aims and purpose of education practices. (2001b, p. 431)

Could it be our egocentric nature that motivates us into the moulding of our students within our own casts, expecting them to become a particular type of person and choosing the particular career we believe they are suited for, such as a dentist, a teacher?

Levinas believes that the primary experience of our lives is definitely biased and egocentric.

I take precedence over the various objects I find around me, and in so far as my experience is normal I learn to manipulate and control them to my advantage, either as the member of a group I identify with myself or simply as myself alone. In general, these objects are at my disposal, and I am free to play with them, live on them, and to enjoy them at my pleasure. (1969, p. 12)

Levinas asks us to put aside our egos to understand that our students are

...not an *alter ego*, another self with different properties and accidents but in all essential respects like me...The Other may, indeed, turn out to be, on the surface at least, merely an analogue of myself, but not necessarily! I may find him to be inhabiting a world that is basically other than mine and to be essentially different from me. (Levinas, 1969, p. 13)

Sokolowski explains that the classic traditions of philosophy support the idea of when we say we are conscious, we are primarily aware of ourselves or our own ideas. Sokolowski refers to this as the 'egocentric predicament' "where all we can be sure of at the start is our own conscious existence" (2008, p. 9). In regard to teaching, Cain in chapter two of this thesis, suggests that a renewed quality of teaching would be to teach without ego because "...to operate from ego is to be self-absorbed – never to move beyond the self as a reference point" (2001, p. 705). If we move to a more phenomenological point of view, a philosophy of understanding, we may be able to extract ourselves from our egos, escape from that enclosed cabinet we call our mind, to allow ourselves to observe the others in our lives.

Do we believe we are free to play with our students, live on them, enjoy them at our pleasure and see them as another self who is in all essential respects like ourselves? Will these thoughts influence what we believe we are teaching for?

Harmonies and Rhythms of the Classroom - What Should We Be Teaching For?

Ron Ritchhart, a research associate at Project Zero from Harvard's Graduate School of Education, begins a section in his book *Intellectual Character* with the question above. What should we be teaching for? Reading the words of John Lennon's interview we could assume we are teaching students for particular roles in society, roles we might think they are most suited for. If we see our teacher's role as ensuring students reach national benchmarks of intelligence it could be said we are teaching for the test. Ritchhart warns us not to believe standardised tests, texts and set curriculums are what we are 'teaching for'. He speaks of ideals, expressed by Donald Arnstine (1995, pp. 22 – 23) as our ultimate aim for education.

They [ideals] embody our values, our hopes, our deepest beliefs. Specific enough to aim at, ideals are broad enough to allow some freedom of action...The openness of ideals make it possible to share them, and thus makes possible distinctively human communities. (2002, pp. 8, 9)

Our dilemma, although ideals can motivate, inspire and direct student and teacher learning, is that ideals cannot be tested and this does not seem to fit with the current, or indeed, historic educational climate. As we consider what we, as past students, remember of our education we might begin to understand what could be relevant for our classroom teaching. Many of us recall our friendships, memorable experiences and meaningful moments but if we ask “what about the knowledge and skills [our] teachers have worked so hard to impart?” Ritchhart, along with other educational researchers such as Arnstine say, “Surprisingly, we don’t have much evidence that these have a very long shelf life” (2002, p. 9). Ritchhart believes it is the patterns of learning that stay with us rather than the collection of knowledge and skills drilled into our minds each day.

...patterns of behaviour, patterns of thinking, patterns of interaction ...Through our patterns of behaviour, thinking and interaction, we show what we are made of as thinkers and learners. Schools can do much to shape and influence these patterns. This is the kind of long-term vision we need for education: to be shapers of students’ intellectual character. (2002, p. 9)

It may be difficult for schools to embrace ‘ideals’ as pathways to learning, becoming ‘shapers’ of students’ intellectual character, when we are entrapped by the industrial productivity of government policy.

Education could be seen as a commercial commodity, needing to 'feed' the masses. As we start out as young teachers we are like musicians, writing our own music for a time, writing from our hearts, creating our 'own' melodies. Musicians eventually realise they have to make money out of their music, they have to earn a living, so they write and play what they believe people want to hear, or what their recording companies tell them is popular but not necessarily something they have a passion for and that originates from their heart. It is only the brave who persevere with what they believe in and sometimes it pays off. They then pave the way for a new 'type' of music, a new sound! Big recording companies often decimate musicians' originality encouraging them to 'prostitute' themselves to the world market of commercial music. Do we do this in our teaching? Do we feel confident, inspirational and effective when we change our melody to suit the teaching soundscape of a mandated curriculum and testing regime? What do we believe we are teaching for? Education is an age old story told from many different perspectives, depending on the attitudes, personal background and experience of the individual.

Palmer believes that

Education has always been described as the development of certain capacities (for example, critical thinking and the tolerance of ambiguity) that allow the educated person to live more productively and more at peace in a complex and demanding world. Ethical education is one that creates the capacity for connectedness in the lives of students. (1993, p. xviii)

Experiencing the Melodies of Others – A Tune of a Different Kind

Music of My Heart

You'll never know what you've done for me

What your faith in me has done for my soul...

You'll never know the gift you've given me...

I'll carry it with me through the days ahead

I think of days before

You made me hope for something better (yes you did)

And made me reach for something more

You taught me to run

You taught me to fly

Helped me to free me inside

Help me hear the music of my heart

Help me hear the music of my heart

You've opened my eyes

You've opened the door

To something I've never known before (All the Lyrics, 2008b)

As teachers do we have the capacity to help students make informed decisions for their future roles in society? Do we open their eyes, open doors, teach them to fly? Can we help them hear the music of their heart?

Melodies from the Underground – A Soundscape from the World Below

Descending into the darkness at 40 kph was a new experience for Jodie! It was difficult to decide if she was scared or absolutely fascinated. On arrival at Level 17 she was greeted with the sight of a mini city, except the streets were carved from rock and the sunlight was created by giant fluorescents attached to the rock ceiling. Large machinery such as trucks, loaders, jumbos and simbas were parked around the loading bay in various states of disassembly, dwarfing the 4WDs sitting next to them. Beyond the machinery lay the Southern Exploration Decline (SED) shrouded in darkness, blacker than the blackest night, emphasised by the brightness of this mini city.

Jodie walked into the Crib room and placed her medal on the board. This action ensures the safety of everyone in the mine. No explosives are fired if there is a medal left hanging on the board. Its presence on the board alerts the shift boss someone is still in the mine, not standing in the cage with the other miners, waiting to rise to the surface.

This was the start of an amazing two week journey, a window into the world of mining. An experience that gave Jodie the opportunity to understand the processes of mining and briefly live the life of a miner, geologist, environmentalist and mining engineer! She was totally in awe of this underground world which people inhabited for twelve hours a day, sometimes never seeing natural daylight, particularly in winter, until the end of their four day shift.

Jodie's time at the Rosebery Mine on Tasmania's wet, rugged and remote west coast was life- changing, heralding the beginning of her interest in workplace programs available around Australia. In chapter two, *Melodies of Teaching Life*, we discuss working in non-teaching environments and how experiences away from the world of school might change

and enhance our classroom practice and attitudes. A previous study, including her work experience in a mine for two weeks, along with an investigation of the *Teachers Release to Industry Program* (TRIP) in Victoria, informed Jodie's research into the comparison of the environments we may encounter in our working life as to that of the teaching environment. The question she asked then and still asks today is: "Will personal experience of these 'other' environments give us a better understanding of life outside our classrooms and more credibility in the eyes of our students?" From Jodie's personal experiences, it did give her a greater understanding of non-school environments. The students respected her knowledge about mining more than if she had read it from a book, showed a film or displayed posters around the room. Her experience also created more energy for teaching a topic such as mining. Her students saw that she was excited about her experience, caught up in the wonder of learning something new. Bronte Price, author of *School industry links: The consequences of minding other people's business* lists reasons for teachers undertaking placement in industry. One that clearly states Jodie's reasons for embarking on this new journey of learning was to:

Gain information which relates to existing school topics, which help students understand the relevance of these topics and the skills learnt through them, and to understand the applications of these curriculum areas of the workplace. The experience and skill of employers and workers can be drawn upon to ensure accuracy and to enrich any topic at any year level. (1991, p. 32)

Jodie was able to introduce her students to the topic of mining with actual experiences to share, which enriched their own experience of mining. Before sharing mining information with her students she wrote an extensive journal detailing her work placement environment. Sending this report to the senior geologist to check for the accuracy of her

interpretation of mining methods ensured her students obtained an authentic picture of mining communities and how they work.

Jodie is not sure if any of her students took a career path in mining as a result of their experience of the Rosebery Mine but she would like to believe it broadened their view of the world past the text books of the classroom. Are we able to show our students all the possibilities that exist in living if we are ignorant of worlds other than school?

Choosing the Music that You Love

Jodie never thought of the possibility of working in such an environment as a mine. Did her geology teacher, Tim, not tell her about working as a geologist in a mine? Her memory does not tell her if he did or did not discuss the possibility of careers in geology.

Tim was a wonderful teacher, full of passion for rocks and a great believer in hands-on experiences. Tim's science classes travelled everywhere to look at real rock formations rather than pouring over a text book in the science laboratory. He instilled in his students a love for crystal collecting and bushwalking, both passions Jodie still carries today.

Did Jodie not recognise geology may be a career she could pursue? Maybe she heard of the perceived downside to the profession, as there is in every career path. The geologists at Rosebery informed her that the west coast of Tasmania was the best possible mining job they could get. In Western Australia and Northern Queensland they would often be thousands of kilometres from any city or town and have to ride in a helicopter to their mining destinations and be 'stuck' for maybe weeks or months on end. In Tasmania they

could drive out to the North West coast anytime, as long as it wasn't snowing, to be in a city within two hours.

Jodie's mining soundscape gave her the opportunity to show her grade three/four students what a mine was really like. The class was so excited when they travelled down there for two days. As she knew all the personnel at the mine by name and the students had seen her photographs and mining paraphernalia collected from her two weeks in the mine, their experience of mining immediately became more authentic. The connection was closer for them because it had been her personal experience.

As primary school teachers we cannot know personally about every aspect of life, every job, and every opportunity. How do we provide authentic life experiences if we have not experienced them ourselves? A possible solution could be thought of in terms of our enjoyment of music. We do not have to know how to play an instrument to enjoy the melodies played. We do not even have to like the particular music played to appreciate the skill and passion of the musician. It might not be our 'style' of music but we can still understand it is 'good' music. Could it be the same with our experiences of the world?

In our teaching practice we could model our openness to possibilities. We could encourage exploration and enquiry into areas unknown to us and seek out creative soundscapes, preventing our school curriculum from becoming rigid and prescriptive, allowing our students to see possibilities for what they could become. Robinson describes the importance of us finding our *Element*, our *Element* being the "place where the things we love to do and the things we are good at come together" (2009, p. xiii). If we are able to help not just ourselves, but our students to discover this *Element* we create possibilities for positive futures for our communities and institutions. Robinson reminds us of the fast

pace at which our world is changing and that we, as teachers, need to “create environments where every person is inspired to grow creatively” (2009, p. xiii).

How important are our professional learning opportunities as teachers in bringing these creative possibilities to fruition?

Second-Hand Melodies – Professional Learning Soundscapes

It would appear that first-hand experiences are the most valuable, messages conveyed second-hand often seem to lose the essence of what has been imparted. Is that why many spaced professional learning programs for teachers are often not as successful as we hope? It seems information, the wisdom from ‘expert’ educators, stops at the participants and is often not shared with teachers back in their schools. Something is lost in the translation, the music does not sound quite as good as the original, unless someone else can place their own energy, their own personality into the new version. It is like when you hear a song for the first time and really like it, then all the versions that come after are somehow not quite as good.

This is something we are still grappling in our Department today and we might personally identify with the difficulty of transferring the enthusiasm and learning in a session held by an inspiring facilitator to teachers who were not present! Senge warns us not to be engaged with professional learning that is “one shot events that are disconnected from the core work of schooling” (2000, p. 385) but this is what often happens.

When the professional learning *is* connected to the core work of schooling we still have problems of integration into classroom practice. Many teachers are inspired as they sit

listening to the facilitator but when they return to the realities of their classroom sometimes that inspiration disappears. This often happens when there is no accountability for attendance at these sessions. “If you conduct staff development without asking people to plan for the return back home, you might as well not bother. In our experience, if nothing happens within thirty days after a session, nothing will ever happen” (Senge et al, 2000, p. 390).

The words from Senge and his colleagues echo the voice of Canadian teacher Barrie Bennett, an exponent of co-operative learning strategies, imparting this same message. Bennett conducted professional learning sessions on the North West coast of Tasmania in the mid-nineties. Bennett gave homework each evening of the three day sessions, asking teachers to write action plans. He worked within their classrooms to ensure co-operative learning was instilled into their everyday classrooms through authentic modelling of good practices. It was an incredibly valuable professional learning for all who were involved. Bennett was also fully supported by the district superintendent at the time which increased the potential success of the program. “The district must support it, and experience with this new method must be taught to other teachers around the district...the organisational support of desired changes is critical to effective staff development” (Senge et al., 2000, p. 390). The *Teaching in Mining Program* was not supported to this degree by districts or our Education Department. As a result, the initiative did not last and became just a wonderful personal experience for the participants.

Making decisions about relevant professional learning can be difficult for districts and principals. Unfortunately there are some teachers who are happy doing what they have done year after year. Our university training in the seventies did not impart the message that as teachers we should model being life-long learners. We received our degree and left

with a sigh of relief, believing we were no longer required to read and study theories on teaching, write long tedious essays with no point, nor understand other areas of work such as industry. As researcher for the TRIP program Chris Perry says, “Most teachers have never left school and have relied on their teacher-training courses for knowledge bases which underpinned their work in their classroom and they had not kept pace with current developments in industry in its broadest sense” (Perry, 1995). For our students we need to put aside these past assumptions. We must be open to possibilities, not stay in our comfort zones, and stretch ourselves as teachers by jumping into new experiences throughout our teaching career.

A Melodic Template – The Way We Have Always Done It!

The music never stops; it just plays a different melody when we are open to change. We can play the same melody over and over if we are not keen to move on, just like a classroom program might never change! Do we not get tired of hearing the same tune many times? We have our favourites and we always like to revisit them, but to play them every day of our lives! Don't our tastes change? Is it like that annoying tune that gets stuck in our head? Maybe we need something else to take our mind away from it, a fresh new song!

Working within education for nearly thirty years now, Jodie has enjoyed many different aspects of school life. Teaching classes from kindergarten to grade seven, working with inclusion and gifted students and the music teaching that started her career, has helped her to stay motivated and inspired in her teaching practice. Today, as a teacher working with teachers and students in technology, she engages with students from between the ages of three to eighteen years old, along with a diverse range of teachers and an equally diverse

range of learning areas using many different types of technologies. Jodie does not have time to become complacent or bored. She cannot take her classroom planning off the shelf every year to teach the same class over and over again. It would be an easy alternative to what she is doing now but where would be the excitement for life and learning? We have teachers in our schools that take that easy alternative. They are happy to dust off the pale yellow manila folders that sit on their shelves, containing what they taught last year, same time: same place. What role model is this setting for our students about learning? To be fair, there are teachers who are still in the same school after twenty years but have purposely changed their role, their teaching practice and continued to learn new things for themselves, keeping their learning fresh and alive. It is not these teachers that cause concern. It is the ones who are stuck on the 'page one, day one' style of teaching that make us wonder how they inspire their students to be lifelong learners.

What is the meaning of TTWWADI (pronounced Twoddie)? It is an acronym coined by Jukes, who tells us in an earlier chapter that students' brains are wired different today. It describes certain teachers in our schools for whom we have concerns. TTWWADI in its extended form simply says, 'That's the Way We've Always Done It!' In his visit to Tasmania five years ago, he told his story of TTWWADI. His entertaining story describes what we have done in the past will affect what we can do in the future. The story is long and involved but it basically tells us of the difficult rail journey for the space shuttle from one end of the United States to the other and how it was caused by the width of two horse's behinds dating back to the time of chariots as transport. The story is amusing but his message is not. If we seriously want to engage and teach our students for the twenty-first century we need to rethink some of our 'industrial age' teaching practices. 'It's amazing how we can embrace doing things the way they have always been done without

examining where the original decisions came from. We just accept a pre-existing mind-set because it's the path of least resistance" (2007, p. 1).

Jukes, as does Senge and Robinson, reminds us of our 'Industrial Age hangover', "Today's public education system was created over a century ago in a time before computers, before television, before airplanes, before automobiles, before radios, before telephones, before satellites, before computers, before brain research and entirely before electricity was available in anyone's home" (2007, p. 1). Jukes believes we still run our schools like factories where we can "produce students with the same efficiency and consistency as Henry Ford was producing Model T's" (2007, p. 7). Jukes asks us to understand the world we now live in, the world our students live in. He believes for education and teachers to change we have to "change the most fundamental parts of [ourselves] and [our] belief systems" and not accept TTWWADI. "Essentially we are telling educators who have developed habits of mind for years to "Do everything different!" (2007, p. 10). Jukes reiterates the saying from Albert Einstein concerning the definition of insanity where we expect to do something we have always done and assume we will get a different result! Is this not what we do in education every day, expecting our students to be interested and engaged in school, without understanding their lives and working within the education model that we always have had? An understanding of the world others live in is an important aspect of teaching, credibility in the eyes of the whole school community is vital for earning respect. This is not just the respect of our students; it is also the respect of our parents. Sometimes this can be difficult if students and parents do not think we understand the world outside school. Some parents see teaching as a tourist destination, a profession with an unreasonable amount of holidays.

McCourt acknowledges this importance of credibility, particularly with our students.

When I told stories about the docks they looked at me in a different way. One boy said it was funny to think you had a teacher up there that worked like real people and didn't come from college just talking about books and all. (2005, p. 65)

The idea of 'real' people and 'real' jobs appears to be important for the students we teach, making a closer connection between teacher and student. Why then do some teachers ignore opportunities to engage with activities that will broaden their own life worlds along with their teaching worlds?

Mining Soundscapes – Stories from Others

Only five teachers participated in the *Teacher in Mining Program* in Tasmania over two years. Ron Bugg, who organised the program through the Tasmanian Mineral Council (TMC), commented that he was disappointed with the response. The program required teachers to give up one week of school holidays but TMC also paid one week's relief to the school, allowing the teacher to have two weeks experience in the mining industry. Out of the other four who were part of the program two agreed to an interview with Jodie.

Jodie hoped her carefully prepared questions (see Appendix 2) would clearly show what her two teaching colleagues thought about their experience in a mining environment. Sue was eager to speak about her experience. She kept referring to her experience as working in the 'real world', as if when we are in schools we are not working in a real world. Sue believed that she had a better understanding of 'real' life experiences through her work at the Hellyer Mine. She referred to school as being an artificial environment, a place where you did not have the opportunity to understand people's different lives. Sue enjoyed the flexibility of the mining work place as school can often be rigid and regulated with little

opportunity to be spontaneous without an entourage of students joining in. She noted that working in industry did not require her to have personal contact with people 'en masse' and that the classroom environment was far more demanding. As a result of this experience Sue felt that she had a deeper understanding of the mining process and could pass this on to her students effectively. Sue shared her experience with staff, students and parents. She created a unit of work and a booklet about her mining experience.

Liz had far more 'out of school' experiences than Sue, having worked in industry herself, which meant she found the *Teaching in Mining* placement more about the content of the industry rather than the novelty of not being in a classroom. Liz believed her experience at Tempco, an electro metallurgical company, expanded her capacity to offer students a broader view of industry in Tasmania. She could now engage different students, some who were not previously interested in the content of the high school curriculum. Liz found she was exposed to different types of people from different cultures that were less judgemental, more aware and accepting than she had found in her teaching experiences. Liz was keen for this program to be offered again with greater support and more opportunities for teachers to get out into communities to find out how people work and live in a different environment.

On their return to the school environment, Sue, Liz and Jodie had the same response from teachers. The teachers did not understand why they gave up a week's holiday to work in a mining environment. Sue and Jodie were able to share with the staff the program's outcomes and the resources they had prepared. Liz was not given this opportunity and she said that staff in the school were not interested in her placement in industry.

We would like to think that students are aware of career opportunities well before they reach sixteen years of age so they may choose areas of learning that inspire and captivate them and maybe even pursue a career in their area of interest. It was like Jodie's experience of geology where she did not consider a career in mining as it was not offered as a possibility. Her life as a student was very similar to John Lennon's experience noted earlier in this chapter, he was expected to be a dentist or a teacher. In Jodie's years as a student they were expected to be teachers, bank tellers and public service workers. Jodie wanted to be a teacher most of her student life but what if she had been aware of more possibilities, would she have changed her mind? Robinson, when he speaks about finding our *Element*, sadly admits that many teachers, parents and well-meaning relatives dismiss this self-discovery toward our passions, advising students to follow a career path that is seen as sensible and attainable. Matt Groening, the creator of *The Simpsons* ignored this advice of 'taking on' a 'real career'. He found his *Element* in drawing, humour and film and took the chance that he may fail. Robinson says that Groening "found high levels of achievement and personal satisfaction upon discovering the thing [he] naturally did well and also ignited [his] passion" (2009, p. 8). Robinson believes this finding of our *Element* is something everyone should work towards achieving.

Finding your element is essential to your well-being and ultimate success, and, by implication, to the health of our organisations and the effectiveness of our education systems. (2009, p. 8)

Is it possible to find our *Element* in the classrooms of the twenty-first century? It would appear that we are in danger of losing the spontaneity of our teaching and learning soundscapes within the current testing climate of education, something Robinson warns us about in his books and interviews.

Can we retain our special melodies, harmonies and rhythms whilst residing within the 'classic' educational soundscape? Can we give all our students the opportunity to find their potential, their 'calling' in the world of careers and life in general? Does the 'classic' education experience provide a 'space' for creativity?

CHAPTER 7

ALL THAT JAZZ – ‘OFF THE CUFF’ TEACHING: IMPROVISATION AND CREATIVITY

(Being creative may support and enhance all aspects of education)

Jazz

Jazz is a style of music, native to America, characterised by a strong but flexible rhythmic under-structure with solo and ensemble improvisations on basic tunes and chord patterns and, more recently, a highly sophisticated harmonic idiom. (answers.com, 2008d)

Can You Feel The Music?

When we hear jazz or rhythm and blues we may think of music that comes from our hearts. Listening to the sounds of jazz envelopes our body, speaks to our heart and compels us to sway to the melodies. As the jazz musician plays he appears to be at one with his instrument, improvising rather than playing a set piece of music, although he may start off playing a familiar tune! A jazz musician intimately knows his instrument, making his performance seem easy and effortless, he is in what some people would call the ‘zone’ or a state of ‘flow’.

We could regard ourselves as being the jazz musician in our classroom. To begin with we have our set piece of music, our lesson plans and we play our melodies with our students. Then, inevitably, something happens and the tune is changed and we have to improvise or teach ‘off the cuff’. Teaching makes for an unpredictable life, where we often have to respond before we can reflect on the content of our reply. We improvise every minute of the day even though we may have engaged in thorough and thoughtful planning

beforehand. We make many decisions and have many instant interactions to deal with. We are in that 'zone' or 'flow' of our teaching when we are fully aware and in the presence of our students, delivering appropriate responses and positive interactions. Just as we hear the experienced jazz musician improvise melodies and counter-melodies, we hear the experienced teacher improvise her day within the constantly changing of dynamics of the classroom. What is this uniqueness a successful jazz musician possesses? What of the responsive, talented teacher who can turn a class around when things are not going smoothly or the special lesson she pulls from nowhere to capture her students' attention?

A musician may have perfect technique, read musical notation accurately and be experienced in playing with others but still not be able to improvise. There may appear to be no 'soul' or 'heart' to his performance. A teacher may have been teaching for many years, understand and use all the right strategies but appear to have no 'soul' or 'heart' in her teaching. It is like she has picked up the 'sheet music' of a learning experience and no matter how disengaged the students become she will not waver from the printed notation. A teacher who is not able to improvise might provide learning experiences that are stagnant, lifeless and dull, thus preventing students from having the opportunity to gain deeper understandings.

The jazz musician would like to appeal to his audience, capturing their hearts and inviting them to move with the melody. If he is playing with others he must listen to their instruments, maintaining harmony and rhythm whilst improvising his own tune. When we improvise as teachers we want our students to be engaged in the performance, sometimes as the back-up players and sometimes as the soloist, improvising and leading the band. At the same time we want our students to reach deep understandings about the concepts they

are learning. As teachers, we want, as does the jazz musician, to capture the heart our audience, maintaining the harmony and the rhythm of the class dynamics.

There is, however, a fine line between effective improvisation and losing sight of the outcome. The improvising musician may lose awareness of his audience and become so involved in his improvisation that he forgets where his performance is leading. The improvisation can become a self-indulgent performance, a journey for the ego, which instantly disconnects from the audience and other musicians. How often have we sat at a rock concert listening to a drum solo that has gone on too long, the musician becoming lost in his own music?

For some, it would appear that live jazz music is totally unstructured. It does follow a structure and is reliant on the performer having a deep understanding of harmonics, musical structures, the capacity of their instrument and the ability to play with others. The musician who successfully improvises has all these qualities with the inclusion of that 'extra' vital component that cannot be taught, it must be felt, 'the heart' of the performance. We can see that a teacher who wants to successfully improvise a lesson or lessons in her classroom requires similar skills, understandings and 'heart'. In the book, *Chaos Theory and its Implications for Curriculum and Teaching*, it tells us,

Good teachers or even good curriculum designers are like jazz musicians responding and improvising to the critical points in their music. As they play, implicitly or explicitly, they recognise there is order in the disorder of their worlds. (Ianone, p. 3)

A teacher may comment that her most successful teaching experiences have been 'off the cuff' or an improvisation. In some instances they start something wonderful in the

classroom. In reflection of these ‘wonderful’ teachable moments we may consider what made these experiences successful and speculate who they were a success for.

What is regarded as successful improvisation in the classroom? Some possible statements that might assist in our reflection are:

The students were engaged in the lesson.

The students produced lots of work as a result of the lesson.

The students were working from their interests.

The students acquired deep understandings around a concept or topic.

The students made connections with other areas of learning.

The students were able to transfer knowledge from one concept to another.

The teacher and students felt good.

Everyone was having fun.

We want students to be engaged, produce work and work from their interests. It is also important to have fun and not every minute of our school day has to be embedded with meaningful, rigorous learning experiences. Most of the time, however, we need to ensure that our improvised lessons contain opportunities for students to acquire deep understanding, make connections with other areas of learning and have the ability to interpret knowledge using different concepts.

These are the critical aspects of the *Teaching for Understanding* model where learning is more about deepening understandings for particular areas of knowledge rather than having a broad, superficial ‘brush’ of everything.

For teachers:

Teaching for Understanding is an educational pedagogy that uses the following four questions as a foundation for its framework:

What topics are worth understanding?

What about these topics needs to be understood?

How can we foster understanding?

How can we tell what students understand? (Harvard University, 2009)

The model suggests students:

Take active roles in evaluating their own progress towards goals.

Apply knowledge to real-world situations.

Make connections across disciplines.

Independently solve problems.

Transfer knowledge, or use it in a new situation. (Harvard University, 2009)

Teaching ‘off the cuff’ is usually reliant on an extensive repertoire of teaching strategies that can be called upon at a moment’s notice. Having this repertoire does not necessarily guarantee our teaching will be effective.

There is no guarantee that a teacher who is knowledgeable, has an extensive repertoire of instructional practices, and is kind and caring will necessarily be an effective teacher. That said, having all three would certainly increase the chances. (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2001, p. 5)

If we are to embed these strategies into our practice, letting them evolve effortlessly as a natural part of the lesson, we need to thoroughly understand the *Teaching for Understanding* model and be able to incorporate effective strategies within the model to enhance student learning. Just as the accomplished jazz musician knows the instrument he is playing well and understands the structures of music, a teacher who teaches with minimal planning must know herself, her students and deeply understand the structures and strategies of classroom teaching. Through awareness, we know when to incorporate new learning opportunities, capturing and harnessing that ‘moment’, without forgetting the ones that have been planned for. We can do this whilst achieving the outcomes required and ensure students’ deep understandings are developed and attained. Slavko Cvetek suggests that

When planning their lessons, [teachers] should...become less concerned with detailed objectives and explicit results, and more with devising possible and probable classroom scenarios to which they can react. Their lesson plans should...contain less detailed descriptions of classroom activities and teaching procedures, and more alternative ‘strategic plans’ that should serve as broad guidelines, based on what teachers can generate in their own situation-specific procedures and classroom techniques. (Cvetek, 2007)

‘Off the cuff’ lessons happen as a consequence of what is occurring in the classroom within a moment in time. There may be some teachers who are confident enough to walk into a classroom without any plan in mind but most experienced teachers would have at least a broad idea of what they want to do. These spontaneous lessons usually occur when we recognise those ‘teachable moments’ and are prepared to move off on a ‘tangent’, directing our teaching towards the passions of our students rather strictly adhering to what we have written down.

Watson, who speaks of teacher identity in chapter five, *Bluesy Tunes – Melancholy Songs*, interviewed a teacher of English in a small rural secondary school with more than twenty years experience of teaching. Watson was exploring the construction of identity in teaching through narratives of practice. During part of the interview with Tom she discovered that he rarely produced lesson plans. Tom describes how he might take a novel he hasn't read into a classroom and shares this with his students. He also assures them they are going to have fun. He reasons that

I know what's going on y'know.

I don't plan lessons very often simply because

You don't know what mood the class is going to be in

When they walk through that door

And it all depends on what that class is going to be like

That dictates the way something's got to be taught. (Watson, 2006, p. 517)

This reminds us of times when we might observe teachers conducting a lesson that is not working, for any number of reasons, but they persevere with the lesson relentlessly. It has been carefully planned, it is written down so they have to see it through to the end! Some of us soon learn if something is not working to stop, take stock of the situation and change direction to suit the class. It might even mean abandoning the lesson altogether. Every morning we have a range of personalities walk into our rooms, coming from diverse home lives. How can we predict that every lesson we have planned and written down will be successfully executed? Watson says that

Clearly, the orthodox view holds that teachers should plan lessons. [Tom] subverts this...But it relates to a serious point, the need for flexibility in teaching...[Tom] takes us

into the classroom and succinctly demonstrates his positioning alongside the pupils as a mentor and guide. (2006, p. 517)

Performing With Feeling

Could we say that this ‘off the cuff’ style of teaching comes from our somatic awareness, listening to our ‘gut’ feelings, to understand where to go to next with our students? To the outsider, observing a classroom that is working well, it would seem we know exactly what we are doing and where we are going next with our lesson. This is not always the case. An intuitive teacher, who listens and watches her students, can use her awareness to direct the classroom activities whilst still keeping the structure or plan in the back of her mind. If we acknowledge intuitiveness and our somatic awareness as guides for our teaching then our lessons evolve not just from our planning but also according to our ‘feel’ of the mood in the room and our ‘feel’ for our students’ engagement. It is this tacit knowing we find difficult to articulate, especially to the pre-service teacher who is eager to understand how we dive and swoop our way through the day often without stopping for breath or reflection.

Lous Heshusius and Keith Ballard refer to Michael Polanyi’s book *The Tacit Dimension* to describe tacit knowledge or somatic awareness as “the knowing that we know but cannot tell because it is initially visceral and internal” (Heshusius & Ballard, 1996, pp. 5, 6). We find it difficult to pass on skills of improvisation which are contained in our passion and feelings for teaching because our inner knowing or somatic awareness that helps us to understand is “undefinable, indeterminate, strictly personal” (Polanyi, 1967, p. 76).

Heshusius has written extensively about the importance of children’s emotions and says that children know in an embodied way, relying on their somatic and affective knowing as

a primary source of information but “as we become adults, we learn how to repress somatic awareness, and many of us can no longer tell when our stomachs know better than our minds, when our bodies feel completely wrong, or why we develop headaches” (1996, p. 3).

Heshusius and Ballard suggest, as adults, we unlearn our somatic knowing or choose to ignore it because it cannot be explained intellectually and is a concept that appears to be ‘invisible’ and ‘inaudible’. Is this why a teacher might insist on continuing with a lesson that is obviously not working for most of her students?

For many of us, there are moments in our professional development, as in the whole of life, when we know that we no longer believe what we had long accepted as true and correct. Something no longer feels right: It is a feeling that arises in our deeper psyche, in our somatic-emotional life. Often this feeling is dismissed at the academic-intellectual level and work continues as usual in the familiar ways in which our profession has socialised us. (Heshusius & Ballard, 1996, pp. 2, 3)

For many of us in the teaching profession, awareness of our somatic-emotional life has created tension between what we are expected to do and what feels right for us to do. There are still many leaders in our government and in our schools who choose to ignore the knowledge our somatic awareness can bring to education. This tacit knowledge is not a visible component of teaching methodology. “Interior knowing cannot be intellectually refuted; it is invisible and lives throughout our being” (Heshusius & Ballard, 1996, p. 5). Some government education policy makers and curriculum writers understand this tacit knowledge cannot be measured and therefore it is dismissed as irrelevant.

If we are regimented in our approach to teaching, sticking to the ‘program’ and unable to improvise, we miss the opportunity to establish and maintain valuable connections with our students, thus our classroom becomes almost like an exercise in musical scales, a performance with no heart. In what ways ought we recognise and attend to our somatic awareness as part of our process of teaching? Ought not the recognition of somatic awareness be included in pre-service teacher courses at university, explicitly stating it as an important attribute of teaching?

When we are aware of our own body cues they can tell us about our interactions with students and our teaching practices. As we re-awaken our somatic awareness, making it explicit in our classroom practice, we may encourage our students to listen to their bodies and what they tell them. They may learn from their own somatic awareness, letting us know how they are feeling and giving us insights into their learning. Are we listening when our students tell us how they are feeling? Palmer discusses the importance of feelings in the classroom environment and the difference between

...the apostles of the ‘hard’ intellectual virtues and the disciplines of the ‘soft’ emotional virtues. It has been a fruitless debate because it has missed a simple point: the practice of intellectual rigour in the classroom requires an ethos of trust and acceptance. Intellectual rigour depends on things like honest dissent and the willingness to change our minds, things that will not happen if the ‘soft’ values of community are lacking. In the absence of the communal virtues, intellectual rigour too easily turns into intellectual rigor mortis.

(1993, p. xvii)

Might that dissonant mathematics experience have been a different soundscape had Mr P been somatically aware and willing to allow his ‘soft’ emotional values to permeate the classroom environment?

We might consider that the ordered structure of our school is like an orchestra and our individual classrooms may be closer to that of the jazz band. The jazz band is less predictable, follows a more loose structure than an orchestra and is more about playing from intuition or 'gut feeling' rather than following a score. Jazz music could be interpreted as more of a 'somatic' type of music than maybe orchestral arrangements. It would seem that the jazz musician comes from a place that is more organic and tribal.

At any time in a classroom, if a teacher is in her 'moment' of teaching, totally in the presence of her students, she can respond effectively to the needs of her students. The more experienced and open she is in her teaching practice the more natural and responsive she can be in a split second. Of course the type of interaction she creates maybe positive or negative, the same as the jazz musician may play a riff that is unappealing to the audience or on the other hand be applauded for his music genius! It is then, with her awareness and knowing, she can change her tune, just as the musician will change his, captivating the audience once more.

Creating Meaningful Soundscapes

If we are to recognise and use somatic awareness in our teaching we could generate possibilities for creativity and innovation in our classroom practice, helping both teachers and students engage with thoughtful activities to develop understanding, creativity, and increased confidence. As we see governments' escalating interest in student performance, standardised testing and teacher accreditation will we see the demise of a teacher's spontaneity and creativity in the classroom, destroying her improvised melodies? Will these ways of working ask teachers and students to become "apostles of the 'hard'

intellectual virtues” (Palmer, 1993, p. xvii) and force them to ignore feelings that help develop innovative practices?

Bennett and Rolheiser suggest, “What makes the teaching and learning process so complex is its spontaneous nature.” As a result of this spontaneous nature, “effective teaching has to be creative” (2001, p. 7). If we believe this to be true is our teaching soundscape in danger of becoming less spontaneous, less creative and less effective because of the turn towards mass-produced results?

Robinson’s comments about the arts in the United States’ current educational climate points to a backwards step for innovation, entrepreneurship, creative thinking and self-confidence.

A lot of the school districts are deeply concerned that the impact of this high-stakes assessment culture - the growing emphasis on grades, numerical testing and on sacrificing everything in the interest of improving university entrance rates – is demoralising teachers and school principals and actually stifling innovation and creativity. Some seem to think that promoting creative thinking is the opposite of achieving high standards in education. It is actually a way of achieving it. (Robinson, 2007)

To express our passions, through our strengths, we are able to acknowledge our somatic awareness, become the jazz musician in the ‘zone’ creating something we are proud of and feel good about. If our strength is in the visual arts, immersion motivates us to pursue a path of learning, wanting to improve our skills and attain near perfection without discouragement. With the more academic subject of mathematics we might be constantly

frustrated and as a consequence feel discouraged, unintelligent and not as clever as the 'rest'.

Children with strong academic abilities often fail to discover their other abilities. Those of lower academic ability may have other powerful abilities that lie dormant. They can all pass through the whole of their education never knowing what their real abilities are.

They can become disaffected, resentful of their 'failure' and conclude that they are simply not very bright. (Robinson, 2001, pp. 8, 9)

If we do not take the opportunity to engage in the arts, if that is our strength, during our school years, expressing ourselves through drawing and performing, we may not have found our melody of confidence. Something some of us may desperately need if we are shy or lacking in confidence.

Elliot W. Eisner believes the arts, particularly visual arts, helped him struggle through his years of schooling. He sees the arts as integral to successful education of all students, along with the basics such as numeracy and literacy. He uses two of the world's most influential art educators, Sir Herbert Read and Viktor Lowenfeld, to demonstrate his point regarding the importance of creativity in any child's life, in and out of school. Lowenfeld in particular believes that the child who uses creativity as an emotional outlet, will gain "freedom and flexibility as a result of the release of unnecessary tensions" helping the child face new situations without difficulties. "Through his flexible approaches toward expression of his own ideas, he will not only face new situations properly but will adjust himself to them easily." On the other side, the inhibited and restricted child will be "accustomed to imitating rather than expressing himself creatively...preferring to go along set-patterns in life" (2002, p. 32). If we are not inhibited, we easily learn to improvise,

creating something that enlivens our self and others. When we are inhibited we follow the score note by note without passion, nor heart and soul. Would students want to work with such a teacher?

It is disappointing to see that schools provide less creative opportunities each year as governments concentrate more on literacy and numeracy scores, sacrificing not only learning areas such as art, music and drama but also failing to recognise the creative teaching of the more academic subjects. In our current society, literacy and numeracy seem to be the most significant measurement of student intelligence that drives our funding for educational programs. These learning areas are essential for successful integration in community with others and assist with our daily lives but, if we concentrate on these two areas, do we not create deficits in others? Providing an unbalanced education with concentration on skills and memory prohibits our students' creative thinking, potentially lowers their self-esteem and may disengage them from school altogether. Recognition of the many forms of intellectual capacity and abilities may help to provide a balance and lessen the current beliefs around what it is to be intelligent. Feelings for 'unintelligence' are ungrounded if we understand there are different capacities for intelligence. "Some people have a great capacity for logical deductive reasoning or for mathematical analysis. Others have strong capacities for musical composition or understanding, others for visual ideas and design" (Robinson, 2001, p. 107).

The Australian *2020 Summit Report* points out the need for productivity, and how education should be preparing our students for Australia's workforce, with particular focus on literacy and numeracy skills. Eisner believes arts education is preparation for the world of work "even though the projects students work on in an art class might not look as if they have much to do with the workplace, they are very much a part of the 'skill set'

students need to become productive workers” (2002, p. 34). Eisner references the comments from a chief executive of a large corporation to show how the arts can benefit the world of work, a point of view from a non-educator.

...there are two sets of basics. The first – reading, writing, and math – is simply a prerequisite for a second, more complex, equally vital connection of higher – level skills required to function well in today’s world. These basics include the ability to allocate resources; to work successfully with others; to find, analyse, and communicate information; to operate increasingly complex systems of seemingly unrelated parts; and finally, to use technology. The arts provide an unparalleled opportunity to teach these higher-level basics that are increasingly critical, not only to tomorrow’s work force, but also today’s. (2002, p. 34)

If students are given the opportunity to participate in disciplines that call upon their creativity at school they could potentially gain the skills the chief executive cites above, preparing them for the workforce.

It is not only important to recognise the vital role the arts play in creativity and effective teaching. The teaching of any area of learning is dependent on the skill of the teacher, her expertise in engaging students. The arts can be bereft of creativity just as some academic subjects could be unless we approach the teaching of the arts with enthusiasm, flexibility and imagination. Eisner acknowledges that “two of the most important factors affecting students’ experiences in the classroom are the quality of the teaching they encounter and the quality of the curriculum provided” (2002, p. 46). Eisner says there is a danger when teaching, particularly in art, that you might “risk stifling students’ creativity, block their imagination and thwart their personal expression” (2002, p. 46). If we are mindful of the

tone of our language, modulate the pace of the class and improvise in the face of uncertainty we could successfully fulfil our students' creative potential.

Canned scripts in teaching promoted by some who believe that teaching can be reduced to a formulaic 'science' (which ironically is not what science is about) do not work, since what cannot be provided to make the teacher's script useful are scripts for students. (Eisner, 2002, p. 48)

Once again we see this idea of 'recipe', or a set of predetermined competencies that will not allow our students to grow and learn in readiness to live their own lives. Todd voices her concerns that it is an act of violence on our students to impose our views, our beliefs and our way of doing things without considering their 'Otherness'. She believes that the "curriculum needs to be more thoroughly considered as part of the quality of human response between teachers and students, as part of the delicacy of engaging students, rather than as a fixed set of representations" (2001a, p. 447). The improvisational ability of our teaching becomes more vital if we want to honour the 'otherness' our students.

This fixed set of representations is an approach often used in the more academic areas of learning. We could begin to think that creativity belongs in all subject areas. "Creativity is not exclusive to particular activities; it's possible wherever human intelligence is actively engaged. It is not a specific type of activity but a quality of intelligence" (Robinson, 2001, p. 113). What if we taught some of the more 'academic' subject areas using more than just the text book, including more opportunities for creativity through exploration, creation and reflection? How do we avoid 'the curriculum' becoming a "fixed set of representations" or "canned scripts"?

Historically, Western schools have honoured the ‘subject’ rather than the student as we hear in the voices of Palmer’s professors and McCourt’s mentors. The ‘subject’ continues to be valued by some teachers and schools more than our ‘inner states’, particularly in some high school mathematics and science classes. In what ways could we express ourselves no matter what the subject area is? Taylor says that

We think of the imagination as creative....where I discover myself through my work as an artist, through what I create. My self- discovery passes through a creation, the making of something original and new. I forge a new artistic language, a new way of painting, new metre or form of poetry, new way of writing a novel and through this and this alone I become what I have it in me to be. (1991, p. 62)

Thus students might be involved in a new way of solving a mathematical problem or exploring new scientific possibilities. Students could be acknowledged as an ‘artist’ when they create a rap as a new metre or form of poetry. Through creative exploration of any subject area students may discover their inner self, their hidden talent and their possible creative futures.

Taylor believes that “self-discovery requires *poiésis*, making” (1991, p. 62). Following Taylor’s thoughts we can imagine that each of us has an “original way of being human” and we each discover ourselves through “giving expression in our speech and action to what is original in us.” For Taylor this immediately makes a connection “between self-discovery and artistic creation” with “artistic creation becoming the paradigm mode in which people can come to self-definition” (1991, p. 61). If we deny students the time to engage in *poiésis*, the bringing forth of something they have created, might we put at risk

their freedom to engage in self-discovery and the opportunity to “come to self-definition?”

As students become absorbed in the process of *poiésis*, assisting in self-discovery of their capacities and the nature of their being within our worlds, could they possibly contribute more positively to our local and global communities? For some students artistic creation could open the door to worlds of learning not previously available to them. For some, like Jodie, the mathematics door remains closed, for the moment. We can be eternally hopeful that she and others will find a key to that door, finding it through creative action, not the words of a text book.

What about the student who understands and enjoys success in mathematics no matter the teaching method? There are many students who enjoy the subject despite the teacher rarely being present, having to use only text books and work with problems from the board. They appear not to need help, not have things explained. Does the student who has a ‘mathematical brain’ draw on her ‘inner’ creativity to achieve success?

According to Howard Gardener we have preferred learning styles as shown in his work on multiple intelligences. Is it possible that our preferred learning style maybe related to a ‘passion’ or an attitude towards a particular discipline? Would a student who is mathematically inclined be passionate about mathematics and as a result naturally creative, helping them understand the concepts?

Passionate Tunes

Polanyi devotes an entire chapter to *Intellectual Passions* in his book *Personal Knowledge*. He describes in detail the passion and value of the sciences, mathematics, and technology and at the end of the chapter, he explores passion in the arts. Polanyi proposes that intellectual passions have an “affirmative content” which, for each individual, provides value and interest for that particular content.

This is their *heuristic* function. The heuristic impulse links our appreciation of scientific value to a vision of reality, which serves as a guide to enquiry. Heuristic passion is also the mainspring of originality – the force which impels us to abandon an accepted framework of interpretation and commit ourselves, by the crossing of a logical gap, the use of a new framework. (1974, p. 159)

Polanyi points out that these intellectual passions around areas such as mathematics and science can “gradually become toned down to a faint echo of their discoverer’s first excitement in the moment of illumination.” Then there is “a transition” which takes this intellectual passion “from a heuristic act to the routine teaching and learning of its results, and eventually to the mere holding of these as known and true” and “the driving power of originality is reduced to a static personal polarisation of knowledge” (1974, p. 172). This appears to be how many schools teach mathematics and science. The curriculum reduces the content to the learning and memorising of ‘facts’ and ‘theories’ helping students successfully ‘perform’ in state-wide testing. The Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations conducted a review of our flagging numbers of students enrolling in science and mathematics in senior secondary schools.

The review focuses on issues in science, technology and mathematics education, which are of national concern. One issue is that

teaching which does too little to stimulate curiosity, problem-solving, depth of understanding and continued interest in learning among students, or to thus encourage them to undertake advanced study in science and mathematics at school and beyond. (DEST, 2003)

Maybe students consider these subjects as making little contribution to their life world. Then again, students might lose interest in subjects they previously loved because of the way they are taught. Students now live in a highly technological world that values our heuristic natures, the preference to problem-solve and experiment with different alternatives. Being creative involves prolonged periods of time, reflection and tacit action, constructing opportunities for elucidation. Do our education systems provide learning environments and curricula that support these prerequisites for authentic creativity? Are our systems held back by short time frames and testing outcomes? Bohm purports that “As a child grows older, however, learning takes on a narrower meaning. In school, he learns by repetition to accumulate knowledge, so as to please the teacher and pass examinations” (2007, p. 4) and as Bohm further acknowledges, “At work, he learns in a similar way, so as to make a living, or for some other utilitarian purpose, and not mainly for the love of the action of learning itself. So his ability to see something new and original gradually dies away” (2007, p. 4).

In regards to mathematics learning the standardised testing regimes of the United States may prevent students engaging in creative aspects of this subject area. “From the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 teachers [may be] under more pressure to teach to the test rather

than to work towards developing in their student a conceptual understanding of mathematics” (Mann, p. 244). Australia appears to be heading along the same track in mathematics and literacy which may prohibit some students from succeeding at school.

It may be worthwhile to explore a creative approach to all subject areas, observing if there is an increase in student understanding and success where students have previously failed. We might consider creativity to be more effective than ‘chalk and talk’ and merely carrying out practice exercises from a textbook till students became proficient and could perform on each test. Within this increase in creativity we might release the students’ “heuristic impulse”, motivating them to continue with a subject. This may eventuate in a deeply felt connection with the learning discipline, where students do not give up in favour of an area more stimulating or leave school altogether.

At the end of his chapter on intellectual passions, Polanyi extends his perception to other emotions he believes are kindred to the intellectual passions of science and mathematics, that being the area of the abstract arts. The abstract arts are to be “appreciated for the beauty of a set of complex relations embodied in them. As in pure mathematics, so also in the abstract arts, these interesting relationships are discovered, created, within structures composed of utterances denoting no tangible object” (1974, p. 193). It is not surprising to find that Polanyi particularly identifies with music as an example of structures because of its close relationship with mathematics.

Among the abstract arts music stands out by its precise and complex articulation, subject to a grammar of its own. In profundity and scope it may compare with pure mathematics. We do not merely hear music but listen to it and enjoy it by understanding it, even as we enjoy mathematics. Like mathematics, music

articulates a vast range of rational relationships for the mere pleasure of understanding them. (1974, p. 193)

Polanyi continues his discussion around abstract arts and how, unlike mathematics, they

...rely instead on their sensuous content. A patch of colour, a musical note are so substantial in themselves, that they speak their part in articulating a relationship with other patches of colour, or other musical notes, without pointing beyond themselves. Instead of denoting something – whether an external object or their own use – they emphatically present their own striking sensuous presence. (1974, pp. 193, 194)

Polanyi points out that expressing creativity only through the arts could be a narrow way of working and thinking. Using the example of astronomy, Polanyi describes how creative experiences of the subject, becoming wholly engaged with it, or even by ‘dwelling in it’ can lead to a sense of excitement or joy.

Astronomic observations are made by dwelling in astronomic theory, and it is this internal enjoyment of astronomy which makes the astronomer interested in the stars. This is how scientific value is contemplated from within. But awareness of this joy is dimmed when the formulae of astronomy are used in a routine manner. (1974, p. 195)

Polanyi says this is also true for mathematics.

Between the practice of hackneyed exercises on the one hand and the heuristic visions of the lonely discoverer on the other, lies the major domain of established

mathematics on which the mathematician consciously dwells by losing himself in the contemplation of its greatness. (1974, p. 195)

Learning Soundscapes – ‘Subject’ Matters

What of the reality of the high school classroom, the curriculum, and the assessment procedures? Many mathematics teachers have the intellectual passion but how do they provide students with opportunities to engage with mathematics creatively if they are tied to a stringent time frame to complete all aspects of a mathematics syllabus, especially in grades nine and ten? “Teachers who only emphasise algorithms, speed and accuracy provide the student negative reinforcement” (Mann, 2006, p. 244). Are we teaching our students, or are we teaching subjects for testing outcomes? Polanyi believes we can only gain a true understanding of any subject by the contemplative experience of them and by teaching this capacity to our students.

The task of inducing an intelligent contemplation of music and dramatic art aims likewise at enabling a person to surrender himself to works of art. This is neither to observe or handle them, but to live in them. Thus the satisfaction of gaining intellectual control over the external world is linked to a satisfaction of gaining control over ourselves. (1974, p. 196)

Can we imagine a soundscape where our students develop a passion for these subjects, given time to ‘dwell’ in them, ‘contemplate’ them, understand deeply their meaning and application in the worlds we live in?

What if we are given the opportunity to explore mathematical concepts creatively? What would that have meant for ‘knowing ourselves’ along with developing a positive attitude toward mathematics?

When our governments and many members of our society discuss what is important to learn and to measure they tend to think in terms of *Academia*, describing students as either academic or non-academic. Robinson tells us this view is incorrect.

Whatever general intelligence maybe, academic ability is not the same thing. Academic ability is very specific. It is based on the two capacities for propositional knowledge and for logic-deductive reason. This is what ‘academic’ means. (2001, p. 66)

The term *academic* comes from the Greek word *Academeia* which derives from the name of a grove near ancient Athens. This is where, around 400 BC, “Plato established a deeply influential group of scholars” and from the teachings he drew through Socrates, his teacher, and Aristotle, his pupil, grew “systems of thought, of mathematics and science that have helped to shape the intellectual character of the Western world” (Robinson, 2001, p. 66). As Robinson points out, even though there have been tremendous benefits from Plato’s teachings they have also created many problems.

...the priorities of education throughout the West are now dominated by the idea of academic ability and by the related idea of IQ. Both offer a disastrously limited picture of human intelligence and both result in a lethal waste of human resources in education, business and in the community at large. (2001, p. 66)

Robinson tells us academic ability is not the same as intelligence, but while our governments and many members of our society view the word *academic* as a synonym for *educational* our schools will continue to test for intelligence using only skills in mathematics and literacy as the measuring tool. “The conflation of academic ability with intelligence is simply taken for granted. It is in a sense an ideology. Like ideologies, this one persists despite all evidence to the contrary” (2001, p. 80).

Robinson believes, “The divisions of the Enlightenment and Romanticism are alive and well in contemporary attitudes to the arts and sciences” and has created the unbalanced nature of our subject hierarchy. “The sciences enjoy high status: the arts suffer from low status” (2001, p. 83).

We now have systems of education where there are very clear hierarchies of subjects in schools. We have math and literacy at the top along with a version of science. The humanities follow behind and the arts are at the bottom – at least that’s true for all developed economies. In secondary or high schools, there are still strong lines of division between different discipline, so subjects rarely collaborate and the effects are startling. (Robinson, 2001)

Our universities honour these divisions and degrees in medicine, law and engineering are the most highly regarded. “Universities in particular and education in general are still dominated by the ideology of academicism” (2001, p. 84). As our test scores are based upon the entrance scores to university we will continue this unbalanced view between subjects until universities change. But as Robinson laments, “universities are lumbering institutions and change tends to take place at a glacial rate” (2001, p. 89).

While we continue to confuse academic ability with intelligence our governments will insist that academic rigour constitutes our successes of learning in school setting. What realms of humanity does society deny when numeracy and literacy are the most important technologies for measuring student performance and success?

There are some teachers, behind the closed doors of their classrooms, who recognise the value of creativity and give their students more creative learning experiences for both 'academic' and 'arts' subjects. If we are not creative in our approach within all subject areas are we in danger of treating our students as objects, and not as fellow human beings?

Surrealist and Expressionist, Marc Chagall, says as he reflects upon painting, his creative passion, "If I create from the heart, nearly everything works; if from the head, almost nothing" (Chagall, 2009).

For how long do we struggle to convince our communities, and particularly the academic community along with our governments, of the significance and value of creativity in education? The question arises, again and again, "What are we teaching for?"

A story from a teacher in New York who experienced 9/11 in *Forever After* is concerned that one of her students may have become too casual about what had happened. She thought he may have removed himself from an experience "too close for comfort" or maybe even more frightening that "he is a product of the New York education system, where knowing is more important than understanding" (2006, p. 181). Her final thoughts define the disconnection of the students' school life and education, from the reality of their own lives.

September 11 is a household term. 9/11, Ground Zero – these are phrases that we connect with a certain day, place, and feeling. I wonder if, in learning, they have become as anonymous as other dates we learn about, even though the wound is still so raw. We sit in classrooms learning about the Koran, the U.S. government, and how airplanes work, but we never seem to discuss how all these things are interconnected. There are forums and support groups all over the country to discuss the impact that September 11 had on our lives, but the rigorous curriculum has no room for feelings or real insights. (2006, p. 181)

If the “rigorous curriculum has no room for feeling and real insights”, for creativity and improvisation, what will be the impact of our students’ lives? What sort of citizens are we creating for our future society? We need to consider the implications for creativity as we learn to be teachers, each with our own particular ‘creative’ passions. Might we discover and nurture our passions through imitation of the other?

CHAPTER 8

COVER VERSIONS: IS TEACHING IMITATIVE?

(Observing the teaching practice of others may help the new teacher grow, yet it may also diminish the originality of the self)

Cover Version

A recording of a song that was previously recorded or made popular by another. Also called cover song. Musicians now play what they call “cover versions” (for example, the reworking, updating or interpretation) of songs as a tribute to the original performer or group. Using familiar material (such as, Evergreen hits, standard tunes or classic recordings) is an important method in learning various styles of music. (answers.com, 2008b)

More Than Just Imitation – Soundscapes of *Mimesis*

Imitation of Love

They're making cheap imitations of everything

From rubber tires to leather gloves

But the cheapest imitation that I've ever seen

Was your imitation of love.

Imitation of love, there's no heart in it

You were only foolin', you never meant it

Imitation of love, I'm tired of livin'

You were only givin' an imitation of love. (Jones, 1962)

When pre-service teachers become part of our classrooms they may reveal our own teaching practice. As they stand up in front of the class and ‘perform their piece’ we might see our own practices reflected back, right down to hand gestures and voice modulation. It is like looking into a mirror and not always liking what you see. Observing their practice gives us the opportunity to reflect on our practice and think about what we need to change. We share these reflections with our pre-service teachers who may be amused at our embarrassment but they take note of our observations and consider changing certain teaching practices.

Is learning to be a teacher an act of *mimesis*? Is the art of teaching only learnt from imitating another? Nancy Hoffman, one of the co-authors of Senge’s book *Schools That Learn*, vividly recalls,

...sitting patiently in the back of the classroom for several weeks, watching and noting every move of the co-operating teacher, anxiously waiting for my turn....My task was clear: to mimic the master teacher, even if that meant thoughtless reproduction of her practices. Thinking deeply about challenging educational issues, or questioning the reasons for her approaches, was not required and there was no time for it. (2000, pp. 406, 407)

Is this the only way that we learn to be a teacher or are there innate talents and certain dispositions within that give us more teaching potential than another? This could be asked of many professions where it would seem some people are well suited to be doctors, nurses, or scientists.

Historically, *mimesis* has been accorded different meanings by different philosophers. As Timo Maran points out in his paper, *Mimesis as a phenomenon of semiotic communication*, “*Mimesis* has never actually been a determined and clearly definable concept” (2003, p. 193). To this day, says Maran, a definition of *mimesis* continues to be vague and philosophers appear to attach their own meaning through their own experiences as only one really can.

Is *mimesis* pure imitation of another’s action? Is it interpreting and (re)presenting an idea presented in some creative form such as visual art, drama or play, as in child’s play?

Part of teacher training as an early childhood teacher involves exploring educational theorists such as Russian born Lev Semenovich Vygotsky. He wrote that children learn through play, imitating problem solving, communicating with others around them and generally learn to ‘be’ in our world. Sara Meadow in her book *The Child as Thinker: The Development and Acquisition of Cognition in Childhood* acknowledges Vygotsky as saying “it is through others that we develop into ourselves” (Meadow, 1993, p. 296).

Maran looks to Aristotle to explain how *mimesis* may have first been interpreted, “First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures, and through imitation learns his earliest lessons. Aristotle Poet 4.1448b5” (Maran 2003, p. 195). This (re)presentation that occurs for the young child reminds us to pay attention in the way we speak and act around children. Why do children often pick up on the undesirable habits of others? Is it an unconscious act of selection? When we consider the student teacher who mimics the gestures and nuances of her mentor we could ask, “Does she choose these

generally unconscious behaviours to add to her teaching toolbox and how does she know they may be important for the teaching process?”

Sharing the Music - A Reciprocal Relationship

As Jodie rolls the silver pen between her fingers the cold steel recalls to her a time long gone and a flood of memories return. She looks down at her name, inscribed along the length of the silver barrel and the words ‘best wishes, Lorraine’. Lorraine was a pre-service teacher in Jodie’s class in the middle of 1997, just before Dan and Kale entered her life. Lorraine’s jovial nature was infectious and enabled her to establish positive relationships with Jodie’s students quickly. Lorraine was only to spend two weeks in the classroom as part of her first year practical experience, an induction course for teaching. Pre-service teachers spend this short time in the classroom to give them a ‘taste’ of actual teaching experience. This is so they may make an informed decision as to whether a teaching career is suitable for them. Lorraine had good rapport with Jodie’s students but she did find teaching quite challenging. Lorraine listened carefully to the advice she was given by the principal and the teachers within the school. After her practical experience she sent a thank you letter and the pen, both of which Jodie still has in her possession, and said, after her practical experience she intended to continue on the path of teacher training. Visiting later in the year, Lorraine met Dan and Kale. It was after the devastating fire that destroyed Jodie’s classroom. By then, the class was in the little terrapin behind Tree View College, their temporary classroom for the rest of the year. The students were delighted to see Lorraine. Dan very quickly introduced himself along with Kale who happened to be on one of his rare visits to the makeshift classroom.

This memory may help us reflect upon relationships between ourselves and our pre-service teachers. If we ask the question, “How do we help them become teachers?”

Maybe we should consider an alternative question first, “How did *we* become teachers?” Did we become teachers when we stepped into a school as a university student or was it when we actually had our own class and started teaching?

Some believe we are born with the instinct to teach, an idea that seems to comfort many who are appalled by or in awe of those of us who choose to teach and spend most of our lives with children. Conversation within educational circles exposes many different opinions, the most common belief being we are born with a ‘special’ teaching gift.

Jodie believes that every pre-service teacher working in her classroom has made a contribution to her students’ learning and her own teaching experience. She values the skills they bring to her classroom. Even though they are inexperienced classroom teachers they often bring a certain amount of ‘people knowledge’ or what van Manen calls *menkennis* to the students.

The following year, after Lorraine, Denice started her teaching practicum in Jodie’s classroom. Dan was still in her class and Kale had moved on to another class. Denice was the most talented pre-service teacher she had ever mentored. Yes, she sometimes mimicked her teaching patterns, and sometimes she sounded like Jodie, but most of the time she had a presence of her own. Denice was a dark-haired girl with a wonderful, welcoming smile. Her caring nature won Jodie’s students over immediately. Jodie explained Dan’s situation and reputation before Denice entered the class to help her understand the nature of his being. Their relationship started positively and continued that way for the whole of her four week practicum. The class were fortunate: Dan tended to trust females. But it was also her manner that warmed Dan to her. Denice would listen to him and most importantly, have a joke with him. A sense of humour was a pre-requisite for successfully ‘getting on’ with Dan! When Jodie watched Denice teach, she saw what

seemed to her to be Denice's natural ability at work. Was she born to teach? Jodie inserted a special letter, outlining what she believed to be Denice's exceptional teaching talent when she submitted her report to the University.

Jodie was not a confident, skilled student teacher like Denice when she was learning her teaching craft. How was she going to present as a confident 'apprentice' teacher after being afraid of schools and teachers for most of her years as a student! She chose the career of teaching from quite an early age, about eight years old, even though the thought of school sometimes terrified her. Was it because she thought she could be kinder towards students than she found her teachers were? Did she think she could explain things better to her friends than they did? Why did her experiences of school not turn her away from entering the profession? Was she born so instilled with the ability, the will, the desire, and the heart to teach that nothing could turn her away?

The *Mimetic* Soundscapes of Our Teaching Lives

When we mimic the teaching practices of others, what things do we learn from our colleagues, our mentor teachers? What do we learn from our friends and family over our lifetime, as we pick up on each other's habits and practices? Could there be a risk involved as we 'copy' others?

The Good, the Bad and Ugly of *Mimetic* Practice

Plato discusses the difference between *diegesis* and *mimesis* in the third book of *The Republic* to demonstrate what he believes is the danger of *mimesis*. He sees *diegesis* as a harmless way for the poet to perform a piece as it is merely a narration of what is written, however if the

poet recites the poem by *mimesis* he is becoming the character of that poem. Plato believes this mimetic act will cause the poet to take on some attributes of the character he is reading. These traits could then become part of the poet's true nature. We would wonder today if the violence we see through online or play station type games and television could encourage children to take on the traits of the characters portrayed. Particularly online or play station games where the child takes on the characters as avatars, an online version of themselves. A concern by many groups in our society is that some of the traits will become part of a child's true nature. There is wide range of social commentary highlighting concerns for children's exposure to violence on the Internet, and in published journals and books. Allan Hoffman writes of these problems in *Schools, Violence and Society*. He begins his story with a disappointing reflection of schools.

In the decades to come the sounds of laughter fade, and the once hospitable sanctuary is transformed into a place of fear. Instead of apples, the children bring guns to school. Instead of games or laughter, there are profanity, assaults, drugs, and alcohol.

What happened? We have seemingly awakened from a peaceful, idyllic slumber to find a world gone mad. Violence has taken center stage. It is a prime concern of our society and has become the focus of investigative journalism on television and in our newspapers.

(Hoffman, 1996, p. xi)

and the research continues...

As Plato develops the notion of his perfect community he acknowledges how impressionable young minds are. Through the dialogue between Socrates, Glaucon and Adeimantus, we are reminded of the importance of storytelling in education and how we must use both fact and fiction stories for learning, starting with fictional stories for

children. Plato's group of thinkers note that although these stories are fictional they do contain some truth.

The first step, as you know, is always what matters most, particularly when we are dealing with those who are young and tender. That is the time when they are easily moulded and when any impression we choose to make leaves a permanent mark. (1974, p. 131)

As the dialogue continues, they discuss the nature of storytelling and decide that the stories should be censored.

It seems that our first business is to supervise the production of stories, and choose only those we think suitable, and reject the rest. We shall persuade mothers and nurses to tell our chosen stories to their children and by means of them to mould their minds and characters which are more important than their bodies. The greater part of the stories current today we shall have to reject. (1974, p. 131)

Many stories in Plato's era were performed as plays and poetry. In every story, the citizens, the audience, hear about lives that are truthful and good. Plato felt that it was not only dangerous for the audience to hear actors spouting forth untruths and evil doings, the actors themselves could become the evil character they are playing, through imitating undesirable characteristics. Concerned for their mimetic nature, Plato forbids certain ways of poetry and drama to be practiced in his city-state. Drama and poetry are given little credence in his imagined utopia.

We will not allow them [Guardians] to take the parts of women, young or old (for they are men), not to represent them abusing their husbands or quarrelling with heaven and

boasting of their supposed good fortune, or mourning and lamenting misfortune. Far less can we permit representation of women in sickness or love or childbirth. (1974, p. 200)

Plato allows performances of both artistic representations but they are heavily censored and only reflect the nature of 'goodness' in people. Other less endearing traits of humanness were outlawed. "We must forbid this sort of thing entirely" (1974, p. 200). Plato makes more exceptions for music, as stated earlier in *The Republic*, so long as it is 'virtuous' music appealing to "the best and the best educated, as opposed to 'vicious' music that appeals to the majority" (1974, p. 96).

Media Moments in Modern Times

Can you imagine what Plato would think if he heard some of the music we hear today, the poetic rap music of Eminem?

Kim

(a song about Eminem's ex-wife)

See it all makes sense, doesn't it?

You and your husband have a fight

One of you tries to grab a knife

And during the struggle he accidentally gets his Adams apple sliced

(No!)

And while this is goin' on

His son just woke up and he just walks in

She panics and he gets his throat cut

(Oh my God!)

So now they both dead and you slash your own throat
So now it's double homicide and suicide with no note
I should have known better when you started to act weird
We could've...HEY! Where you going? Get back here!
You can't run from me Kim
It's just us, nobody else!
You're only making this harder on yourself
Ha! Ha! Got'cha! (Mathers, 2000)

...or the loud, screaming, heinous lyrics from Cradle of Filth?

From the Cradle to Enslave
Old adversaries
Next to Eve
Now they're clawing back
I smell their cumming
As through webbed panes of meat
Led by hoary Death
They never left
Dreaming sodomies
To impress on human failure
When we've bled upon our knees

Tablatures of gravel law
Shall see Gehennah paved
When empires fall

And nightmares crawl

From the cradle to enslave....

This is the end of everything (Filth, 1999)

Are we in danger of imitating the life of these lyrics? Do the lyrics of these songs persuade us to behave in the way the words suggest, as Plato believes they will? As adults are we 'safer' than our children from the influence of these violent and evocative lyrics? We might understand Plato's concerns but are there not two sides to this soundscape? Perhaps a positive side: A representation that is violent or depicting a less admirable life could help us to learn empathy and understanding towards another person's plight. A negative side might be: Plato's concern for depicting our argumentative natures, our tendencies towards jealousy and greed possibly opens up our dormant violent tendencies, and could lead to some imitative behaviour from ourselves and our children.

It is often reported in the media or education articles that our society is perceived as becoming more violent and thoughtless because of the violence we constantly view or hear. Songs from the Beatle's *White Album* supposedly incited Charles Manson and his group of followers to commit the *Manson Murders* during the sixties. The two teenagers responsible for the *Columbine School Massacre* in 1999 allegedly watched violent movies and played violent video games just days before killing twelve people and injuring twenty-three more at their school and then turning the guns on themselves. Is it the music lyrics, the violent video games and movies that influence us to become violent? If that is true, should not all of us be murdering one another, or shooting students at our local school? Do we forbid this exposure to violence for the sake of those people whose violent tendencies lie dormant until someone or something opens the door? If we read further concerning 'blame' for a brutal murderer's behaviour we also find that they have often

read or listened to what Plato might deem as 'good' or 'virtuous' texts. According to the followers of Charles Manson, he often quoted words from the Bible as well as the Beatles, for Manson it was a matter of interpretation in both cases. The debate for exposure to violence is ongoing and might continue forever to be a matter of personal opinion.

Is to not take a risk, a risk of taking away our opportunities to explore the experiences or pleasures of life and continue to grow as people? If we consider Plato's 'ideals' from *The Republic*, as a guide for 'good' education and a 'good' way of life, we are to see the world as a 'good' place, where we associate with 'goodness' only, become 'good' people and live a 'good' life. "If we prevent our poets, our artists and our craftsman from portraying bad character, ill-discipline, meanness, or ugliness" (1974, p. 162) as Plato suggests for his 'ideal state', are our students not destined to know or possess any of these 'bad' aspects of our humanness? Upon what does our interpretation depend as we attempt to understand what is meant by being 'good'?

Taylor looks at our instincts, our moral intuitions and how culture can mould these from what we might potentially be born with.

...our moral intuitions are so deep that we are tempted to think of them rooted in instinct, in contrast to other moral reactions which seem very much the consequence of upbringing and education...But so like so much else in human life, this 'instinct' receives a variable shape in culture, as we have seen. (Taylor, 1989, pp. 4, 5)

Is Taylor referring to moral intuitions as essentially good? If so, is he suggesting that we are essentially born with a good and virtuous nature? Would we know immediately that the violence we encounter as children or as adults is against our deepest instinctive natures

and then, would we know instinctively how to respond appropriately? Would we know instinctively what ‘appropriate’ means? “Culture and upbringing may help to define the boundaries of the relevant ‘others’, but they don’t seem to create the basic reaction itself” (1989, p. 5). Taylor speculates that this instinct can be shaped by cultures, or through the environments in which we live. Not every child resides in the world where non-violent role models are present. Think of Cane, Andy and Dan. Would their reactions have become confused based on their daily encounters with violent adults who were the significant others in their lives?

As we ‘practise’ to become that inspiring teacher how much of our culture and upbringing impacts on our eventual ‘being’. The teacher who teaches from the heart?

Practising Melodies – Pre-Service Teacher Woes

Jodie still has her reports as a pre-service teacher. The comments on the reports were varied. As she reads them today she finally understands the advice from her mentor teachers. At the time she was frustrated because she could not find the harmony in her teaching melody, her ‘space’ in the teaching soundscape. After receiving each one she would think, “Is this really my true calling?” She is unsure what kept her going. At twenty-two years old, maybe it was the need to be employed or because her nature is to finish what she started no matter how tough things become. Here she is, nearing her thirtieth year in education, still enjoying the teaching soundscape by working with a diverse range of students and teachers across many schools. There have been two occasions in her life when she could have potentially have left the teaching profession, the first time during her teacher training and the second instance when she was teaching Cane. Why has she continued teaching? Did she learn something from her mentor teachers and

colleagues or did she find her own way to the heart of teaching, rediscovering the magic, encouraging her to stay?

A Journey from Disharmony to Melodic Comfort

Jodie was sent to the North West coast of Tasmania to teach in a large primary school as her first placement. Her university course was to prepare her for teaching early childhood classes but she also studied music as her major subject option because she loved music: and she believed music was an important part of teaching young children. When she thinks about the early childhood educator, even to this day, she conjures up the vision of the kindergarten teacher she remembers as a small child, playing the piano as the students marched around the kindergarten circle that was painted onto the polished boards. Had she already pre-conceived ideas of what an early childhood teacher should be from her own experiences as a student? Could the kindergarten teacher be considered an archetype, a static vision of how a teacher should be, a model she should emulate?

Jodie went to visit North-West Bay Primary School in late December 1982. Imagine her shock when she was told that she would be teaching primary music from kindergarten to grade six. Her 'music' university option did not extend to teaching a whole primary school music program! The Principal, Dion Smith, was equally shocked. He believed the Department had sent him a music teacher. At first, Jodie was terrified. She was faced with a very tall, sturdy and imposing man in his early sixties, who was trying to understand what she was actually capable of. In her first meeting with him he was gruff and very short with her and she wondered what sort of school she was going to be teaching in.

When Jodie returned to the school the following year to begin her first teaching appointment she came to know Dion as a considerate and forward-thinking principal. He encouraged her to become the teacher he believed she could be. Was this the teacher she believed she could be too? At this early point in her teaching career, she was not convinced that she was a good teacher. She felt she still had much to learn about the teaching profession.

The school was built in the era of the open plan school model. Dion vigorously supported the notion of team-teaching, the educational pedagogy that came along with the open plan structure. Even though he was from an older teaching paradigm, where principals were dominant, Dion created a school atmosphere that was friendly, collegial and sometimes quite noisy! This was gratifying for Jodie as her thesis for the final year at university was about teaching creative music, not the usual formalised and structured teaching of music. Her approach fitted well with Dion's own philosophy of teaching. She did enter three choirs in the Eisteddfod competitions, taught recorder and guitar like most music teachers did and still do in some primary schools. But she could also teach creative music in ways that matched the themes the classes were exploring. Thus her potentially frightening appointment to the school turned into a learning opportunity.

It is not an easy task to take music classes if you are not a confident musician. Jodie remembers the trepidation she felt when the older classes moved into the music room and recalls some of the boys' attitudes towards music and the playing of instruments. Many of them were not keen on the idea of picking up sleigh bells or claves and creating some expressive music to accompany a story or theme. Once she came to know the students more she became less afraid. She found her sense of humour held her in good stead with some potentially disruptive students, the students who were not interested in learning to play music and who felt threatened by the idea of musical performance.

When, many years later, Jodie read McCourt's account of his early teaching years she shivers remembering how she felt with her music classes.

In a minute the bell will ring. They'll swarm in and what will they say if they see me at the desk? Hey, look. He's hiding out. They are experts on teachers. Sitting at the desk means you're scared or lazy. You're using the desk as a barrier. Best thing is to get out there and stand. Face the music. Be a man. Make one mistake your first day and it takes months to recover. (2005, p. 12)

And

The professor of education at New York University warned us about our teaching days ahead. He said first impressions are crucial. He said the way you meet and greet your first class might determine the course of your whole career. They're watching you. You're watching them...They'll take your measure and they'll decide what to do with you. You think you're in control? Think again. (2005, p. 39)

It was difficult for Jodie to face the type of class she had never taught before. She had no experience of teaching music to a grade six group of students. She had no experience to draw upon for dealing with pre-pubescent children. Working with all the classes in the school K-6, would she know, as the music teacher, how to make a good impression the first time she met each class when she did not believe she had the skills to teach music effectively? She is sure her students knew she was nervous. It took her a long time to greet her students with genuine enthusiasm, even to look forward to the lesson. It took them a long time to accept her as their new music teacher, after their confident, skilled elderly teacher retired the year before. Jodie cannot remember much about her music classes in that first year of teaching but she does remember climbing a steep ascent on the 'learning

to be a teacher' curve! It was a challenging year, a year to deal with some fears, fears she still has, such as a lack of self-confidence when faced with difficult situations: when she feels she is no longer in control, instances where she is unsure how to work with the student who comes into the classroom angry or where a teaching colleague refuses to engage in professional learning. As Palmer explains, we must learn to walk through these fears, as they will always surface from time to time. We need to have courage to teach.

Later that year Dion showed his consideration for Jodie's professionalism, giving her the opportunity to teach in a composite grade one/two class for one part of the week as well as teaching music for the other half. She was ecstatic. Finally, she was going to learn about classroom teaching, teaching classes she had been trained to teach. As all classes were team-teaching classes supporting the open plan structure and pedagogy of the school she was able to learn from her teaching colleagues. She was finding her 'comfortable' teaching soundscape at last, or so she thought!

The following year played some quite different melodies. Dion left after Jodie's first year to be replaced by what she called, as did many of her colleagues, the 'principal from hell'. Joan represented everything that scared her about teachers and schools when she was young. For the next four years Joan had an effect on Jodie's teaching persona that she perceives, even today, as negative and demeaning.

...our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. (Taylor, 1994, p. 25)

As Taylor's words reveal, the people in our lives can affect the way we grow and become who we are. "Non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being" (1994, p. 25). When describing the dilemma faced by the female gender at the beginning of the twentieth century Taylor points out how difficult it can be to shake off the expectations or the mirror images we take on as children, and even as adults, to be free to choose which direction our life could take. Although you may no longer be encumbered by restrictions created by people or society you still maybe internalising "a picture of [your] own inferiority, so that even when some of the subjective obstacles to [your] advancement fall away, [you] maybe incapable of taking advantage of the new opportunities" (1994, p. 25).

Within these perspectives misrecognition shows not just a lack of due respect. It can inflict a grievous wound, saddling its victims with a crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is vital human need. (Taylor, 1994, p. 26)

As a relatively new teacher, Jodie believed that Joan did not give her due recognition. The following disturbing soundscape demonstrates how Jodie let Joan take away her short-lived confidence so Jodie could barely take advantage of new opportunities. Joan inflicted on her, and other teachers in the school, grievous wounds which many still carry and speak of today.

Suddenly the Melody Changes

Joan was small in stature, curled up with arthritis and continually scowling. Out of school, at social gatherings often held at her house, she was relaxed and easy going. Joan, in her home environment, revealed a devilish sense of humour and her face would light up when she smiled.

At school she was quite different, many teachers who worked with her struggled to cope with her demeanour and expectations.

One teacher, Ginny, left the profession permanently after working under Joan's leadership. The staff regarded Ginny as an outstanding teacher and a very supportive senior staff member. Jodie caught up with Ginny seven years later, in 1994, when they both attended some professional career sessions. They shared the experience of stress leave, having some 'time out' of school to reflect upon the rigours of teaching life. Ginny confided in Jodie, telling her that it was Joan's pressure to perform that drove her away from the teaching profession. Eventually, Jodie returned to teaching because her supportive and understanding principal at the time of her leave had developed a practical teaching program for her gradual return to school. Ginny said she could not go back to Joan. Ginny believed that Joan disliked anyone who showed weakness and taking stress leave was just that.

Joan was observed to rebuke teachers for the most frivolous mistakes, like removing the newspaper from the staff room, and she could become cold and calculating failing to be empathetic towards a teacher who was suffering a threatened miscarriage. For Jodie's part, she believed Joan was living with pain each and every day, trying not to let the arthritis take over her life, determined to show her strength. In the end the Department had to insist that Joan leave her principal position as her dependence on others, including attending to personal needs, created unnecessary stress to administration and teaching staff.

Jodie was not a confident teacher in her second year and she believed Joan could see her weakness. Jodie cannot recall any instances during the four years of Joan's leadership where Joan treated Jodie as a professional person might expect.

A nauseous feeling wells up inside Jodie as she reflects on an unpleasant incident in the playground where Joan chastised her in front of her choir students. It seemed to displease her that Jodie had allowed the choir students an early play-time as they would be on their way to the Eisteddfod during the normal recess break. Joan said, "How dare you make a decision to let them out early! You are not the principal. They will get their clothes dirty and be too excitable to perform well." Jodie was mortified by this confrontation. Jodie pointed out that it was the decision of her team teacher, whom Joan had always deemed the 'older and wiser' teacher of the partnership, the teacher she had told Jodie to look towards for guidance and help. Jodie suggested to Joan that maybe she needed to speak with her partner as well. Jodie was in trouble for a decision she did not make. She does not remember if Joan ever spoke to her partner teacher, by the time she found her Jodie thought her fury would have dissipated quite substantially. Joan's face of anger was reminiscent of Jodie's grade six mathematics teacher! The choir won first place that day and obviously the run around outside did them no harm despite Joan's concerns!

Subsequently at Jodie's next school she assumed she needed to ask permission to do almost anything. Her new principal thought this was peculiar and reassured her that he trusted her decisions based on her professionalism. Jodie was beginning to feel she was trusted and to follow her own initiative.

Jodie believed it was imperative to demonstrate a caring nature as part of the role of an effective, inspirational teacher. This included all relationships, whether with students, colleagues or principals. Jodie believed that Joan was not a good role model for teachers. She thought Joan lacked a caring attitude, a lack of humanity toward all staff and students. At the same time Jodie felt empathy for the woman who would have lived with physical pain every day. Jodie felt betrayed by her principal, who appeared unable to support any

teacher or student who seemed weak or afraid. Nel Nodding's book *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* may explain a possible reason for Joan's actions.

Those entrusted with caring may focus on satisfying the formulated requirements of caretaking and fail to be present in their interactions with the cared-for. Thus caring disappears and only its illusion remains. (2003, p. 26)

Could Joan be playing out the traditional role of principal and teacher, the role McCourt speaks of in his Irish classrooms, the old-fashioned formula of caring? Dan Lortie writes of the many facets of the teaching life. Interviews conducted with the Five Towns sample, which involved schools in the metropolitan area surrounding Boston, with teachers in varying socio-economic settings and grade levels expressed their expectations around the teacher and principal relationships. Those interviewed clearly

...reject principals who exercise close supervision or constrain teachers by numerous and detailed rules...a third (31 percent) said the principal should be warm, helpful, and accessible – the kind of person one can turn to for reassurance and assistance. (1975, p. 198)

We observe from Jodie's soundscape that she felt ostracized and abandoned and believed that the actions of her principal were unethical. Although the interviews Lortie refers to were conducted in 1963 would the response from teachers differ in today's teaching climate?

When we have no control over others what can we do to improve our situation?

Noddings tell us,

We recognise that in fear, anger, or hatred we will treat the other differently, but this treatment is never conducted ethically. Hence, when we must use violence or strategies on the other, we are already diminished ethically. Our efforts must, then, be directed to the maintenance of conditions that will permit caring to flourish. (2003, p.5)

We are dependent upon the strength and sensitivity of the ethical ideal – both our own and that of others - we must nurture that ideal in all of our educational encounters...How good *I* can be is partly a function of how *you* – the other – receive and respond to me. Whatever virtue I exercise is completed, fulfilled, in you. The primary aim of all education must be nurturance of the ethical ideal. (Noddings, 2003, p.6)

Jodie has worked closely with eleven principals in the schools she has taught within and many more as a visiting professional. Some female, some male, some old, some young, some friendly, some inspiring, some controlling and some disinterested. Jodie only recalls Joan as being the difficult and cold principal amongst the many. In conversations with former colleagues from North-West Bay Primary, teachers, administrative staff and senior staff, the recollections have a similar dissonant quality. Jodie ponders the reasons for the Joan's reticence for closeness and caring. If as a staff, this notion of caring, this ideal of being good, could have been shared and discussed at North-West Bay Primary could the outcomes for Ginny and Jodie been more positive? Here all possibilities might lie in that mediating method Grumet tells us about in an earlier chapter of this thesis, where we may have the opportunity to diminish the distance between our private and public lives by revealing our deeply held beliefs and values.

Educators might be expected to follow the premise that everyone has the right to be treated with respect and recognition. Remembering the words of Levinas, treating another as if she is not a replica of ourselves, could be seen as working towards building our

students' self-esteem and not take away their own essential being. If we are to believe that *mimesis* is a way children/students learn to live in our society, and as Aristotle says, through mimicking many of our adult behaviours, we as parents and teachers should be thoughtful about how we respond and interact with them. When we label students because of their class, race or parentage we are not treating them as themselves. Instead, it is misrecognition of the student, taking away their potential to be who they believe they can be. It is turning our students into concepts or things.

As an adult we may see how the experiences of our childhood have impacted on the way we are today. When observing a student teacher, we may identify certain aspects of our own teaching style. We may also see this in our children, who appear to have taken on some of our personality traits. As we observe our parents, we might identify where some of our values, beliefs and traits originated. Teachers may not have the impact a parent or carer has on a child's life but from the soundscapes shared here, there are many recalled 'teacher moments', those times when students (re)present our own characters and events that may sometimes have life-long effects. Could we then say we do have an impact on our students in some way? Do we recognise the relevance of this *mimesis* within our everyday interactions?

Plato's *Republic* censors certain material for the 'good' of its citizens and so they will not mimic the less desirable characteristics of human nature. Plato's definition of *mimesis* tells us mimetic behaviour is a direct imitation of what is being represented: the good, the bad and the ugly. Maran's view of *mimesis* differs somewhat to Plato's.

The precondition for *mimesis* is the recognition arising in the creative subject that there is potential for mimetic expression in the object. This is the cognitive dimension of *mimesis*,

which is directly connected with the attentiveness, perceptual structure and orientation of the creative subject in its surrounding environment. (2003, p. 200)

Maran explores the nature of *mimesis* by reducing it to a communicative phenomenon. Through exploration, various descriptions and references to Paul Ricoeur, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Walter Benjamin, Maran delivers a description of *mimesis* that connects with how it may benefit the teacher in training. He says, “*Mimesis* is the outcome of the human’s creative activity and cannot occur without the recognition by the creative subject that it is possible and worth to express the perceived object mimetically” (2003, p. 201). We might like to think pre-service teachers recognise what is worth expressing from their mentor teachers. Are they able to discern the quality ‘attributes’ that are worthy of imitation?

Maran describes *mimesis* through the thoughts of Stephen Halliwell, who says the translation of *mimesis* over the centuries has “changed the nature of the concept reducing it for centuries to mere imitation with negative connotations” (2003, p. 202). Maran continues his discussion on the meaning of *mimesis*, preferring to refer to the ‘classical’ or ‘original’ meaning of *mimesis* before its translation into latin as ‘*imitatio*’. He articulates the classical meaning as follows:

In representation, the relation between mimic and the original is primarily meaning-relation and the creation of the *mimesis* here basically means the interpretation or reconstruction of some aspect of the original using similarity and difference as tools of sign relation. ‘Imitation’, on the other hand, refers more to the superficial reproduction of the original, where the creative subject does not express a semantic relation, but resemblance on the basis of the perceptible characteristics. Thus ‘representation’ relates

more to the interpretation made by the creative subject, whereas the result of the 'imitation' is rather copying or duplication. (2003, p. 204)

According to Maran, some elements of the meaning of *mimesis* were missing in the translation for many centuries and as a result a superficial view of the word arose. Maran believes that we still need both imitation and representation to help explain the meaning of *mimesis*. They

...should not be considered as opposing phenomena that exclude each other, but rather as edges of the spheres in which the construction of *mimesis* becomes possible. Imitation and representation can combine with each other in many ways, as there are also numerous possibilities for expressing the similarities and differences between the original and the mimic. (2003, p. 205)

As an artist of portraiture, Jodie draws portraits from photographs. There are some 'purist' artists who would say that she is copying or imitating the photograph. She considers the photograph an imitation but her drawings are a representation. When she draws these portraits another aspect of the picture appears that she cannot explain. She draws a self-portrait from a photograph and it, according to her sister, looks like their cousin. The photograph does not look like their cousin. She draws a picture of her son from a photograph and she observes his father's essence in the drawing yet it is not evident in the photograph. What is it that she brings to these drawings that is not in the photographs?

Through interaction between similarities and differences it is also possible to convey many symbolic meanings, as is done for instance in caricatures and cartoons.

Furthermore, the meaning assigned to the mimic may arise from its relations to the

context, from connotative references, from the intentions of the creative subject concealed in the *Mimesis* or some other semiotic aspect. (2003, p. 205)

As the presenter, or re-presenter, Jodie has the opportunity to still imitate but also bring herself into the presentation.

Plato believed this *mimesis*, or imitation would harm the minds of the audience and the actors “unless they are inoculated against them by knowing their real nature” (1974, p. 422). These words might ask us once again to contemplate what it is that makes some of us mimic actions we instinctively know to be against human nature, the actions considered unproductive for our society such as stealing, dishonesty and selfishness. If we knew our true nature would we maintain the essence of ourselves as well as recognising that some actions are worthy of imitation whereas others are not?

What are the possibilities open to us for acting within our true nature consciously, shedding less preferable traits? van Manen asks us to consider the following thoughts in his explanation of teacher identity, “...in giving personal interpretation and practical shape to the meaning of teaching (or parenting) one must inevitably critically question, reject, alter, or confirm the pedagogical practices of one’s own parents, teachers, and others” (1994, p. 152). If we continue to understand *mimesis* as something beyond just imitation what does this mean for the pre-service teacher? Do they imitate practice or are they representing their interpretation of practice? Is this the most effective and valuable way to learn our craft as teachers?

As we consider the thoughts of those who believe teachers are born and observe the mimetic nature of teaching training, we may contemplate how the imitation of another’s

practice and the innate teaching qualities you are born with could work alongside each other. One particular teacher, Ellen, believed teachers were born. On the other hand, she went on to say that she learnt how to present well from observing others. Ellen has worked in a number of positions in and out of teaching and says even though she maintains that teachers are born she still thinks that they needed to be nurtured to reach their true teaching potential.

Inspired by the Notes of Another's Tune

In 1985 Jodie was placed in another class. She was now teaching with Angela in the prep/ one class, and maintaining her half-time music program. This was a turning point in her career.

Although she was still in Joan's school she didn't see her often; Joan allowed Angela to look after her. They were housed in a terrapin, a demountable classroom erected to capture the overflow of students, at the back of the school, far from the school offices. Joan did not venture far from her office, not to the back of the school, to their busy classroom.

Angela and Jodie perfectly matched each other in their teaching and their team-teaching situation worked well. Jodie believes Angela taught her some of the most important aspects of teaching practice during those two years. Angela always maintains that she learnt equally from Jodie, but it was difficult for Jodie to see that she contributed to Angela's already expansive teaching repertoire. The two years they spent together with fifty-five preps in that leaking, cold terrapin were the most exciting and invigorating classroom teaching experiences. Jodie really appreciated the power of team-teaching with an empathetic partner.

Two years later when Angela moved on to another school Jodie had a new teaching partner, Samantha. It was very difficult to work in the same way. Joan, finally, in Jodie's fifth year of

teaching, considered her the leading teacher in this new partnership. Samantha, her partner, was beginning her second year of teaching and she wanted to prove the very strong ideas she held about the way she wanted to teach. Jodie did not find it easy to work alongside her. Angela and Jodie had their own strong beliefs but they had talked things through and came to certain agreements. They acknowledged their strengths and weaknesses and worked out ways to complement each other as they taught their students. Samantha was not as accommodating; Jodie was frustrated that she could not be 'in charge' now she had been given the opportunity. Samantha was annoyed because she was seen as the junior teacher in the partnership. Samantha and Jodie taught together for two terms before Jodie left to give birth to her daughter. In some ways Jodie was relieved. They liked each other as people and their teaching practices appeared to be successful but Jodie was disappointed that Samantha did not see her as a mentor, something Jodie aspired to be.

Jodie returned to teaching the following year. She was sent to a new school, By-the-Beach Primary. It was a great school, where Jodie had her own class for the first time and it was her sixth year of teaching!

The soundscapes we have captured from Jodie's memories may help us reflect upon the nature of teaching and how we might learn to become an inspiring and effective teacher. We can go to university and earn our teaching degree but what is it that makes some teachers more gifted than others?

Could teacher training be interpreted as *mimesis*, the representation of practice as shown by other more experienced teachers? Through these representations pre-service teachers would also bring their own 'teaching' qualities to the classroom, as Jodie did with Angela, building on those often unconscious qualities, along with some practical teaching techniques, that are essential for effective teaching.

What Gadamer has to say about imitation and representation may provide insight for Jodie's portrait drawing and for how she might observe the mentoring of new teachers.

Imitation and representation are not merely a repetition, a copy, but knowledge of the essence. Because they are not merely repetition, but a 'bringing forth', they imply a spectator as well. They contain in themselves an essential relation to everyone for whom the representation exists. (2004, p.114)

Jodie acknowledges an essence of the person she is drawing, a "bringing forth" or *poiesis* of her creation. She can observe the student teacher capture something of the essence of their mentor teacher and also retain something of their selfhood to share with the students. From Jodie's pre-service soundscapes we can see that sometimes she needed to learn specific techniques and acquire a toolbox of skills for successful teaching. But is this all we need to be effective teachers? Is this teaching from the heart?

We might observe that Jodie imitated Angela and her many ways of operating in a classroom but Jodie placed her own interpretation and personality into her teaching practice. A person who walked into Jodie's room and then into Angela's would recognise the similarities but they would also see the distinct personalities reflected in their practice and their classroom soundscape, just as Jodie's portraits were the same as the photographs, yet not the same. Angela nurtured Jodie's teaching through modelling and sharing. She did not instil the values and beliefs Jodie had about students, they were already there. As Jodie recalls the pre-service teachers from her classrooms she understands they often mimicked what she did in the classroom, but if they did not have the deep commitment a teacher needs to communicate and connect with their students, no amount of mimicking would enhance their ability to teach.

A Model Melody

Observing others to learn a craft or a way of doing things appears to be the way we have learned our teaching profession for centuries. In Plato's time he presents the model of apprentice and master. Early in the twentieth century we had junior teachers working with more experienced teachers in classrooms and then the university sent students out on practicums to work alongside supposedly proficient teachers. In some schools principals ask teachers if they want to mentor pre-service teachers, whereas other principals approach teachers personally because these teachers have shown particular teaching qualities that principals believe would assist pre-service teachers. What sort of habits would these student teachers acquire from teachers who volunteer to take them and who are not effective teachers? We may observe teachers being dismissive of certain parts of the curriculum they do not feel comfortable with. A teacher who is not confident embedding Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into her classroom practice may give her pre-service teacher the impression that ICT is not important and as a result these students are not given opportunities to embed technology into their practical sessions with the class. When we are mentoring pre-service teachers our expertise as a teacher is crucial in moulding these future educators. Teachers who leave out or dismiss important parts of the curriculum are, unjustly, not providing the beginning teachers with good role models.

Consider then the quality of teacher 'modelling' if the mentor teacher has not been thoughtfully selected by the university or the school. Are there risks for the pre-service teacher who chooses to imitate bad practices? Plato was sure that if someone imitated another whose character was unworthy the imitator might allow some of the less worthy traits to become part of their own character. "Have you not noticed how dramatic and

similar representation, if indulgence in them is prolonged into adult life, establish habits of physical poise, intonation and thought which become second nature?" (1974, p. 154). Are we to ignore this as only a possibility? Now, as teachers, we want our pre-service teachers to develop good teaching practices that are second nature, as classrooms are far too busy to sit and contemplate how one should act in any particular moment.

Returning to our understanding of *mimesis* and its importance in the training of our future teachers we see how Maran builds upon his explanation of *mimesis*, ensuring we are not left with the simple definition of imitation. He believes

Mimesis lies in the region between imitation, representation, perception and performance. Binding the perception of an object with conscious performance, *mimesis* inevitably presupposes the existence and participation of human creative forces. *Mimesis* is an active process in which something new is created, even if it is based on what is previously known, and thus *mimesis* and creativity are very closely connected. (2003, p. 211)

Though pre-service teachers might mimic our teacher practice we might also hope they bring their own creative understandings and beliefs about teaching and make the 'performance of teaching' their own. We cannot stop what has influenced our view of teaching over our life time, whether as a student or a student teacher. We can only reflect on what we have learned and decide which aspects of teaching we can take to our own hearts. Jodie believes she has learnt that the teaching practices that sit in harmony with her 'being' are the practices that connect with the students in her classes.

Presentation Soundscape – Teaching Role and Performance

Classroom teaching could be likened to a presentation, a performance, like a play, where the teacher is playing a role. The aspects of her personality that she displays could be conscious or unconscious. Whether the teacher reveals, reflects her true nature might well be her deliberate choice. Surely she must do this in the knowledge that students and pre-service teachers will observe and might choose to take on some of the aspects of her personality, values and beliefs.

Within these classroom performances there may appear some ‘teacher types’. We might experience, as students and pre-service teachers, the ‘teacher type’ that society has portrayed over many centuries. The heritage of what society believes a teacher to be. How does this ‘archetypal’ portrayal of teachers influence the learning of our teaching craft? Let us consider the word, archetype,

1. A typical, ideal, or classic example of something
2. Something that served as the model or pattern for other things of the same type
3. In Jungian psychology, an inherited memory represented in the mind by a universal symbol and observed in dreams and myths
4. An image or symbol that is used repeatedly in art or literature (Encarta, 2009)

Earlier in this chapter, the preconceived idea of an early childhood teacher, especially that of a kindergarten teacher was mentioned. The idea of this persona or archetype of the kindergarten teacher might come from observations as children but also through society’s insistent portrayal of the teacher personality. It would seem that we derive from an archetype whether we like it or not. We only have to look at Microsoft Clip Art on the

everyday PC or images that display the essence of a profession or person. The iconic nature of symbols perpetuates archetypal persona or caricatures. This is also the same for other professions, such as the scientist who is continually portrayed as a curly headed man in a white coat, much to the dismay of many science teachers! Education has its own set of icons, the small images that represent an idea or concept, which are not very helpful as we try to change the view and culture of education in the twenty-first century. Do archetypes of teachers colour our perception of how we should teach? Are there certain traits we must appropriate as teachers that we cannot avoid? Are we controlled by our heritage?

Archetypes are revealed in many ways through media. In chapter four, we discuss the video of *The Wall* by Pink Floyd in relation to what is happening to the students within an industrialised model of education. Here, we could revisit the video, from the view of the teacher. The teacher is wearing a gown and mortar board and carries a large stick. This image is very much like the description of the masters in the Irish classrooms of McCourt's in his books *Teacher Man* and *Angela's Ashes*. Leslie, the ninety year old whose soundscape appears at the beginning of this study also describes the teaching inspectors in this way and indeed many of the teachers he had till he was fourteen.

Ciaran Sugrue discusses the nature of teaching archetypes through the concept of the *Master* and the *Mistress* and the life experiences of student teachers before they reach their training.

What has teaching and schooling already done to student teachers before entry to teacher education programmes and what are the factors that appear to contribute most to the

making of their lay theories of teaching that we know from previous research already well formed, robust, tenacious and powerful? (2004, p. 584)

Our pre-service teachers may come with preconceived ideas of how to be a teacher as they walk into our classrooms and expect us, as their mentor teachers to behave in a certain way. Could these preconceptions cause disappointment and confusion?

Sugrue goes on to say that “these archetypes are a subterranean influence on student teachers’ orientation towards teaching as a career, their personal constructions of themselves as intending teachers and their identification with teaching” (2004, p. 585).

This could potentially create friction between a pre-service teacher and her mentor, or even a practicing teacher and his colleague, as maybe was the case with James and Jodie.

As Sugrue continues, “The personal experiences of these student teachers form a nexus between their apprenticeship of observation and the embedded cultural archetypes of teaching” (2004, p. 585). If this link between observations and embedded beliefs is unbalanced how do we help our pre-service teachers shed some of these deeply held beliefs to understand their true nature of teaching? Teaching we might like to think is coming from their hearts.

Sugrue points out one view of teaching that many people still hold true today, “Archetypal teachers are, therefore, people who *dominate* classrooms and students and *dictate* the learning process through a transmission mode of teaching” (2004, pp. 585,586). Will there be opportunities to change the teacher archetype that is still perpetuated in our society? If our pre-service teachers believe that the teacher is the embodiment of knowledge and our role is to fill our students’ heads, the empty vessels, with this knowledge how do we change this view? It is the important role of mentor teachers to model better practices so

that pre-service teachers see us engaging in a more reciprocal relationship with our students where we learn from each other and guide the journey of learning.

Sugrue also recalls McCourt's writings to illustrate the archetypal teacher. From reading McCourt's vibrant descriptions Sugrue extracts his own thoughts about some unattractive traits of the teaching fraternity.

Power, control, passivity, rote memorising and obedience are major elements of this teaching as a means of indoctrination for conformity, for breaking the spirit. (2004, p. 587)

van Manen points out some of the less appealing, stereotypical qualities of our profession where, when people are recalling the 'virtuous' person, it calls "forth servile teachers trapped in the suffocating atmosphere of small-minded, patriarchal, and intolerant communities" (1994, p. 149).

Sugrue references the school memories of others as students and gives what could be an accurate account of some teachers from Jodie's time as a student. Joan, the 'principal from hell' might fit this description perfectly.

Being strict, presenting a stern face, being distant from learners, insisting on strict adherence to rules, sticking to the letter in relation to prescribed curriculum content and demanding accuracy without taking the learners' perspectives into account are very dominant features of the female archetype of teaching. What resonance do such archetypes have in contemporary lay theories amongst student teachers? (2004, p. 587)

Sugrue believes we have these archetypes embedded in our memories but believes our student teachers can learn from these memories. He says that the retired Irish art critic, Brian Fallon, who writes commentaries on twentieth century Ireland believes “There is a basic difference between being tied to the past and coming to terms with the past – in other words, understanding it and learning from it” (Sugrue, 2004, p. 587).

The concern for Sugrue is that contemporary Ireland appears to have “a collective amnesia about the past” (2004, p. 587) and as a result the “past maybe reconstituted in an unreconstructed manner, reformed rather than transformed.” (2004, p. 588). This does not appear to be unique to the Irish educational landscape.

As Sugrue points out, the teacher educators who work with our pre-service teachers in the universities are usually former classroom teachers themselves. Do these teacher educators understand the often unconscious teacher archetype student teachers bring to their knowledge of education and the role of the educator? What do these university lecturers do to dispel and change the perceptions of the teacher archetype? Do they continue to model some of the less desirable characteristics of the archetype and place students with mentor teachers in schools that uphold the patriarchal role of teachers from the past?

The role of *mimesis* in teacher training becomes critical. If we do not model what we believe are inspirational teaching practices or place pre-service teachers with classroom teachers who demonstrate effective teaching practices educational transformation may not occur. It could be another cycle, like that of Cane, Andy and Dan, where the lack of good role models and the continued exposure to less desirable actions prevent them from breaking out of a destructive life cycle.

If we, as educators, do not reflect on the nature of teacher archetypes and discuss how we can learn from the past with our pre-service teachers we do not give them the opportunity to understand their deeply held beliefs about teaching and enable them to change practices that are no longer relevant in the twenty first century.

...teacher education is about much more than competence. It is about values, beliefs and attitudes that contribute to the general climate and stance towards teaching and learning... Teaching archetypes were once accepted orthodoxies, and it is necessary to interrogate them on an ongoing basis as a means of re-constructing and re-imagining lay theories of teaching more appropriate and more adequate to the vicissitudes of our time. (Sugrue, 2004, pp. 596, 597)

Sugrue concludes his paper with the following comments,

Initial teacher education, and continued professional learning opportunities need to find new ways to enable student teachers, beginning and experienced teachers to engage with tradition in the field, and to create new synergies, challenges and dissonance between contemporary discourses to avoid individual and collective amnesia about the evolution of teaching and learning as manifest in school systems. Teacher educators too, need to engage more overtly and consciously with this task unless they are too to become 'cocooned' by their own rhetoric, and prescriptive contemporary discourses. (Sugrue, 2004, p. 597)

Heartfelt Soundscapes – What We Bring to the Melodies of Others

As we learn our teacher practice through the imitation of our mentors we might adjust what we have learned to suit our own personality, our own harmony and rhythms of

teaching. As Maran says, we are creating something new as it is based upon something that already exists. We would hope that we bring our unique virtues and dispositions to what we have learned from others, making a heartfelt soundscape of our own.

If we refer back to the chapter on *Soulful Music* we might recall that our virtuous natures play a vital role in the heart and soul of teaching. Van Manen discusses the importance of teacher training education and explores the concept of virtues and character with regard to learning good teaching practices. He believes that

...the practice of teaching actually relies more appropriately on the unique and particular features of qualities or virtues. The thoughtfulness that good teachers learn to display towards children also may depend upon internalised values, embodied qualities, thoughtful habits that constitute virtues of teaching. Thus, virtues are the 'learned' and 'evoked' pedagogical qualities that are necessary for the human vocation of bringing up and educating children. (1994, p. 155)

van Manen asks a number of questions regarding the virtues of good teaching, questions that may play in our mind.

- How do we know the goods internal to the practice of teaching?
- Can all qualities or virtues of good teaching be taught to new teachers?
- What is the relation between virtues and critical reflection?
- Are there virtues that most teachers should share? (1994, p. 156)

Let us contemplate van Manen's question of "What is the relation between virtues and critical reflection?" Are some virtues unconscious, instilled in us from childhood? Might we see opportunities for critical reflection within direct thinking about our actions,

awareness of these childhood virtues, analysing and deciding how we might change from our past beliefs as we endeavour to become better teachers? Maybe, over time, through critical reflection we can mindfully adjust our actions till eventually they become second nature. Some teachers, however, may not want to change because it is too hard, they cannot see the need for change, “There is nothing wrong with the way I teach, it was the way I was taught and it worked for me, everyone teaches like that,” and so on.

van Manen suggests virtuous qualities of good teachers may include the following: patience, trust, humour, diligence, believing in children, having special knowledge, and the ability to understand meaning and significance of difficulty, discipline, interest, and other aspects of learning.

Did Jodie learn the virtuous qualities of good teachers van Manen lists during her teacher training? In consideration of this question she is unable to recall whether her training mentioned any of these preferred teaching attributes. At university, there were no courses that prepared her for the reality of class teaching. She was immersed in learning theories, child development and subject knowledge. van Manen notes that such university programs have become “highly fragmented due to the continuous process of differentiation and specialisation of professional interests” and that students are expected to be able to “integrate the fragmented elements into a personally founded expertise” (1994, p. 156). As we ruminate about van Manen’s words: “personally founded expertise,” we may perceive a glimmer of hope in our understanding of the nature of teaching. What if our university lecturers or our mentor teachers had told us the heart of teaching cannot be learned from a book: it is in our practice that we may find our hearts! The many lines of our music, that have been separate tunes, begin to weave a melody of one tune, each line of our score creating a harmony with the other. Have we found the true nature of our teaching, have we found our heart of teaching?

As we give voice to our pedagogical moments, and reflect upon them critically we can bring these virtues to our notice, our awareness, and understand the true meaning of our actions. In the case of ‘pedagogical virtues’ in teachers, critical reflection may instil these mindful actions into practice until they become part of who we are as a teacher. “Not until they find themselves in the company of children do beginning teachers find out what they know, who they are, and what they could become as educators” (van Manen, 1994, pp. 156, 157).

Voicing our stories and ethically reflecting upon them can help us build a series of soundscapes over years of teaching and gradually we may come to know the nature of our teaching practice. We could thus change and grow through our discoveries. “Each teacher may see his or her pedagogical life as a reflection of a personal identity that can only develop in time by living through experiences and telling stories about one’s daily living with children” (1994, p. 157). We might not be able to ‘teach’ these virtues but we could give our pre-service teachers opportunities for critical reflection through narrative forms to help them understand and deepen their teaching practice. We may continue to wonder if Gordon and James had been encouraged to critically reflect on their daily interactions with students whether they would have come to understand the emotional violence of their teaching.

Would we also remind our pre-service teachers to acknowledge and document their feeling natures within their narratives? We have previously noted that Heshusius suggests that somatic awareness can inform us about the ‘rightness’ of what we are doing. She tells of her experience in the *Learning Theories for Educators* class at university, portraying the kind of fragmented programs to which van Manen refers. Heshusius was stunned and confused when she found the content of the course was about the lives of rats and their

behaviour in different situations. She continues her story of course work in special education, realising near the end of her course she had learnt nothing of the people who were the residents of the special institutions she would be working in. Heshusius had not heard their voices in her lectures. She realised she had learnt nothing about them and so had learnt nothing about herself. Heshusius was appalled to think she was qualified to run an institution without knowing the lived experiences of the people whose lives she would be making decisions about. Her body gave her messages that this situation was not right, through “a feeling of paralysis, a deadly tiredness, and a feeling of betrayal” (Heshusius & Ballard, 1996, p. 52).

After completing her degree Heshusius took a position with ‘learning disabled’ students. In this role she became more disillusioned when faced with “drawers full of ‘stuff’...loads of programmed materials, workbooks, worksheets, filling-in-blank exercises, phonic exercises, all sharing one overwhelming characteristic: They were pieces of things. Pieces without any context, without meaning” (1996, p. 53). Heshusius clearly remembers her body sensations during this time, “It was as if my heart sank into my stomach every time I tried to work with this ‘stuff’. I would literally feel the pull of gravity and would feel a wave of something close to nausea go through me” (1996, p. 53). In our somatic awareness we can bring to the surface the meanings of our practice, and the practice of others, learning what resonates with our values and beliefs about teaching, allowing us to refine the habits and dispositions we need to change and enrich our students’ learning. This somatic awareness could reveal our disposition towards teaching and help us identify if our being is in harmony with these practices.

Musical Habits – A Matter of Disposition?

Let us reconsider the word *mensenkennis* as introduced by van Manen. *Mensenkennis* describes an attribute of those amongst us who have ‘people knowledge’. Could we think of *mensenkennis* as being closely connected to the notion of disposition?

In the last few years there has been a push towards helping our students develop positive habits of mind and dispositions of learning. Ritchhart, who asks the question, “What are we teaching for?” in the chapter *Classic Education*, provides us with a possible meaning for disposition in terms of it being a general type of action. “When we talk about someone having a friendly disposition, we understand that to mean that the person tends to approach situations in a certain way and to display a general set of actions we associate with friendliness.” Ritchhart goes on to say that there would be “a whole range of related actions and responses.” He believes that our dispositions are not automatic but they do “provide a gentle nudging that helps to bring out the behaviour” (2002, p. 20).

On the other hand, Ritchhart tells us that habits are more mindless and automatic and maybe less controllable. In opposition to dispositions which are about general actions and responses, habits “tend to describe specific actions or behaviours, quite often those with a negative bent, and is thus less broad and descriptive of general behavioural trends” (2002, p. 20). In the example of the individual who “might have the habit, or custom of shaking hands when introduced to someone,” Ritchhart suggests that “this gesture is rather ingrained and reflexive in nature, and we tend not to infer from it too much about the person’s general behaviour or way of acting” (2002, p. 20).

If we explore the notion of disposition as a tendency towards general actions could we discover why some students and teachers behave in particular ways? In our acts of *mimesis* do we colour our re-presentation of teaching practice with our dispositions, and our habits?

The Passion of Teaching, Dispositions in the Schools, edited by Robert Lee Smith, Denise Skarbek and James Hurst, explores the idea of dispositions in reference to teacher training. In particular, the editors and other selected authors discuss the dispositions of mind, body and spirit. Chapter Fourteen, written by Marsha Heck and Deborah Roose, opens with a quote from Ikue Tezuka's book *School with Forest and Meadow* (1995, p. 45), which could encapsulate the meaning of our roles as teachers of our students and also parents of our children.

The most important responsibility of teachers is to help children grow to be a human being; having much knowledge is not important. To think for oneself, to learn independently, to treat others kindly and fairly, to work with friends, to encourage others, to say what one thinks, and to act as one thinks: these are the things which are important. And, of course, a strong healthy body is also important. In other words, a child needs help in developing all aspects of her personality and her life as a human being. These things cannot be taught from textbooks. (Smith, Skarbek, & Hurst, 2005, p. 191)

Heck and Roose suggest that “dispositions might be seen as who [we] are *being* rather than what [we] do or what [we] know, how [we] listen and the relationship [we] have with knowledge, not simply that [we] listen or investigate new ideas” (2005, p. 191).

Heck and Roose draw on Paula Underwood's Native American traditions to exhibit dispositions of mind, body and spirit, helping to explain the integration of multiple dimensions of human experience. Underwood, who was a Native American educator, says that in these descriptions spirit is not used in a religious sense but as one's relatedness to others. Underwood created a four step path for developing dispositions in undergraduate and graduate students:

- 1) Be who you are – enhance accurate self-awareness of the relationship of one's own faith tradition and the teacher within.
- 2) Be where you are – accept your circumstance, walk past denial or ignorance of diversity of one's teaching and learning community. Respect, seek out, and nurture diversity.
- 3) Look around – look, listen, and be present to others in the community and the emergent truth as it reveals itself through conversation in any given time or place.
- 4) Decide and do – then, building on the first three steps of ways of being and learning, make compassionate decisions and caring actions.

The reflective teacher does not stop there. He or she spirals back to the first step on this path, which Underwood describes as both sequential and circular. (2005, p. 194)

Not only do they use Underwood's steps as an example for 'good teaching' but also discuss at length, the close relationship to Quaker education and the beliefs Underwood has about the ways we should teach and learn. "Educators in these Quaker and Native American traditions can be seen through their 'being', to practice, reflect on, and model for their students the dispositional themes explored above" (2005, p. 203).

The following heart warming words from Underwood provides a possible melodic mantra for our teaching practices,

...true learning cannot come from mere memorisation. It comes instead from that sudden spark of apprehension that lights the fire of continued and growing understanding. (2005, p. 207)

And Heck and Roose suggest, as teachers,

...we are those responsible for tending that fire. We should do well to embrace the tension of our lingering unfamiliarity and discomfort with dispositions, and embrace the incendiary possibilities of our apprehensions for ourselves, our students, and the future. (2005, p. 207)

The poet, William Butler Yeats tells us “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” (Yeats, 2009)

Melodies that Belong to the Inner Self, the Heart – *Being Ourselves...*

As we discuss the idea of *mimesis* in teacher practices and observe the tension of our lingering unfamiliarity and discomfort with dispositions, we must remember the importance of being ourselves. Many famous writers, spiritualists and philosophers invite us to discover the self rather than looking to them for the answers in our search to find our inner selves. Carl Jung tells us

I do not want anyone to be a Jungian...I want people above all to be themselves...Should I be found one day to have created another ‘ism’ then I will have failed in all I tried to do. (Jung Today, 2008)

Freire says, “In order to follow me it is essential not to follow me” (Freire & Faundez, 1992, p. 30).

And from the teachings of Vipassana meditation, we are told Buddha did not create the religion of Buddhism.

This is what the Buddha taught: an art of living. He never established or taught any religion, any ‘ism’. He never instructed those who came to him to practice any rites or rituals, any empty formalities. Instead, he taught them just to observe nature as it is, by observing the reality inside. (dharma.org, 2007)

Indian mystic, Osho, when speaking of the nature of Buddha, says “It is the capacity not to worship buddhas but to *become* a buddha; not to follow others but to develop the awareness within that brings a quality of light and love to all that we do” (1994, p. X1).

As we contemplate the act of teaching can we think about how we bring the self to our teaching practices? How do we develop awareness from within to bring a quality of light and love to all that we do, in our classrooms and in our lives? If we are to find our hearts of teaching, exploring our true nature, what do we need to know about the self to be the inspiring, effective teacher?

CHAPTER 9

GOING SOLO – MELODIES FOR THE SELF

(Understanding and knowledge of self, unlocking the cabinet of our many stories may inspire and enhance teaching practice)

Solo

In general: Without the presence or aid of another.

Idioms: all by one's lonesome, by oneself

In Music: A solo, from the Italian solo, meaning alone, is a piece or a section of a piece played or sung by a single performer. In practice this means a number of different things, depending on the type of music and the context.

In Jazz: In many Jazz performances, each number will alternate ensemble sections with solo sections where one performer is playing either completely alone, or with unobtrusive accompaniment from the others. Common examples are the rhythm section of jazz bands, and quiet background music by other wind instruments. Such solos are most often improvised.

In Popular Music: A solo refers to a "crowd-pleasing" improvised melody played by a single or featured performer and may also refer to a drum solo. Use of the term "solo" appears to follow from jazz and, though they are often pre-composed or originally improvised, the expectation that solos be improvised continues, especially in certain genres. ("answers.com," 2008c, p. 172)

Capturing our Inner Melodies

In earlier chapters, we explore melodies that impose on us, melodies that are 'popular' and melodies that need to be created in collaboration with others. Then there is the melody the single musician composes and plays for herself. The term 'solo' means alone in the

Italian language, but if we consider the nature of being soloist in anything we do, are we really alone? For the solo singer, musicians may play the music, the composer may write her song. Always there is an audience, someone, or more, who listens. Without audience there may be no performance.

The musician may be happy to play for herself alone to hear. If she intends others to respond to her music, to listen to it, to like it, she would do well to find a tune that strikes a chord in the heart and mind of another as well as her own. “All presentation” says Gadamer, “is potentially a representation for someone” (2004, p. 108). Gadamer suggests that the player-artist who has intention in her performance creates the same ‘meaningfulness’ for both player and spectator.

Gadamer discusses the nature of performance, reminding us that even when we play alone we are playing for somebody.

If someone performs music in this way, he is also in fact trying to make the music ‘sound good’, but that means that it would really be there for any listener. Artistic presentation, by its nature, exists for someone, even if there is no one there who merely listens or watches. (2004, p. 110)

We find Gadamer’s discussion on the nature of performance as potentially a representation of something for someone, a resonance for someone, an endeavour to “sound good” and may be a way of exploring the notion of ourselves, as teachers, becoming the soloist-player-artist-performer and teaching as potentially, perhaps essentially, representation.

Solo Soundscapes

Many teachers would agree that teaching could be considered a lonely experience because we often have to go solo. Think of the teacher in the single classroom country school, the only teacher in the whole community. Think too, of the teacher in the urban high school, member of a staff of fifty, each a lone adult amongst up to thirty students, each a soloist before an audience. Each learns her skills alone in her classroom, day after day, practising, rehearsing alone, and performing her art for her students. Gadamer says, “The work of art has its own true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it” (2004, p. 103). If the teacher is reflective, diligent in her practice, resilient, intentional and as her teaching becomes her work of art, her tuneful melody, we may see that her experience changes her in some ways. We may see that the person or persons, her students, who experience her performance, her representation, change in some way too.

The students enter the room and the teacher closes the door on the rest of the world. In many cases the teacher may object to any interference from others and feel threatened when anyone walks into the room unannounced. A principal once asked, “Why do teachers stop what they are doing when I walk in the classroom? They stop and wait expectantly for me to make an announcement of some sort when all I wanted to do is slip in unnoticed and chat to the students!”

Some teachers may prefer going solo, and find it difficult to invite adults into their classroom. The parent who comes in to help is sent to the ‘quiet room’ to hear reading or to sit in a cold corridor to help students with their work. Jodie feels fortunate that for most of her teaching career she has been in the presence of other adults. Her first years

of teaching at North-West Bay School she shared classes with another teacher, team-teaching, which prepared her for future classes where she was rarely left alone. A few years after her team-teaching experiences there were a group of students in her class who were deaf. Constantly their interpreter was by her side and often the specialist teacher for the deaf worked alongside too. When Kale, her student with Autism, was in her class, his full-time carer was always with him. There have not been many times in her career when she could shut the door on the world and be alone with her students. She is grateful for those experiences with others.

In the chapter, *Cover Versions*, we hear some of Jodie's team-teaching soundscapes. As she points out in her experience of team-teaching with Samantha, not every team experience is successful. For Jodie, the secret to the success of an effective team-teaching situation is where the teachers complement each other.

The *Case Study of a New Scottish Open Plan School* in 1976 describes the open plan school as “a school built to a design which does not include self-contained classrooms” (Hamilton, 1976, p. 2). A recent article, *Open plan schools in Portugal: failure or innovation?*, written by Miguel Martinho and José Freire da Silva from the Ministry of Education in Portugal revisits this model of team-teaching and open plan classrooms. They note that it was popular in the seventies but was out of favour by the end of the eighties. Their research revealed that

...the open space concept was unacceptable to some teachers, administrators and architects who did not want such a radical change in schools. The concept of flexible spaces with movable walls, where the open space could constantly adapt to the changing

needs of the educational teams (team-teaching was another important feature), created strong resistance in some schools. (2008, p. 2)

Jodie's first teaching appointment was in a school that supported the open plan structure with everyone teaching in teams, now those classrooms have walls built across the divide. William Brubaker, award-winning architect, said that in the United States, "most open plan schools returned to the old and comfortable programs. Open space was chopped up into classrooms with doors that could be shut" (1998, p. 20). The open plan rooms at North-West Bay Primary later became small, dark and unwelcoming, barely fitting the twenty-eight or so desks and long-legged students.

The open plan educational methodology, which had gained much support for its innovation in industrialised countries such as ours, was almost entirely abandoned: teachers returned to the classroom alone. There appeared to be many reasons for the rejection of open plan classrooms. In 1988 Andy Hargreaves pointed out one: "The culture of individualism in teachers is one of them, as it is a natural tendency to teach in the same way that one has learned" (as cited in Martinho & Freire da Silva, 2008, p. 3). Martinho points out another: surveys showed evidence that teachers were not properly prepared for a pedagogy that was intended to be innovative and that little or no attention was given to training teachers for this new paradigm (2008, p. 3).

The classroom Jodie describes as her 'dissonant' mathematics experience was an open plan classroom and she remembers the wonderful spaciousness, the great expanse of carpet and the new plastic 'moulded' furniture. A luxury after six years of polished boards, wooden desks and wooden chairs embedded with nails that snatched at her clothes every time she rose from her seat! It was such a new innovation in Tasmania at the

time the local TV crews came and filmed the class in their daily classroom activities. Jodie still remembers being allowed to stretch out on the floor and read a favourite book, something that rarely happened in a classroom in 1971. The space was deliciously extravagant and allowed the students to do so many things not possible in the 'average' small classroom. They never sat in rows of desks. They sat in circle groups. This open environment gave the students, as pre-teens, the space to physically and mentally develop in comfort.

Few open plan classrooms exist today in Tasmania, classrooms that have not been transformed into smaller rooms. They have become large spaces housing single classes with small numbers of students due to the school's falling attendance numbers. Some of these are in low socio-economic suburbs where schools are 'less preferred' by parents. Yet there are cases of other classrooms in other schools that are small and overcrowded because the school is popular. When visiting schools now we see most classrooms house single classes and the teachers continue to go solo: The soundscapes of our teachers continue to play lonely melodies.

The Lonely Heart Song

As we seek meaning from the concept of teacher as soloist we might feel a sense of confusion pervade our consciousness. The idea of being alone, especially in the classroom, could be perceived as nonsense. Can we really be alone in the classroom? Can teachers be lonely when working alongside a class full of excited and curious students? It may be worthwhile seeking an understanding of both aloneness and loneliness and how this may help us reach into our hearts of teaching.

Osho, who spoke to us about the nature of Buddha at the end of the previous chapter, clearly defines the difference between aloneness and loneliness.

When you are lonely you are thinking of the other, you are missing the other. Loneliness is a negative state. You are feeling that it would have been better if the other was there...Loneliness is the absence of other.

Aloneness is the presence of oneself. Aloneness is very positive. It is a presence, overflowing presence. You are so full of presence that you can fill the whole universe with your presence and there is no need for anybody. (1994, p. 21)

A teacher may enjoy her aloneness in the classroom and not feel lonely at all. Even though her class surrounds her there is a certain quality to being in a class with young students. The soundscape changes into a melody of chattering students. As teachers we are hopeful that this harmony and rhythm continues throughout the day until the students leave at three. Then, as many teachers will tell you, the bliss of silence envelopes you. As we stand or sit in a busy classroom of students we might feel connected with them, enjoy their company, present yet alone in the crowd.

None But the Lonely Heart

Only one who knows loneliness

can understand my suffering and how I am tormented.

I look into the distance... I have no strength, my eyes grow dim...

He who knew and loved me is far away!

Only one who knows loneliness

can understand my suffering and how I am tormented.

My heart is burning...

One who knows loneliness

can understand my suffering and how I am tormented. (Wikipedia, 2008b)

The melody for these lyrics is by Pyotr Tchaikovsky and was composed to Lev Aleksandrovich Mey's poem "The Harpist's Song," which in turn was translated from Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship.

When the positive presence of aloneness changes to the suffering of loneliness, we are troubled. Are we troubled by our isolation? Do we crave the company of other adults? On a 'bad day' loneliness can engulf us and carry us away from the connection with our students. As the words to the song *None But the Lonely Heart* tell us, when we are lonely we suffer torment and we have no strength. How do we avoid this potentially damaging aspect of our teaching when the histories of teaching practice tell us to stand as the single adult in the classroom? How can we work confidently alongside our teaching colleagues or principal, sharing our melodies, retaining our individuality and yet find time to embrace our aloneness and use this as a quality of being to improve our teaching practice?

We may observe many teachers who participate in Hargreaves 'culture of individualism'.

He tells us,

Physically, teachers are often alone in their classrooms with no other adults for company. Psychologically, they never are. What they do in there in terms of classroom styles and strategies is powerfully affected by the outlook and orientations of the colleagues with whom they work now and have worked in the past. (1994, p. 165)

They have mastered their teaching craft and now treasure it, guard it, keep it as their sacred professional secret. As a visiting colleague to their classrooms we might want to understand why they stop when we enter. Is it a matter of self-confidence, an expectation from the past that it is courteous to stop teaching when a visitor arrives? Is it the remembrance of the terrifying event when the school inspector arrived at the school to observe a classroom teacher and report on her? “Classroom isolation shuts out possible sources of praise and support. Isolated teachers get little adult feedback on their worth and competence” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 167). Do we share some basic instinct with those teachers who stop; the need to be powerful in our space, our territory or are we just scared to death we will be found out, found to fall short of the mark as a good teacher? Lortie believes that “Teacher individualism is not cocky and self-assured; it is hesitant and uneasy” (1975, p. 210).

Understanding the Lonely Heart – Needing the Melodies of Others

We may identify with an experimental tension that lies between wanting to be an individual self, not letting others take away the part of ourselves that is sacred, and on the other hand, the need to be ‘part of crowd’, accepted, and to have friends. The words of Osho tell us our need for the company of others is to avoid our loneliness. In a crowded room with many of our friends we may yet feel lonely. To sit alone, with no one near, we may be content, not feeling lonely in the slightest. It is possible for us to choose times to be alone and time to be with others, and to understand why we might feel lonely in the company of friends, family or students. These feelings reside in us. We are able to choose to recognise our loneliness as De Mello suggests, we watch our feelings as they slowly pass, as the “passive, detached observer” (1990, p. 36). In that way we do not need to choose to identify with our feelings and suffer them. “The reason you suffer from your

depression, your anxieties and your loneliness” says De Mello, “is that you identify with them” (1990, p. 36). When we do not identify with these feelings we are no longer suffering or tormented, nor do we lose our strength as the lyrics to the *None but the Lonely Heart* would have us believe.

De Mello points out that society has conditioned us into believing we need each other for our psychological wellbeing. To depend on others for the things in life we need like food and shelter is a necessary aspect of what he names ‘interdependence’. What concerns De Mello is the way we depend on others for our own personal happiness. He asks us to “Think about that. Because if you do, the next thing you will be doing, whether you’re aware of it or not, is *demanding* that other people contribute to your happiness” (1990, p. 54). He suggests we should not rely on the other for our happiness or else our next step will be fear, “fear of alienation, fear of loss, fear of rejection” (1990, p. 54).

De Mello touches upon melody as metaphor, which is in a way synchronic with the metaphor of my study. On the true nature of people interacting with one another, he reflects,

What I really enjoy is not you; it’s something greater than both you and me. It is something that I discovered, a kind of symphony, a kind of orchestra that plays one melody in your presence, but when you depart, the orchestra doesn’t stop. When I meet someone else, it plays another melody, which is also very delightful. And when I’m alone, it continues to play. There’s a great repertoire and it never ceases to play. (1990, p. 54)

If only we could fold this beautiful way of being in our inner selves, if we could escape the assumption that we need particular company to be whole or happy. Imagine the benefits

this way of being would have for communion with our students and colleagues. When the lonely teacher in her classroom turns away from craving the company of adults like her for conversations, she is open to capture the melodies played by her students, to enjoy their tunes as they pass. She is fully in her teaching moment, no longer aching for the melodies of her colleagues. Her students know she brings herself fully into their presence. They know she wants to be with them, connected, and she will not be at risk of breaking their heart songs. De Mello exhorts us to drop our illusions and get in touch with reality.

...believe me, you will never be lonely again. Loneliness is not cured by human company. Loneliness is cured by the contact with reality...think of the loneliness that is yours. Would human company ever take it away? It will only serve as a distraction. There's an emptiness inside, isn't there? (1990, p. 55)

What is reality? Reality is when we see things as they actually are, without our assumptions acting as what Bohm calls the 'observer' and informing our actions. Bohm discusses our perception of reality in terms of proprioception, which as he explains is self-perception. In response to a situation with another where, for example, you may have felt angry or alienated Bohm says,

...if you had proprioception of thought, you would immediately say, "Well, I had the impulse to think, I thought something, and then came that feeling. It was caused in that way, and therefore that is all that it means." But if you get the feeling that it does not come from thought, then it will tacitly be taken to mean a direct perception of reality. (2004, p. 81)

De Mello and Bohm teach us to see how our realities are caught up in our thoughts, triggering our loneliness, creating negative perceptions of ourselves. Thus we compose

soundscapes for each other that are not reflective of our true realities, our true melodies.

If we have awareness or proprioception of thoughts, we might recognise the lonely melodies and misconceptions of self many of us try to hide or pretend do not exist.

Distracting Soundscapes – Taking Away the Loneliness

Let us listen for the melodies each one of us brings to the classroom soundscape. It is a dissonant melody when the teacher going solo in the classroom seems to cling to her assumptions to maintain her individuality, the heavy weight of loneliness that modern society seems to exacerbate. It is discordant when the students also scramble towards their individuality, pulled strongly by the longing to be like their friends or other ‘popular’ students. Caught up too in a world of loneliness, by such distractions as De Mello mentions, they

...run away, turn on the television, turn on the radio, read a book, search for human company, seek entertainment, seek distraction. Everybody does that. It’s big business nowadays, an organised industry to distract us and entertain us. (1990, p. 55)

Today, in the twenty-first century, businesses find niche markets that both exploit and promote the notion of ‘individuality’. They multiply heartlessly the number of distractions we can choose. Our world, through technology, is saying, we will make it to suit your needs, your lifestyle, and your preference! Students bury themselves in the virtual world, in online games such as *World of Warcraft* or social networking sites like *Facebook*, lone yet not alone. This is the virtual life for most of our students. We often condemn students for

avoiding reality and yet we continue to teach in the old paradigm, the ‘fierce’ ownership of *our* class, a paradigm to which we cling.

We could help our students understand that these technological tools are distractions from reality and are not simply avenues to escape from it. How many students are bullied on *Instant Messenger* or feel rejected when they are not accepted as ‘friends’ on *Facebook*? For many, this has become their reality. They are dependent on others for their happiness through contemporary communication media. The world of technology encourages students to go solo: they sit alone at their computers, chat on their mobile phones, connect with global friends and, maybe they do their homework. After a while, when the lights are off or while the batteries are recharging, loneliness creeps around them. As parents and teachers we need to help them to enjoy being alone. Learn to be alone, appreciate aloneness.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh, spouse of fellow aviator Charles Lindbergh, says,

We are all, in the last analysis, alone. And this basic state of solitude is not something we have any choice about. It is, as the poet Rilke says, “not something that we can take or leave. We are solitary. We may delude ourselves and act as though this were not so...” How one hates to think of oneself alone. How one avoids it. It seems to imply rejection or unpopularity...We seem so frightened today of being alone that we never let it happen...Now, instead of planting our solitude with our own dream blossoms, we choke the space with continuous music, chatter, and companionship to which we do not even listen. It is there simply to fill the vacuum. When the noise stops there is no inner music to take its place. We must re-learn to be alone. (1997, pp. 41, 42)

Remembering the words of De Mello, we could seek out the different melodies, enjoy them as they pass and allow our repertoire to continue to play, even when we are alone.

But how do we re-learn to be alone, and go solo in this world of continual distraction, along with valuing our individuality and yet appreciating the significance of community?

This sense of individuality is the one that we endeavour to sustain throughout our lives.

As teenagers we try to establish it: who we are and where do we belong in the world? The need to go solo for our students is as essential for them as it is for them to learn to be a member of a group. As we recognise the value of our own individuality, our solo natures, we must honour the individuality of the person we come face-to-face with and what they bring to us. Gadamer touches upon the nature of individuality and community through the thoughts of Humboldt. "...for him [Humboldt], there exists an indissoluble connection between individuality and universal nature. Together with the feeling of individuality, the sense of a totality is given as well..." (2004, p. 437).

How do we understand and achieve the balance? Palmer asks us to consider the paradoxical nature of our being: this "indissoluble connection" that creates a need for both the company of the others and the need for aloneness.

Human beings were made for relationships: without a rich and nourishing network of connections, we wither and die...It is a clinical fact that people who lack relationships get sick more often and recover more slowly than people surrounded by family and friends.

At the same time, we were made for solitude. Our lives may be rich in relationships, but the human self remains a mystery of enfolded inwardness that no other person can possibly enter or know. If we fail to embrace our ultimate aloneness and seek meaning only in communion with others, we wither and die. (1998, p. 65)

If we do not find the balance between community and solitude, we are in danger of falling victim to loneliness. “Solitude split off from community is no longer a rich and fulfilling experience of inwardness; ...it becomes loneliness, a terrible isolation.” We risk falling into a dangerous reliance on all those distractions on offer. “Community split off from solitude is no longer a nurturing network of relationships; now it becomes a crowd, an alienating buzz of too many people and too much noise” (1998, p. 65).

If we are to encourage our students to become part of the learning soundscape, and help them to form a strong sense of identity, discover their individuality and be in community we, as teachers, need to understand what solitude and community mean. Within the pages of Palmer’s book, *A Hidden Wholeness*, we find his words might further explain what these terms could mean.

Solitude means never living apart from one’s self...it is about being fully present to ourselves, whether or not we are with others.

Community means never losing the awareness that we are connected with each other...it is about being fully open to the reality of relationship, whether or not we are alone. (2004, p. 55)

Palmer describes the need for both solitude and community as “broken paradoxes”. Our education system is filled with them, and enforces a lifeless educational experience upon our students. Palmer lists four paradoxes that fragment our educational practice:

- We separate head from heart. Result: minds that do not know how to feel and hearts that do not know how to think.

- We separate facts from feelings. Result: bloodless facts that make the world distant and remote and ignorant emotions that reduce truth to how one feels today.
- We separate theory from practice. Result: theories have little to do with life and practice that is uninformed by understanding.
- We separate teaching from learning. Result: teachers who talk but do not listen and students who listen but do not talk. (1998, p. 66)

Palmer may teach us, even convince us, that we can teach ourselves to understand the nature of opposites and how we can bring them together to make our lives whole.

Paradoxical thinking requires that we embrace a view of the world in which opposites are joined, so that we can see the world clearly and see it whole. Such a view is characterised by neither flinty-eyed realism nor dewy-eyed romanticism but rather by a creative synthesis of the two. (1998, p. 66)

This non-dualist view gives opportunity for balance and potentially helps us create meaningful learning soundscapes for our students.

The result is a world more complex and confusing than the one made simple by either-or thought- but that simplicity is merely the dullness of death. When we think things together, we reclaim the life force of the world, in our students, in ourselves. (1998, p. 66)

Within the complex and confusing soundscapes of our classrooms we require the opportunity to play our melodies alone as well as to play them with others, accept the significance of each melody and reclaim our life force, bringing the melodies together to create a wholeness of being.

What of the solo performance, who is really watching, listening and joining in with the teacher's solo performance? When we recognise and accept that our students live in quite a different world from our own childhood worlds and understand the nature of the new technologies they engage with, we may begin to encourage them to join us, presenting themselves and becoming part of both solo and community performances.

The Soundscapes of Our Twenty-First Century Students

One of the problems with student participation in our teaching performance is the schools 'industrial model' perpetuated by media, governments and society in general. Never has it been more obvious than now that our schools are far behind the worlds of our students. Prensky points out the discrepancy between the world we live in and the world of school.

Kids who out of school control large sums of money and have huge choices on how they spend it have almost no choices at all about how they are educated, they are, for the most part, just herded into classrooms and told what to do and when to do it. Unlike in the corporate world, where businesses spend tens of millions researching what their consumers really want, when it comes to how we structure and organise our kids' education, we generally don't make the slightest attempt to listen to, or even care, what students think about how they are taught. (2008)

As Prensky suggests, we do not listen to our students, we do not hear their melodies or let them share their lived experiences, their personal soundscapes. He refers to us, including himself, as the "Digital Immigrants", and our students as "Digital Natives." He uses these names to emphasise that our students live in different cultures and that we need to listen

to student voices if we are to understand the nature of their worlds. As Hartman, who warns us not to be seen as the 'expert' in chapter five, says, loss of voice can be disempowering and morally wrong. The malaise of education today, Prensky states, is that educators do not listen to students and what their needs are for learning. He believes, "It takes a willingness to accept whatever is said, good or bad, agree or disagree. But it is important for educators to try, because they so rarely converse with their kids about how they want to learn" (Prensky, 2008). Some teachers prefer to tell students what to do, lecture them, and give out worksheets to complete.

Students universally tell us they prefer dealing with questions rather than answers, sharing their opinions, participating in group projects, working with real-world issues and people, and having teachers who talk to them as equals rather than as inferiors. (Prensky, 2008)

Through the generations we could say that adults and youth have been divided. Rilke lamented early in the twentieth century,

Ah, if our parents were only born with us, how much backtracking and bitterness we would be spared. But parents and children can only walk side by side, never together; there is a deep ditch between them across which they can pass to each other from time to time a little love. (2005, p. 70)

Technology appears to have increased this divide further between adults and youth, maybe further than it ever has before. As we walk side by side with our students can we lessen this divide by speaking with them and passing them a little love from time to time? Jukes acknowledges this divide and says we must work towards bringing everyone together for the sake of our futures.

If we want to truly unfold the full intellectual and creative genius of all of our students more of the time – if we want to prepare them for the world that awaits them – if we want to help them prepare for their future, not our past – for their future, not our comfort zone – if our nations are going to march through the twenty-first century and maintain its longstanding tradition of success – if we want our children to have the relevant twenty-first century skills – we must create a bridge between their digital world and ours. (2008, p. 59)

In musical terms, the bridge is used to pause and reflect on earlier sections of the melody, or it can prepare the listener for the climax of the melody. If we pause and reflect on the melodies from our past and recognise they are only part of the composition, could we then create another melody in conjunction with our students, as the bridge, for pausing and preparing a climax for our final composition, a shared educational *telos* which we sing together? In our constantly changing world we need to be open to possible transposition into another key or even the creation of another melody entirely, to keep our performance fresh and exciting.

As we transpose our melodies in harmony with the melodies of our students we are mindful of our rhythm, our timing.

Whether you are surrounded by the singing of a lamp or the sounds of a storm, by the breathing of the evening or the sighing of the sea, there is a vast melody woven of a thousand voices that never leaves you and only occasionally leaves room for your solo. (Rilke, 2005, p. 84)

We capture the moment for weaving our melodies together as one and that moment is the time to let our students go ‘solo’, to play their counter-melodies across the classroom soundscape.

To know *when you have to join in*, that is the secret of your solitude, just as it is the art of true human interaction: to let yourself take leave of the lofty words to join in the one shared melody. (Rilke, 2005, p. 84)

Captivated by a Melody – Being in the Moment

If we do not understand our students’ soundscapes in this new century, is it possible that parents or teachers can count in the lives of our young people? “In being played, the play [or musical performance] speaks to the spectator through its presentation; and it does so in such a way that, despite the distance between it and himself, the spectator still belongs to the play [musical performance]” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 115). If we experience teaching as performance in what ways could we be sure that our students hear the message or the meaning inherent in our performance? Could we say that our students belong to ‘the play’, they are engaged in the performance? What must our responsibility be if they feel lonely, uncared for by the very schools that we suppose provide nurturing environments for their present lives and prepare them for their future?

When students are engaged in what they are learning the teacher almost disappears into the background of the classroom. She is not an invisible presence but a facilitator, a ‘guide on the side’, leading students into new learning experiences. This is true for all of us when we are involved in something we really enjoy, time and, often people, pass by unnoticed. Once again Gadamer captures what the performance of teaching could be.

The play itself is a transformation of such kind that the identity of the player does not continue to exist for anybody. Everyone asks instead what is supposed to be represented, what is 'meant'. The players (or playwright) no longer exist, only what they are playing. (2004, p. 111)

The teacher and the curriculum disappear and only what the student is playing is happening in the classroom. It becomes natural and secure, full of excitement and intrigue, memorable moments in our classrooms. Gadamer encapsulates these moments in his description:

It is in the performance and only in it – as we see most clearly in the case of music – that we encounter the work itself, as the divine is encountered in the religious rite. (2004, p. 115)

In the rite of teaching, is it possible to encounter the divine in our hearts?

When real learning occurs in the classroom, and out of it, we are immersed in the experience. It seems like no time has passed and we are no longer encumbered with our worries or desires, or what people think of us. In the moment, present to the experience, we are truly engaged as an individual, uninfluenced amongst others. The music, the movie, the play, they captivate us.

In De Mello's therapy sessions he meets a common problem, the attachment to another person to make us happy.

Nobody loves me; how, then, can I be happy? I explain to him or her: "You mean you never have any moments when you forget you're not loved and you let go and are

happy?” Of course they have. A woman, for example, is absorbed in a movie. It’s a comedy and she’s roaring with laughter and in that blessed moment she’s forgotten to remind herself that nobody loves her, nobody loves her, nobody loves her. She’s happy! (1990, p. 112)

De Mello again reminds us that our attachment to people or things is fleeting, as is our dependence on them, particularly when we are engaged with something we enjoy doing.

At a public lecture, organized by the School of Leisure & Tourism Studies at the University of Technology Sydney during 1999, Professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi spoke about his theory of flow and how he has spent a number of years researching its essential nature. Csikszentmihalyi told listeners of his difficult life as a child in a war-torn Hungarian society, a life that set him on the path of discovery towards a better future. He found that many people did not realise what they had to do to make themselves happy. Csikszentmihalyi began his research with artists, discovering how they felt in their creative modes.

Many described an “ecstatic state” or a feeling of being outside of what they were creating with their hands. *Ecstatic* comes from the Latin for “stand to side.” Csikszentmihalyi accounted for this feeling of being consciously outside of the creation as due to the psychological limits of consciousness, that at higher levels of consciousness the more mundane aspects become subconscious in order to restrict conscious attention to the number of items it can manage. So a pianist described not noticing the room, his hands, the keys, the score, but rather being conscious of only “being one with the music and expressing emotion.” (Farmer, 1999)

This “ecstatic state” describes something of what Jodie experiences when she is drawing portraits. She could say she is totally in the moment, or in “the flow” She draws whilst she is alone and so she is her own lone observer. She enjoys playing guitar and piano. She recognises this same ecstatic state when she plays alone for her own pleasure. Quite a different state emerges when she has an audience to listen to her play. Csikszentmihalyi notes that “a major constraint on people enjoying what they are doing is always being conscious of a fear of how they appear to others and what these others might think. Ecstasy includes rising above these constraining concerns of the ego” (Farmer, 1999).

Bohm exposes how our society conditions us to become attached to our egos, preventing a natural ‘flow’ in our creative performances. “...we are afraid to make mistakes. From early childhood, one is taught to maintain the image of ‘self’ or ‘ego’ as essentially perfect” (2007, p. 5).

Csikszentmihalyi lists seven points to demonstrate how it feels to be in “the flow”:

1. Completely involved, focused, and concentrating – with this either due to innate curiosity or as the result of training.
2. Sense of ecstasy – of being outside everyday reality.
3. Great inner clarity – knowing what needs to be done and how well it is going.
4. Knowing the activity is doable – that the skills are adequate, and neither anxious nor bored.
5. Sense of serenity – no worries about self, feeling of growing beyond the boundaries of ego – afterwards feeling of transcending ego in ways not thought possible.
6. Timeliness – thoroughly focused on present, don’t notice time passing.
7. Intrinsic motivation – whatever produces ‘flow’ becomes its own reward. (Farmer, 1999)

If we remember back to chapter four, *Soulful Music*, where Jodie noted that James and Gordon failed to establish a positive connection with Dan, we might say it was because of their attachment to ‘perfection’ as a teacher, an attachment to their egos. Could this be why their teaching was seen to be without ‘flow’ and created disconnection with certain students? We might now understand how profound Cain’s tenth renewed quality, “separate their egos from their work” (2001, pp. 703 - 705), could be. The separation of our egos from our teaching may be the key to understanding how we might embrace our heart of teaching, bringing the self to the classroom soundscape.

Are we able to assist our students in transcending their ego and being in ‘flow’? Bohm says that it is unfortunate that our society depicts this need to strive for perfection, inhibiting our performances, particularly when “all learning involves trying something and seeing what happens” (2007, p. 5). How then might we begin to create a soundscape of flow? For students to come to the point of working and being in ‘the flow’, we might provide an environment where our students feel a connection with others, a place of interdependence. A student who feels safe and is working in a trusting environment might not be reliant on the other, they would not be dependent. They might relax in what they are doing and come to be unconcerned about the presentation or how they might appear to others. De Mello quotes A. S. Neill, the creator of the Summerhill School, a progressive, co-educational, residential school, where competition was discouraged and individual progress and achievement were celebrated, as saying,

When a child is sure of his mother’s love, he forgets his mother; he goes out to explore the world; he is curious...When a child is hovering around his mother, it’s a bad sign; he’s insecure. Maybe his mother has been trying to suck the love *out* of him, not give him the

freedom and assurance he wants. His mother's always been threatening in many subtle ways to abandon him. (De Mello, 1990, pp. 162, 163)

We might reassure our students of our care and love of them. We might give our students the freedom and assurance they require and not threaten to abandon them. We are, after all, their 'guides on the side'. If the soundscapes of our classrooms played these melodies of freedom and assurance might the learning be more meaningful? Might this type of environment encourage us to be present to the experience, enjoy the melodies as they pass by and forget to watch the clock and think of what we need to do tonight, tomorrow or next week?

Returning to Our Personal Melodies – The Rise of the Individual

The average age of the current teaching population in Tasmania is between forty-five and fifty-five. Many are teaching students who are growing up in a customisable world, a world that presents different types of experiences, many of them foreign and frightening for some of us. We must either compete or understand the messages mass media send to our modern day society. "Over the course of the twentieth century the media have come to occupy an increasingly central role in the formation of individual and collective identities" (Darder, 2002, p. 18). Darder, in conversations regarding the impact of the media, details its insidious influence on young minds, "Students are barraged daily with conflicting notions of who they should strive to be" (2002, p. 18). She believes teachers should "recognise how the media function as a subtle and not-so-subtle means of defining and shaping our innermost desires and dreams – which more often than not, are directly linked to the interests of the marketplace" (2002, p. 19). Everything is directed at keeping our 'individual' needs satisfied supposedly resulting in eternal 'happiness'.

Taylor discusses the “Three Malaises” of modernity in his book *The Ethics of Authenticity*. His first source of worry is this enormous push towards individualism. Taylor writes how this direction towards individualism has driven us away from the chains of class, given place, and role in society, but it has also narrowed our path, restricted us. Taylor cautions us to remember that individualism can be used in two different senses. One is a moral ideal, where we honour our individuality without selfishness, an individual without ego. The other ideal, suggests Taylor, is an amoral phenomenon that reveals a darker side, a centring on the self, a form of egoism. When we become the individual in the egoist sense, this way of being “both flattens and narrows our lives, makes them poorer in meaning, and less concerned with others in society.” People become obsessed with themselves and this is connected to an “abnormal and regrettable self-absorption” (1995, p. 4). This is not a new concern for the twenty-first century. Taylor acknowledges other philosophers who have written about the malady of this amoral phenomenon. Alexis de Tocqueville, for example, wrote in the early eighteenth hundreds, “People no longer have a sense of a higher purpose, of something worth dying for.” Søren Kierkegaard wrote, “We suffer from a lack of passion.” And later in the twentieth century, Nietzsche said, “they have no aspiration left in life but to a ‘pitiable comfort’” (1995, p. 4).

That our modern society is greatly concerned in providing us with comforts and distractions is a phenomenon that requires such moral consideration as Taylor suggests. Just watch the advertisements or competitions on television, there is an overabundance of entertainments out there inviting us to add to our collection of items, personalised for me, to keep me ‘happy’. Christopher Lasch, author of *The Culture of Narcissism*, sharply criticises our twentieth century society and how it has given rise to a narcissistic personality structure. Our daily experience teaches us to “want and need a never-ending supply of new toys and drugs” and “The effect of the mass media is not to elicit belief but to

maintain the apparatus of addiction” (Lasch, 2009). We buy a new CD or DVD and replace it soon after with another new CD or DVD. In our drive as consumers to ‘own’ material objects we soon forget to cherish the very items we desired in the first place. The online article, *A Dialogue with Christopher Lasch* exposes this appetite for new ‘toys’ and our desire for ownership and appropriation in the words of Waldo Frank. He believes if we frequently receive new ‘toys’ we will eventually transfer the value “from the *toy* to the toy’s novelty... The arrival of the toy, not the toy itself, becomes the event.” Waldo continues that our society is organised around mass consumption and this need for new ‘things’ becomes an addiction. “The need for novelty and fresh stimulation become ever more intense, intervening interludes that are increasingly intolerable.” It is with good reason that William Burroughs refers to the modern consumer as an “image junkie” (Lasch, 1987).

This self-obsession is driven by a second source of malaise, “instrumental reason.” We draw upon a kind of rationality, says Taylor, when we “calculate the most economical application of means to a given end. Maximum efficiency, the best cost-output ration, is its measure of success” (1991, p. 5). Instrumental reasoning threatens to take over our lives, consuming us with its consumables. Taylor is concerned, like Darder and Lasch, that “the demands of economic growth are used to justify very unequal distributions of wealth and incomes” and that “the demands make us insensitive to the needs of the environment, even to the point of potential disaster.” Further to this, and more frightening, is how our social planning, “in crucial areas like risk assessment, is dominated by forms of cost-benefit analysis that involve grotesque calculations, putting dollar assessments on human lives” (1991, pp. 5, 6).

Taylor’s feared consequences for the political life of individualism and instrumental reason rise from his third malaise. Although we are living in a society that encourages

individualism and we think this individualism is about freedom, we are actually still severely restricted. Through giving weight to instrumental reasoning we ignore serious moral deliberation. Again Taylor draws from Tocqueville,

A society in which people end up as individuals who are 'enclosed in their own hearts' is one where few will want to participate actively in self-government. They will prefer to stay at home and enjoy the satisfactions of private life, as long as the government of the day produces the means to these satisfactions and distributes them widely. (1991, p. 9)

This point maybe more relevant in the United States where people have the right to choose whether to vote but the inherent message remains the same. Here, in Australia, it is compulsory to vote over the age of eighteen. Although our population is required to place a vote, whether people are actively participating in democracy is a valid concern. How many voters really understand the democratic practices of our country when they prefer to vote for their 'favourite' party, the one that promises wide distribution of that which satisfies those most? Politicians may be forced to become morally unbound. A politician, Gadamer says, may be forced to govern according to certain rules and thus have to lay his personal insights aside, insights that may in fact benefit the system, a point referred to in the earlier chapter of *Soulful Music*. Taylor admonishes citizens, who potentially could and do become politicians, for becoming enclosed in their own hearts.

One of the problems of education for the twenty-first century could be the disconnection from each other as a result of the self-indulgence and extreme individualism that Taylor describes. Lives are becoming fragmented, students feel lonely, unsupported and directionless. They want to assert their individuality and be part of a group. As we wander the streets in most Australian capital cities we would soon be aware of the gothic

culture that offers students a way to be different and to belong. They dye their hair black, and hang or pierce black and silver jewellery over and through their bodies. They paint their lips black and wear black clothes blended with other dark shades of colour. They wear black boots, black fishnet stockings and long black coats. Their music contains 'black' lyrics. Life is black. Are they really being individual, different? They live the paradox of being different and the same. Taylor discusses the danger of these partial groupings, how they move people away from whole society and how it weakens our connection with society.

Fragmentation arises when people come to see themselves more and more atomistically, otherwise put, as less and less bound to their fellow citizens in common projects and allegiances. They may indeed feel linked in common projects with some others, but these come more to be partial groupings rather than whole society: for instance, a local community, an ethnic minority, the adherents of some religion or ideology, the promoters of some special interest. (1991, pp. 112, 113)

As our society continues to label, categorise and conceptualise people, our world community remains fragmented. As Darder says, our media maintains this way of being in the world, "...reporters must identify people who are not 'white' by using some sort of ethnic label (*black* mothers, *Korean* parents, *Hispanic* children, *Filipino* workers, etc)" (2002, p. 19). Although these are grouping people around the world, maybe we could believe our Australian youth are not quite as disconnected from each other as Taylor might suggest.

Recalling Levinas' concept of the Other present in our lives, we may now consider whether we can optimistically turn this state of disconnection or divide between teachers

and students that we have been exploring as part of our society's malaise towards a future of hope which plays the moods and melodies of its music with much more ease.

Twenty-First Century Soundscapes – Technologies and Our Students' Realities

In a positive future, we could work against the malaise of fragmentation and consider where technologies might bond us one to the other. Social networking tools like *Facebook*, *My Space* and *Bebo* rely on people actually connecting with each other.

Prensky often asks the hosts of his presentations to invite students along to form a panel. Students speak with a large group of educators, and dispel some of the assumptions of Prensky's "Digital Immigrants." At one time, a teacher asked students,

"Do computers cut you off from the world?"

"Not at all," said an excited student: "We share with others and get help. Technology helps, it strengthens interactions so we can always stay in touch and play with other people. I've never gone a day without talking to my friends online." (Prensky, 2008)

When we converse online are we not speaking with others in text or speech, in discourse with another and exposed to the questioning of the Other? "It is only in approaching the Other that I attend to myself" (Levinas, 1969, p. 178). Although Levinas died in 1995, technology had already begun to change the way people communicated and he had his own thoughts about the way this technology was heading. Levinas saw technology as possibly something evil but equally saw it as an opportunity to facilitate ethical responsibility, "...technology is an evil that promotes social injustice when it is at the

service of 'pagan' nature worship. It is ethically positive, however, when it promotes dialogue and exposes injustice to the judgement of humanity" (Hutchens, 2004, p. 131).

Melodies of Pretence – Hidden Dangers Online

Would Levinas see the value of conversation through the accumulation of hundreds of virtual social networking places that exist today? Would he consider we are meeting the Other 'face-to-face' in these online communities? Might he see the advantages of cyberspaces such as *Second Life*, where all over the world we converse through our avatar in an educational setting about educational issues? Maybe he would see the enormous potential for technology to become a conduit for ethical responsibility with the others in our global communities. Hutchens speaks of Levinas's ideas toward technology,

The world consists of a network of social arrangements through which we discover the wonders of our world...this expansive space consists of constellation of relationships among people, which, in technology, might lend themselves to ethical justice. (2004, p. 135)

Our avatars are mere online representations of ourselves within an online environment but are they true representations of who we really are, representations of the self? If we think of the alter ego, a character representing some aspects of ourselves, we can imagine what our avatar could potentially be. We add to this alter ego, qualities we yearn to have and drop the less likeable qualities. We create the 'ideal' personality to present to the other. Are we playing a game of pretence, projecting forward a personality we might like better than our existing self? Could there be problems with this game of pretence? It

would appear there are both negative and positive ways of looking at the creation of the avatar, the alternative persona.

There are dangers inherent in online worlds of which we need to be aware. Could these online worlds give potential ‘predators’, ‘dressed up’ as kind, caring avatars, opportunities to ‘hunt their prey’? We often reveal more about ourselves online than in ‘face-to-face’ meetings. Think of how we respond to a stranger in the street. We do not usually give out information about ourselves such as our phone number, our address, our last name. The internet soundscape of chat rooms, virtual worlds and web pages appear to lull us into a false sense of security, encouraging us to divulge information about ourselves. Is this because we are not standing with others face-to-face? Do we think we are alone in our own world of thoughts because the other is ‘hidden’ from us?

Within our education department we have resources that help students understand virtual environments and provide guidelines for safe ways to participate online. One such resource, from the Australian Children’s Television Foundation, is *Noah and Saskia*.

This TV program portrays the possibility of the multiple perceptions of people that may occur in a virtual reality. Saskia writes and plays her own music which she uploads to her website.

Noah downloads her music into his own online world, without her permission. Saskia enters Noah’s virtual reality to speak with him about stealing her music. After an initial unsuccessful meeting as a ‘random’ avatar, Saskia becomes more thoughtful about the personality she chooses to present in Noah’s online world, a world she has just been ‘unceremoniously’ ejected from. She creates “Indy.” Noah represents himself as “Max Hammer” and readily accepts the “Indy” personality into his online realm.

As the story, over many episodes, progresses, we see visual images of Noah and Saskia as “Indy” and “Max” revealing their thoughts and feelings to each other. We see their avatars and their imagined ‘real’ person, an image Noah and Saskia believe the true self of the other to be. There are three different personalities, Noah and Saskia as themselves, their created avatar and the imagined ‘real’ person. The story jumps between these three different ‘personalities’ keeping viewers engaged throughout the show. The program ingeniously portrays how things may not always be as they first appear. Both teenagers are alone in their rooms on the internet, neither realising they are living on different sides of the world or that they are the same age. They both imagine each other to be much older and ‘cooler’! At the end of the series they discover the ‘real’ Noah and Saskia.

The program highlights the ‘masked’ reality of online worlds, although the show does not explicitly state the real dangers of what could happen in such a situation. For example, Noah could have been an adult male, with unethical intentions, scouring the internet for potential teenage girls to entice into conversation and maybe an eventual face-to-face meeting.

What the show does reveal is that our avatar may give us the opportunity to explore who we might like to be, and ultimately give us the chance to change into a different personality online. It could become an exploration of our individuality, our potential, in a non-threatening or confronting situation. These online encounters could help us explore Levinas’ philosophy regarding our responsibility to the Other, another opportunity to understand and assume responsibility for our actions.

Saskia learns about the many aspects of her own personality as Indy. In her real world Saskia would not have confronted Noah for stealing her music or indeed spoken to him at

all! As Indy, her avatar, she engaged in dialogue with his avatar, Max Hammer. She learned to be responsible for the way she approached the Other. In her first incarnation, a random avatar selected without forethought, Saskia creates a demanding and rude persona and she is initially thrown out of Max Hammer's online world. Saskia carefully chooses a new avatar, Indy. She consciously decides she needs to take a different approach if she is to be accepted in Max's world. Indy's introduction to Max is more gentle and welcoming. As a result Max does not throw her out of his world, he talks to her. It would appear Saskia has understood her responsibility to the Other. Levinas says, "In discourse I expose myself to the questioning of the Other, and this urgency of the response – acuteness of the present – engenders me for responsibility; as responsible I am brought to my final reality" (1969, p. 178). Saskia's final reality in the first instance as the "rude persona" created a situation that was not helpful. The questioning of the Other, in this case Max Hammer, required her to change her approach to bring forth a different reality.

The realities of a virtual world could be likened to that of living in a parallel universe, where a number of realities can be played out in the same world, with the same people but with the ability to change personas, avatars and events, without others detecting that it might be the same person on the other end of the computer. In the online world we have the opportunity to change our avatar and appear as different people, adjusting our behaviour to suit a situation and maybe become accepted. Could this be a valid way to learn the ethics of being there for the other?

Anna Strhan, an educator whose explores the concept of the Other put forth by Levinas, explains how important this responsibility for the Other is in our classroom and world soundscapes. "I am taught what I could not have discovered within myself. In the

approach of the Other, meaning and truth are produced from beyond myself, and a common world is created between self and Other” (Strhan, 2007, p. 414).

Saskia’s experiences in the online world impacted on her real-life relationships in a positive way, and she quickly learnt particular actions were not acceptable. There are many people whose actions online are unethical, but their actions offline are ethical. Is it a space where they can pretend to play out the darker side of their nature? Do they believe themselves to be more invisible in online worlds, more insidious and difficult to find, thus being safe from detection? What is the common world created in these negative circumstances? What sort of reality does the unethical individual bring to her own life? These questions may bring us to the question of what is ethical behaviour. If we look to Levinas and his thoughts for pure ethics, we will find that the person who responds from a place of pure ethics does not come from their ego or premeditated thought. “It is only in the direct and unmediated encounter with the Other that we can gain a glimpse of the meaning of the ethical impulse that [Levinas] describes as the human responsiveness to the appeal of the Other who needs my care” (van Manen, 2000, p. 319). From Levinas’s description we could say the online predator does not come from a place of pure ethics, as their behaviour appears pre-mediated, using carefully thought out processes to ensnare others less knowing and innocent. Whilst potential ‘predators’ exist in our world it is the responsibility of everyone, especially teachers and parents, to show students/children how to use technologies safely, to encourage them to ‘listen’ carefully and with awareness as they dwell in their online soundscapes, ensuring the experience of global communication is positive.

As students continue to use avatars and online personas might we be required to help students deeply understand their ‘personality’ and to live with the shortcomings of

perceived selves? Can we lead our students away from obsessive individualism and help them find their true natures, the melodies that live within their hearts. What common worlds are we creating when our relationships are not from our hearts, when they come from our amoral individualistic tendencies that can be selfishness or narcissistic?

A Symphony of Melodies – Losing Sight of the Musical Composition

In the introductory chapter of this study Palmer speaks of the benefits of personal storytelling and reflection. Even though he advocates these methods as important for learning, especially about oneself, he also acknowledges the danger of total or narcissistic individualism. “But when my little story, or yours, is our only point of reference, we easily become lost in narcissism” (1998, p. 76). When we work with our students, teaching them as a whole person with a life story, we begin to understand the online worlds they ‘live in’ and see how much time they spend telling their own stories, such as in Blogs, and playing their own melodies. How do we prevent them from becoming lost in the narcissism of their online melodies within our classroom soundscape? Palmer asks us to remember “the big stories of the disciplines” and the “stories that are universal in scope and archetypal in depth.” He believes these stories “frame our personal tales and help us understand what they mean. We must help students learn to listen to the big stories with the same respect we accord to individuals when they tell us the tales of their lives” (1998, p. 76).

Does our individualised or materialistic ‘throw away’ society ignore the big stories that help us understand our need for solitude, the acknowledgement of individuality alongside our need to be in community and being part of a whole? Taylor speaks of “a loss of resonance, depth, or richness in our human surroundings” (1991, p. 6). Is this where we

have lost heart: lost heart in our teaching, lost heart in our communication with others, creating a disconnection from the Other?

As we vanish into the worlds of our distractions, becoming enfolded within our own individual melodies we begin to lose sight of the musical composition. We become consumed by a “device paradigm.” Albert Borgman introduced this notion of the “device paradigm” to explain how our technological devices are viewed and used by modern society. Technology could possibly provide us with what Palmer describes as the “big stories of the disciplines” and the “stories that are universal in scope and archetypal in depth” however, Borgmann warns us that the promise of technology “guides and veils the shaping of the modern world” and reminds us that the “initial genuine feats” that technology promised can also be reduced to the “procurement of frivolous comfort” (1984, p. 39). It would appear our students are more deeply part of this “device paradigm” than maybe we were as children. Borgmann, in response to this “device paradigm” would like us to restore our “focal things and practices.” A focal thing is something of ultimate concern or significance and without practice the focal thing will fail to prosper. As teachers, we might restore these focal things and practices to our “device paradigm” helping our students to understand our susceptibility to these technological distractions.

Countering technology through a practice is to take account of our susceptibility to technological distraction, and it is also to engage the peculiarly human strength of comprehension, i.e. the power to take in the world in its extent and significance and to respond through an enduring commitment. (Borgmann, 1984, p. 210)

While we slip more deeply into the “device paradigm” we need to keep reminding ourselves and our students these devices are merely tools that help us live our lives more conveniently, giving us more time to make that enduring commitment to the quality of our lives and relationships.

A Melody of Transformation – Future Soundscapes

Within the soundscapes of education might we, as teachers, offer possibilities for this enduring commitment to the quality of our lives and relationships, offer authentic connections with others through our pedagogy? It appears that once students reach their early teens, and sometimes even before that, education seems to lose its appeal and many students are no longer engaged in the musical soundscape of school, they no longer wish to be part of the performance, to listen to the melodies played.

You’ve only got to look at the huge dropout rates among children, and not just kids from lower income families, but all children...People are being disaffected and turned off by education. They’re not excited by it. (Robinson, 2007)

Could it be that students consider earlier in their lives the place we call school does not offer the realities of their world? Do they perceive it as only offering a ‘one size fits all’ education that has nothing to do with themselves as individuals or their group?

Rilke spoke of what could be possible for the worlds of school to achieve,

If life is anywhere to become broader, deeper, more human, this is to happen in school...there is time and quietness and space: time for every kind of development, quiet for every voice, space for all of life and all of its value and things.

Rilke knew that school falls far short of these expectations.

A series of unspeakable errors has turned school into the opposite: increasingly, life and reality have been pushed out of it. School was supposed to be nothing but school, and life was something completely different. It was supposed to come only later, after school, and it was supposed to be something for adults (as if children were not alive, as if they were not in the center of life). Due to this incomprehensible, unnatural strangulation, school has died off. All of its content has ossified into rigid clumps because it lacked the movements of life. (2005, p. 72)

As we hear the words Rilke offers we could agree in many instances with his devastating summary. School is still viewed as an unreality, another life that has to be endured to reach the ‘real life’, the life of adults. Our disengaged students are often blamed for their own hostilities towards education, labelled troublesome and lazy. “It’s not because they’re bad kids or they don’t have abilities. It’s because the system isn’t looking for things they can do. Diversity to me is absolutely fundamental” (Robinson, 2007). Do we continue to play this one melody of the past, teaching in an ossified soundscape?

We are always striving to improve the education we offer our students, tweaking this program, introducing another and dismissing the one that didn’t work. Is it about improving what we do, what exists, building on what we know? Robinson says, “To me, the issue for educational reform is not about small incremental changes. The issue is about transformation, not improvement” (Robinson, 2007).

This transformation, this escape from an ossified educational soundscape begins within the self, within the heart of the teacher. Repeating Palmer's words in chapter one of this thesis, *Composing the Melodies of Our Hearts*,

...the transformation of teaching must begin in the transformed heart of the teacher. Only in the heart searched and transformed by truth will new teaching techniques and strategies for institutional change find sure grounding. Only in such a heart will teachers find the courage to resist the conditions of academic life while we work and wait for institutional transformation. (1993, pp. 107, 108)

When we consciously commit to find the inner lives of our teaching we may discover our identity, integrity and humility, letting go of our egos, accepting the transforming heart of our teaching.

Finding Our Own Melody – The Sweetest Sound

Through all the melodies that have played within these pages, I have sought the heart of teaching, visited spaces in Jodie's life, my life, to which we may have never dared return for fear of pain, memories of failure and avoidance of the truth. Our search has brought the remembrance of heartbreak and despair. We begin, now, to understand that heartbreak and despair lie at the heart of teaching.

The Haunting Sound of Heartbreak

The narratives of this thesis may expose teaching as an emotionally violent soundscape. Such violence is inevitable. A podcast interview of Palmer when he spoke about

heartbreak in education on a Tasmanian radio station, broadcasted from *New Dimensions Media*, may help us understand and accept at last the emotional violence, the heartbreak of teaching, helping us uncover the hidden meanings of our teaching experiences. During the conversation with interviewer, Michael Toms, Palmer asks us to embrace the heartbreak of teaching, learn through the pain, and seek out where we need to go next. He says it is hard to wear a mask that keeps our true selves hidden, from ourselves as well as from our students. To remove the mask and take the risk of heartbreak is to be open to the true nature of teaching. (Toms, 2008) As Grumet says, it is through our masks that we glimpse ourselves and maybe catch ourselves if we can.

We may see heartbreak as the step forward that we require to ‘fine tune’ our melodies and compose new songs to sing, songs of despair or joy. Palmer advises that heartbreak helps us find our heart, and it is a courageous act to acknowledge heartbreak, name our pain, move forward in healing, challenging the institution, and creating a community of congruence. Heartbreak is not a negative state as it opens into something larger, a new capacity: it leads us towards open-heartedness. Palmer believes we need open-hearted people. When we come from our broken hearts to a place of open-heartedness we are more able to create change, access the power of the heart, discipline it, and then use it in community. He says the shattered heart is a step further from the broken heart and it is difficult to pick up the shards on our own, when we are alone. When we find community with others we are able to piece together the shattered heart. (Toms, 2008)

As we face the violence and loss of sense of community in education we could easily be tempted toward blind acceptance of supposedly ‘new’ trends promising to fix the ongoing problems in our schools. We could lose heart. If we ignore the melodies we hear in our hearts of teaching we are in danger of disconnecting from others and indeed, from

ourselves. When Palmer describes the plight of Rosa Parks, the African American woman who dared to refuse to give up her seat for a white passenger on a bus in 1955, and challenged the laws set down by ‘white’ people, he reminds us “no punishment anyone lays on [us] could possibly be worse than the punishment [we] lay on ourselves by conspiring in our own diminishment” (1998, p. 171).

Reflecting on Our Own Soundscapes and Melodies

Jodie considers that wearing a teacher ‘mask’ would contribute to her own diminishment. While she hides from herself she is living in false soundscapes, playing melodies that do not belong to her heart. She must continually inspire herself if she is to inspire her students ensuring the ‘spark’ of inquisitiveness required for lifelong learning becomes an almost overwhelming presence. She moves closer toward being the ‘inspiring teacher’ when she is in genuine communication with her students and colleagues, engaging in authentic dialogue, the ‘mask’ now dropped. Here Jodie and I close together again in self-understanding, transforming the Jodie of recalled, narrated, interpreted stories into being one with the author, me. If I am no longer fearful of my heart breaking, I can embrace the new possibilities open to me. I am not required to ‘act’ as the teacher archetype, the ‘master’ or ‘mistress’. The face I present in the mirror is the true reflection of who I am.

Our soundscapes, Jodie’s and mine, are our journey towards bravery, the building of courage to teach in the face of adversity. We wore the teaching ‘mask’ on occasions and in those times failed to be the teacher we longed to be. Later, as we placed our world in words and offered it to the Other, advice Levinas asks us to consider, our teaching soundscapes became more musical, harmonious, and rhythmic. They are spaces where we reach into to our heart and draw ourselves closer to what we call *soulful teaching*.

Illuminating the reality of our soundscapes allows us to play back memories of teaching practices and experience long gone. As we glimpse the world from before, we could think of the ‘what ifs’ and ‘if onlys’. Gemmell, the Science Fiction Fantasy writer reminds us of the pointlessness of the words “if only”.

There is no more futile phrase than *if only*. If only we could go back and live our lives again. *If only* we hadn’t said the unkind words. *If only* we had turned left instead of right. *If only* is useless. We make our mistakes and move on...if I allowed myself to walk the path of *if only* I would go mad. (Gemmell, 2003, p. 201)

Recalling our life as a teacher and a person does not cause regret or conjure up the “if only”. The acts of remembrance and interpretation, recounted here, have vitally connecting us to our heart, resolving, releasing, and allowing us to play our unfinished melodies. Our recollections offer a serene acceptance for past experiences enabling us to walk confidently into the many potential ‘moments’ of teaching, in the presence of our heart.

The Swan Song – The Possible Finale

As we come to the finale, that final ‘movement’ in the composition, the chord of resolution, we can contemplate the ‘teaching’ journey. This is not the end of our search for the heart of teaching. This is a prelude for future soundscapes as we continue to seek further insights into what it is to teach from the heart. Other compositions are to be written, written with the joyous anticipation of the learning that is to come. Freire tells us,

My openness to caring for the wellbeing of my students has to do with my openness to life itself, to the joy of living...Joy does not come to us only at the moment of finding what we sought. It comes also in the search itself. And teaching and learning are not possible without the search, without beauty, and without joy. (2001, pp. 125, 126)

Within the profession of teaching we find ourselves in a privileged position. We are given the opportunity every day in our classrooms to work with students “whose dreams and hopes are at times timid and other times adventurous” and students “who [are] yet unfinished, curious, intelligent, and capable of knowing” (Freire, 2001, pp. 127, 128). This privilege is to be embraced with heart and soul. Freire reminds us that teaching is strictly a human experience and that he could,

...never treat education as something cold, mental, merely technical, and without soul, where feelings, sensibility, desires, and dreams had no place, as if repressed by some kind of reactionary dictatorship. In addition, I never saw educative practice as an experience that could be considered valid if it lacked rigor and intellectual discipline. (2001, p. 129)

In the 9/11 stories of *Forever After* a Jewish teacher recalls his family’s experiences of World War II. One member of his family, a holocaust survivor, appeals to him to help the students in his care to become human.

Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human. (2006, p. 175)

Let us put humanism and humility back into teaching. Let us join with our students in a musical composition that sings to our hearts and touches our soul.

We are one, but we are many
And from all the lands on earth we come
We share a dream and sing with one voice
(Woodley & Newton, 1987)

This thesis has re-presented a story, more than a story of the lived experience of a teacher who seeks to find the heart of her teaching. It has found ways to illustrate and illuminate philosophical understandings about what stirs the heart of a teacher.

Our journey, my journey, continues...

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

The Pebble People (*For Grade 9 – 12 students*)

Ben Adam sat outside his grandparents' weathered old loghouse. He liked to sit outside and listen to the sounds of the forest, especially after one of his grandma's famous chicken dumpling dinners. And he liked to play one of his ravelled games – making rocks war dance. So he started looking for different colored pebbles. Some were easily scraped off the surface of the well-worn path to the grandparents' loghouse, others he had to dig and scratch out of the earth.

Finally he found the ones he wanted - black ones, white ones, red ones, yellow ones, and blue ones. Holding the pebbles on an open palm, Ben Adam talked to them. He spoke to the pebbles for a long time about the respect and discipline they should have while wearing the traditional clothing the Creator had given them. He talked of symbols the old people said were their dress. He spoke of how they should all try to conduct themselves with dignity. Ben Adam repeated the words of an uncle who had helped him dress for a war dance many times before.

After several moments of serious meditation, he placed the pebbles in the bottom of an overturned tin bucket, each according to its own size and color. He carefully placed the red, yellow, blue, white and black pebbles into the circular grooves of the bucket in the formation of a bustle, the middlemost circle being the drum. Under his breath, he sang the ancient words of his ravelled war dance song, but he did not drum yet because he did not want the dancers moved.

Ben Adam finished his silent song and again spoke to the pebbles. His message contained a prayer of thanksgiving that his people were alive to see another day and that they had chosen this day to come together in celebration of tribal customs. He thanked all the dancers, drummers, and spectators. He asked the Creator to bestow special blessings upon them throughout the evening and as they travelled back to their homes. (The story continues for 4 more paragraphs)

Some example questions students were required to answer:

1. The one purpose of Ben's play is to: a) Challenge traditional roles, b) solve personal problems, c) practice social traditions, d) develop survival skills
2. Ben's prayers reveal a sense of: a) duty, b) compassion, c) courage, d) humility

Regents High School Examination Comprehensive Examination in English Session Two. (January 2002). The University of the State of New York

APPENDIX 2

TEACHING IN MINING PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The Experience:

1. How did you find out about the Teaching in Mining Program?
2. For what reasons did you decide to apply for the Teaching in Mining experience?
3. Were you given enough information about the program before you contacted your placement supervisors?
4. Did your 'employer' understand why you were there?
5. Were the staff prepared for your visit?
6. Did you have the opportunity to experience all aspects of the industry?
7. Do you think that you now have a better understanding of that industry?
8. Would you become involved again?
9. Would you encourage others to become involved?

THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

What it meant for me:

10. When you returned to school how did you use your experience in the classroom?
11. Did you develop any units of work?
12. Did you take your students to the industry?
13. Did your school offer opportunities on your return to share your experience with other staff members?

Changed pedagogy:

14. How has the experience helped your teaching practice?
15. In what ways has your teaching practice changed?
16. How does it affect your perspective on teaching?
17. Has it improved student outcomes, and if so, how?

THE PROGRAM AND THE FUTURE

What next:

18. Was the experience worthwhile?
19. How do you think it could be improved?
20. What do you think is the future of programs such as this in Tasmania?
21. What are the future possibilities of the program?