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Embodied Narrative Inquiry: A Methodology of Connection

Liora Bresler

In his discussion of culture thirty some years ago, Clifford Geertz refers to Susanne Langer’s notion of *grande idée*—certain ideas that burst upon the intellectual landscape with an extraordinary force. Promising to resolve many fundamental problems at once, these ideas become the conceptual center-point around which a comprehensive system of analysis can be built (Geertz, 1973, p. 3). Narrative, as I discuss in this paper, is one such contemporary grande idée. A second contemporary grande idée is embodiment (Bresler, 2004). Juxtaposition of these two forceful concepts, I argue, creates a methodological field that draws on our ability to connect with others to achieve empathic understanding and can illuminate the fluid, embodied nature of lived experience.

To work in a paradigm of embodied narrative is not to study anything new or different, but to address familiar events and topics — including stories voiced by teachers and students, school and political speeches, and conference presentations — from a different standpoint. This standpoint attends to the embodied process of the narrative event as part of its overall message.

The first part of this paper presents different interpretations of narrative, mapping the conceptual journey of this term across various disciplines over the past 50 years. I then introduce the notion of *embodied narrative*, grounded in an experiential “I-Thou” connection of relatedness. The second part conceptualizes the “I-Thou” connection by reflecting on sensibilities and qualities of sound intrinsic to musical experiences, particularly improvisation and musical communication.

Diverse Interpretations of Narrative -- And One More

An inevitable consequence of the popularity of *grandes idées* is the multiplicity of how they are interpreted (Geertz, 1973, p. 4). As this special issue of *Research Studies of Music Education*, and to an even greater extent the conference on which it is based testify, there are indeed diverse interpretations of narrative inquiry. This diversity exists, of course, beyond the discipline of music education, mirroring the larger academic world. Narrative is an expansive term. It is often interpreted as discourse (see, for example, Peter Moss, 2005). Another common interpretation equates narrative with articulated personal
meaning (see, for example, Lisa Roberts’ (1997) book on museum education, where knowledge and narrative are presented as opposites: knowledge is objective and fixed, narrative personal and constructed). Jerome Bruner (1996) describes narratives and their interpretations, as “trafficking in meaning,” where “meanings are intransigently multiple: the rule is polysemy” (p. 90). Beyond mere multiplicity, Bruner describes narratives as a mode of thinking, as a structure of organizing knowledge, and as a vehicle in the process of education.

Another relevant interpretation of narratives which highlights a subtle but important difference is the definition of narrative as story (Barone, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1995, 1988; Zembylas, 2003). Barone and Polkinghorne emphasize the presence of diachronic data, data that are arranged chronologically (even if then disrupted through, for example, flash-forwards or flashbacks). Stories have, in their basic forms, ends that satisfy some tension generated by their beginnings. They can thus fix the hearer’s affective orientation to events, characters, and ideas (Egan & Ling, 2002). Without the stories we try to lay on them, Egan and Ling comment, life and history are “just one damn thing after another” (p. 96). In that respect, stories function aesthetically, much like Dewey’s notion of “an experience” (1934).

Given that perspective, all forms of artistic expression -- music, drama, dance, poetry, visual art, media -- are ultimately forms of storytelling; they are articulations in which one describes overtly or implicitly “what is important,” presenting a view of the world and of oneself. Such works describe a moment when we are invited to attend to the “arc of a narrative,” providing “little tools for orienting our emotions” (Egan & Ling, 2002, p. 96). The orientation of emotions facilitates a personal connection that, in turn, enables perceptions, conceptualization, and meaning making. The aspect of personal connection in narrative, in particular, and the generative power of that connection is at the core of my

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1 As we examine interpretations across disciplines, an interesting question beyond the scope of this paper concerns differences across disciplines. For example, how are narratives of oral history different from those in mythology?, from family and cultural folklore?, or from teachers’ and students’ narratives? A related, larger issue is how the narratives of research participants are different from narratives constructed by researchers (an issue that relates to the nested form of participants’ narratives within etic researchers’ constructed meta-narratives. I address this topic in the last part of this paper).

2 Referring to everyday, as well as most but not all literary stories.
conceptualization of narrative as an act of coming to understand the world empathetically, exploring and negotiating polysemic meanings. As Mary Catherine Bateson has noted, exposure to other ways of doing things is insufficient if that exposure is not combined with empathy and respect (Bateson, 1990, p. 58).

Narrative is not new to scholarship. Stories have been the material of scholars of folklore as early as the 19th century (Toelken, 1996), part of the European nationalistic movements. Historical research in the 19th century (Bridges, 2003), and sociological research of the 1920s and 1930s (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) took narrative forms. However, narrative became a key scholarly concept across disciplines only during the second half of the 20th century. The concept of narrative was initially framed in the field of literary criticism by the formalist Canadian Northrop Frye, in his discussion of narrative structure (Frye, 1957). The subsequent rise of French literary theorists, including Roland Barthes (Barthes, 1964) and Claude Bremond (in Carr, 1986), produced important, widely read studies of narrative structure during the 1960s (Carr, 1986).

Migrating from literary criticism and folklore into the discipline of history, the concept of narrative can be seen as having propelled postmodernism, initially co-existing with structuralist, formalist, and modernist ideologies. Analytic philosophers of history, Arthur Danto, W. B. Gallie, and Morton White addressed the role of narrative in history within several months of one another during 1964-65. Their works have generated an animated dispute among philosophers and historians. They were criticized for presenting an overly literary view of a discipline which had sought to be objective and scientific. Their critics accused them of missing the essence of history by favoring its literary presentation over the hard work of discovery, explanation, and evaluation of sources which lies behind it (Carr, 1986). “History”, critics argued, “is not a literary genre but a disciplined inquiry whose goal is knowledge. Narrative is merely the way, indeed only one way, in which its results are “written up” for public consumption” (Carr, 1986, p. 9). It was in the years since the 1973 publication of Hayden White’s *Metahistory* (a name that

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1 It was the introduction of “quasi scientific” history in the late 19th century, writes David Bridges (2003, pp. 105-107), that eroded the intimate association of historical with literary writing.
reflects the Zeitgeist of the time) that “narrativism” has arguably become the dominant perspective in
discussion of the nature of historical discourse (Bridges, 2003, pp. 105-107).

In this process of applying concepts from literary criticism (with its obvious roots in fiction) to
scrutinize the scientific discipline of history, the Pandora’s box of examining the tools/texts of disciplines
was opened, soon affecting (or infecting, depending on one’s position) all the humanities, and eventually,
the social sciences. In his seminal book *Interpretation of Cultures*, Clifford Geertz (1973) claimed that all
anthropology is fiction (i.e., narrative). Sociology, education, and the rest of the social sciences followed
rapidly. In the mid 1980s, narrative had established itself firmly within cultural psychology (Bruner,
1986), a subdiscipline of psychology: the last stronghold of positivist thinking among the social sciences.

Historical context matters. During these times of paradigm change (Kuhn, 1962), triggered by the
epistemological limitations of positivism – particularly its inability to account for people’s meaning
making – narrative proved an ideal candidate as a grande idee, the right concept at the right time. The
accelerating spread of narrative coincided with what Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 17) have termed the
third phase of qualitative research in North America – the phase of *blurred genres*. By the 1970s and
1980s, qualitative researchers, write Denzin and Lincoln, had a full complement of paradigms, methods
and strategies to employ in their research. Theories ranged from structuralism and constructivism to
semiotics and phenomenology. Research strategies and formats for reporting research included methods
of historical, biographical, ethnographic, action, and critical research. Diverse ways of collecting and
analyzing field-based materials included semi-structured and open-ended interviews, and unstructured
observations. What Denzin and Lincoln term “a form of genre diaspora” accommodated documentation
that read like fiction, and theoretical treatises that look like travelogues (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). During
this massive continual crossing of disciplinary borders, the genre of the scientific article was increasingly
supplanted by the essay. The establishing of new qualitatively oriented journals in anthropology,
sociology, and education helped promote new narrative genres including art-based inquiry.

As a consequence of the “narrative debate” that arose within the discipline of history and spread
soon after, to other social science disciplines, narrative became a contested concept about how we
experience the world. The philosopher and historian David Carr claims that independently of our contemplating the past (as historians do), narrative inquiry pervades our experience of time and social existence. Narrative, he writes, is not something extrinsic, “window-dressing” or packaging, incidental to our knowledge of the past. Instead, he stresses the continuity between narrative and everyday life by uncovering narrative features of everyday experience and action (Carr, 1986, p. 17). Jerome Bruner (1986), in his book published in the same year within the discipline of cultural psychology, highlighted similar themes. It helped that the messenger was Bruner, an enormously powerful scholar with unusual cross-disciplinary knowledge, stature, and impact, who ventured to articulate what narrative could mean to the social sciences at large.

Embodied multi-sensory narrative

My thinking about narrative has been propelled by the work of Tom Barone (1983, 1990); Kieran Egan (1986); Jerome Bruner (1986, 1996); and Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (1998, 2000). While the textual aspects of narrative are central to all these writings, my own interests revolve around the lived, multi-sensory aspects of narrative and the role that musical ways of knowing can play in the generation and understanding of narrative. Narrative inquiry in the social sciences, I suggest, is grounded in auditory, kinesthetic, and aesthetic sensivities, and embedded in the lived experience of constructing and attending to narratives. The notion of embodied narrative centers on processes and spaces that facilitate the creation and communication of narratives in qualitative research. The distinction between narrative and narrative inquiry, I propose, parallels Barthes’ distinction between text and textuality (in Csordas, 1999). Text is a material object that occupies space in a bookstore; textuality is a methodological field that is experienced as activity and production (Csordas, 1999, p. 145). Embodied narrative inquiry, I suggest, is a methodological field that can be tremendously powerful in researching across the human sciences.

My argument rests on the assumption that narrative exists within language. Language is clearly larger than narratives, referring to the field of possibilities and shared conventions. Language shapes our perceptions, conceptualization, and sensitivities, our very vision of reality and what we attend to. Richard
Palmer (Palmer, 1969, p. 9. in Gallagher, 1992, pp. 5-6) notes that language shapes both our conception of ourselves and of our world (and the two, Palmer points out, are not so separate as they may seem). Language engenders the various facets of our living – from social behavior to abstract thoughts and the qualities of our feelings.

As musicians, our interactions with musical narratives within musical languages and their visceral, temporal qualities sensitize us to important aspects of experience that are not prominent in verbal and visual languages. These aspects, permeating both the private and the public dimensions of narrative, are crucial to social science research. Certainly, when we engage in narrative inquiry we aim for more than textual information, and engage in more than a text. As musicians conducting narrative inquiry, we bring multi-sensory sensitivities in the process of listening to (and help generate) the creation of narratives, and, as performers, to communicating research. Interpreting narrative requires a juxtaposition of the textual dimension of narrative (often focusing on what Louise Rosenblatt (1978) terms “efferent,” (i.e., literal) with the aural, embodied (and sometimes) aesthetic dimensions of textuality.

Why is the embodied and oral character of language so much more marginal in scholarship than the verbal? We communicate in many ways, making use of all our senses, touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing (Ong, 1982, pp. 6-7), with gestures and body language featured extensively. Language is so overwhelming oral, comments Walter Ong (1982, p. 7), that of all the many thousands of languages spoken in the course of human history, only around 106 have ever been committed to writing to a degree sufficient to have produced literature, and most have never been written at all. Writing, the commitment of the word to space, enlarges the potentiality of language almost beyond measure and restructures

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2 These two, as I elaborate later, are intimately related.
4 The scholarly attention to oral narrative is an interesting area in itself. The father of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), called attention to the primacy of oral speech which underpins all verbal communication, as well as the academic tendency to think of writing as the basic form of language (Ong, 1982, p. 5). Since Saussure, linguistics has developed highly sophisticated studies of the way language is nested in sound – the field of phonemics (Ong, 1982, p. 5). In the late 60s and the 70s, applied linguistics and sociolinguistics have been comparing the dynamics of primary oral verbalization and those of written verbalization. Interestingly, the greatest awakening to the contrast between oral modes of thought and expression and written modes took place not in linguistics, but in literary studies, beginning in early 20th century with the work of Milman Parry on the text of the Iliad and the Odyssey.
thought (Ong, 1982, pp. 7-8). Despite the embodied and oral roots of all verbalization, the scientific and literary study of language and literature has until recently, shied away from orality.

The study of language and narrative has tended to focus on written texts rather than on orality, Ong (1982) suggests, because of the intimate relationship between the notion of study and writing. Human beings in primary oral cultures, those untouched by writing in any form, learn a great deal and possess and practice great wisdom, but they do not “study” (Ong, 1982, p. 9). While all thought, including that associated with primary oral cultures, is to some degree analytic, the breaking of concepts into various components, abstractly sequential, classificatory, explanatory examination of phenomena or of stated truth is nearly impossible without writing and reading (Ong, 1982). With their attention directed to texts, scholars often assumed that oral verbalization was essentially the same as the written verbalization they normally dealt with, and that oral art forms were to all intents and purposes simply texts, except for the fact that they were not written down (Ong, 1982).

This mindset can be traced to the confusion between taleworld and storyrealm (Young, 1987), that is, between the events the story is about and their presentation in the form of a story. This confusion has been a long-standing problem in narrative analysis. The taleworld, writes Young (1987) is a reality inhabited by persons for whom events unfold according to its own ontological conventions. The storyrealm consists of tellings, writings, performances, that is, of recountings of or alluding to events understood to transpire in another realm. The status of one realm bears on but does not fix the status of the other (Young, 1987, p. 21). An embodied narrative inquiry attends to story realms -- the performances and recounting. It is based on connection: connection between the narrator and his/her story; and connection to the audience, the listener(s). These two levels of connection are central to understanding embodied narrative.

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3 Some indigenous scholars (and postcolonial methodologists) would argue to the contrary, that writing distorts oral tradition, enabling exploitation via outsiders’ consumption.

4 Ong points out that we have the term “literature”, which means “writings,” from litera, letter of the alphabet, to cover a given body of written materials, but no comparably satisfactory term or concept to refer to purely prayers, formulaic expressions, or other oral productions.
In my exploration of the concept of connection, I found compelling work in philosophy, specifically, in the work of Martin Buber (1971), and in hermeneutics (see, for example, Gadamer, 1988 and Gallagher, 1992). Another discipline that offers insight is art appreciation (Armstrong, 2000). Within their respective domains, these scholars address connection and dialogue, both of which I view as central to the power (and prevalence) of narrative. The process and context of narrative experience embedded in cultural worlds have been insightfully addressed in the field of story telling and folklore by Betsy Hearne (Hearne, 2005; Hearne & Trite, in press).

“I-Thou” Connections in the Arts and in Research

Outside/Inside dichotomy

Narrative inquiry, like other genres of qualitative research, is motivated by the wish to understand the other’s perspective. What distinguishes the aims and processes of qualitative inquiry from other forms of research is the quest for what Wilhelm Dilthey, Max Weber and others have referred to as 

verstehen,

empathic understanding (see, for example, in Bresler & Stake, 1992; Kvale, 1996; von Wright, 1971). The goals and processes of empathic connections provide a space for others to articulate experiences, to create “arcs of narratives” in the process of reflecting on meaning. Empathic understanding involves resonance, an embodied state of mind that is cognitive and at the same time, affective and corporeal. I argue that artistic experiences in general, and music in particular, provide an important model for empathic understanding, juxtaposing similar processes of embodied affect and cognition within an aesthetic distance that generate dialogical relationship with the artwork.

The quest for connection is as old as human society. More recently, Martin Buber articulated the idea of connection stipulating that in connection the self is touched and changed in relation to people and things. He termed this kind of relatedness “I-Thou,” contrasting it with “I-I,” “It-It,” “We-We,” and “Us-Them” relationship. “It-It” people, Walter Kaufman writes in his introduction to Buber’s book, “are apt to be great scholars of extraordinary erudition, with no time to have a self. They are devoted to their subject, but it does not speak to them. It is a subject one has chosen to study, and there may be others working on the same subject, and one respects them insofar as they, too, have no selves and are objective” (Kaufmann,
In contrast, connection means that the “I” is touched by the “Thou,” much as a listener can be touched by music. Buber suggests that “We must learn to feel addressed by a book, by the human being behind it, as if a person spoke directly to us. A good book or essay or poem is not primarily an object to be put to use, or an object of experience: it is the voice of YOU speaking to me, requiring a response” (Kaufmann, 1971, p. 39). The kind of response that Buber refers to involves a change of self as one encounters another’s narrative.

The theme of responsive interaction is addressed by Hans-Georg Gadamer (1988) in his discussion of *horizons of understanding*, the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. In seeking to expand our horizons, Gadamer suggests, we have to open ourselves to the full power of what the other is saying. “Such an opening does not entail agreement but rather the to-and-fro play of dialogue” (in Smith, 2001, p. 2). By discovering others’ horizons the one perceiving the other achieves a more intelligible view of the other’s ideas, though, it needs to be emphasized, without necessarily having to agree with them. This open-ended interaction with the other enables the expansion of self.

Fusing horizons involves the deconstruction of an inside/outside dichotomy. Indeed, John Dewey had deconstructed this dichotomy in his discussion on the child-centered versus discipline-centered debate (1938), as well as in his conceptualization of art as experience (1934). Dewey argued that making and experiencing art involve a dialectic process of interaction between the outside and the inside. Dewey’s definition of art as experience is based, I now realize, on these very same dialogical connections that Buber describes (though originating within a different continent and different intellectual tradition, but interestingly, at the same time).

The theme of response and transformation is addressed in the field of art appreciation by John Armstrong. In his book *Move closer: An intimate philosophy of art*, Armstrong (2000) identifies five aspects of the process of perceptual contemplation of an artwork: 1. noticing detail, 2. seeing relations

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5 Buber’s collection of Hasidic narratives (1947/1991) compellingly illustrates the power of stories in creating “I-Thou” relationships that aim to transform everyday experiences for Jewish Hasidic laymen.
between parts, 3. seizing the whole as the whole, 4. the lingering caress, and 5. mutual absorption. Although these specific terms were generated in the area of visual art and in the discipline of appreciation, these aspects are strongly present when embarking on the performance of a new musical piece in the process of making sense and coming to know (e.g., Silvey, 2004, 2005). As musically trained people know well, the first three aspects are fundamental to musical analysis. The first aspect is becoming aware of detail which our habitual and rapid seeing and hearing tend to gloss over. That requires a conscious effort: we are literally turning our attention to different parts of the musical or visual work. The second aspect, that of noting relations, involves apprehending how every element performs with respect to the whole. The third aspect has to do with completeness and coherence, the grasping of unity in the face of multiplicity.

The fourth and fifth aspects of experiencing visual art, what Armstrong has termed the “lingering caress” and “mutual absorption”, involve a new set of relationships between viewer and visual (or musical) work. Lingering caress is characterized by the lack of instrumental purpose -- a form of engagement which is traditionally associated with the concept of aesthetics. When we linger, Armstrong (2000) notes “Nothing gets achieved, nothing gets finished – on the contrary, satisfaction is taken in spinning out our engagement with the object” (p. 98). The process of a deepening relationship allows for artistic and aesthetic discoveries. The fifth aspect, mutual absorption, refers to the transformative character of deep engagement. Armstrong writes, “When we keep our attention fixed upon an object which attracts us, two things tend to happen: we get absorbed in the object and the object gets absorbed into us” (p. 99). In my own experience of mutual absorption, whether with Bach, Schubert, or Ligeti I “become the music.” The boundaries between what I commonly perceive as inside and outside are blurred. Sound penetrates the self, engaging me on a bodily level in fundamentally different ways than the visual, for example.

From a musical perspective, I would like to add to Armstrong’s five aspects a sixth aspect – that of performance, communication to outside audience. Based on mutual absorption, what the participants in a musical performance perceive as the inner and outer are blurred. Drawing on music’s ability to create a
field, performances unify performers and listeners in a shared experience. I develop this theme in the second part of this paper, in the discussion of embodied narrative as communication.

These six aspects of engagement with the arts--interactive and cyclical, rather than hierarchical and linear (hence the use of the term aspects rather than stages)--are central to narrative inquiry. Shaping perception, these aspects infuse the various stages of this kind of research, including the processes of interviewing, analysis, and writing. The first three aspects, in my experience, tend to be analytic and task oriented, as we focus on detail, note relations and patterns, and grasp for a coherent whole (Examples of these processes during data collection and analysis can be found in methodological texts, see, for example, Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Patton, 2002; van Manen, 1990). Just as they function in art and music, these aspects of perception and engagement in a research context involve interplay between part and whole, description and interpretation, tightening one’s focus and widening it.

Noting and perceiving interact closely with a genuine connection. The open, negative space present in the lingering caress and in mutual absorption fosters an empathic connection that can expand one’s emotional as well as cognitive repertoire. The lingering involved in prolonged engagement and immersion in both fieldwork and data analysis allows us, in the words of Armstrong’s book title, to “move closer” in order to establish intellectual and emotional connection and gain a renewed perception and interpretation of the other’s narrative. In this dialogical space for the creation of meanings, (a space which becomes tri-directional in the process of communication) ideas and issues are appreciated, absorbed, and internalized.

In the context of research, the idea of interaction between “outside” and “inside” and the possibility of dialogic connection are supported by the postmodern attention to researchers’ interactions with participants and in settings. Traditionally, social science emphasized detachment from the “subjects,” for fear of emotional entanglement. While an understandable taboo in the field of laboratory psychology given the structures of the settings and the nature of “data,” the concern about attachment has also operated in disciplines that required prolonged engagement in social settings and extensive interaction with research participants. Anthropologists, for example, formerly started out “here” and then went
“there” to study “them,” returning to write about their “informants” in descriptive studies (Geertz, 1988). These studies were shaped into etic narratives that provided little information about the ways that researcher’s understanding and interpretation were shaped by the interactive experience of fieldwork.

Qualitative research now takes a more reflexive stance, incorporating critical examination of the anthropologist's presence and actions, reflecting on the ways that self and others have been mutually shaped in the process of fieldwork. It attends to the dialogical, recursive nature of fieldwork: that is, the relationship between the ways fieldwork unfolds and the tools and texts that the ethnographer employs (Bresler et al., 1996). Qualitative research thus revolves around an “I-Thou” relationship. The “I” is the biography and the self of the researcher, or what Peshkin has termed researchers’ subjectivities (Peshkin, 1988). Peshkin described subjectivity as an amalgam of the persuasions that stem from the circumstances of one's class, status, and values, interacting with the particulars of one's object of investigation. Operating during the entire research process, the research subjectivity pervades the processes of conducting the research as well as the processes of analysis and writing (Peshkin, 1982). In the context of narrative inquiry, the researcher’s narrative interacts with participants’ narratives, generating, in Gadamer’s words, a “fusion of horizons.” Authentic, meaningful engagement with a story involves getting inside it and letting it get inside you, internalizing as well as analyzing it.

Hearne and Trites (in press) argue that interpretation involves the reader’s own story (in the case of narrative research, the initial reader and interpreter is the researcher). “It takes a story to know one,” Hearne points out, discussing the importance of “a narrative compass, a story that has guided our lifework” (in Hearne & Trite, in press). The converse is true as well. Bateson remarks that women today read and write biographies to gain perspective on their own lives. Each reading provokes a dialogue of comparison and recognition, a process of memory and articulation that makes one’s own experience available as a lens of empathy (Bateson, 1990, p. 5). Part of a postmodern scholarly process is the awareness of one’s story and the ability to reflect on how it impacts one’s choices of issues and lenses, and the ways in which one hears participants’ narratives. This process requires a degree of self-knowledge (not to be confused with self-indulgence or “navel gazing”: the self-centeredness of Buber’s “I-I”).
A dialogic process, drawing on one’s own narrative compass, is clearly affective as well as it is cognitive. The embodied affective/cognitive process involved in interaction and connection is made possible by the (embodied affective/cognitive) processes of perception and the inherently social ability to engage in a dialogue with others. In this context of narrative inquiry, the conventional dichotomy of affect/cognition and its deconstruction require some elaboration. The association of the arts with emotions in contrast to science’s (and philosophy’s) association with cognition prevailed until the mid 20th century. Until the mid 20th century, cognition was virtually exclusively regarded as objective, characterized by a certain dignified distance, whereas emotions were typically regarded as “inside” us, lacking such distance and attendant respectability. The dichotomization of affect/cognition in relation to the arts has been initially deconstructed by the master of deconstruction of dichotomies, John Dewey (1934), and in the latter half of the 20th century, as part of the cognitive revolution (e.g., Broudy, 1972; Eisner, 1982; Langer, 1957). It was soon after that the role of emotions in research, rather than the older view of research, was raised as a vital theme (e.g., Behar, 1996, 2003; Bresler, 2002; Kleinman & Copp, 1993; Peshkin, 1988).

Mind/body dichotomy

A related--now recognized as equally false--dichotomy concerns that of body and mind. The idea of embodiment entered the scholarly conversation at approximately the same time. Here, too, Dewey had pioneered this awareness during the early 20th century, discussing the body in the context of his notions of experience and growth: two key concepts in his thinking. In his introduction to F. M. Alexander’s book, Dewey wrote, “Men are afraid, without even being aware of their fear, to recognize the most wonderful of all the structures of the vast universe—the human body. They have been led to think that a serious notice and regard would somehow involve disloyalty to man’s higher life” (1918, p. xiv).

Dewey develops this theme in a paper presented to the medical profession via the New York Academy of Medicine (an audience that may be expected to have been familiar with the

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interconnectedness of the mind and the body), discussing disembodiment as the source of aloofness and disconnection:

The very problem of mind and body suggests division; I do not know of anything so disastrously affected by the habit of division as this particular theme. In its discussion are reflected the splitting off from each other of religion, morals and science, the divorce of philosophy from science and of both from the arts of conduct. The evils, which we suffer in education, in religion, in the materialism of business and the aloofness of “intellectuals” from life, in the whole separation of knowledge and practice—all testify to the necessity of seeing mind-body as an integral whole.

The division in question is so deep-seated that it has affected even our language. We have no word by which to name mind-body in a unified wholeness of operation . . . Consequently, when we endeavor to establish this unity in human conduct, we still speak of body and mind and thus unconsciously perpetuate the very division we are striving to deny. (1928/2002, p. 24)

In an essay titled “Nature, Life and Body-Mind” in his book (this one addressed to philosophers) Experience and Education (Dewey, 1929/1958), written during the same year, Dewey surveys the history of body/mind since the Greeks, tracing the dichotomy of body and soul in Pauline Christianity, which constituted the body as “earthy, fleshy, lustful and passionate” compared to a “Godlike, everlasting” spirit (1929/58, p. 249). Dewey’s naturalism and discussion of the continued growth of “flesh and blood” human beings in their social relations and interactions focuses on the social.

The theme of embodiment is picked up several decades later by French philosophers (Bourdieu; 1984; Foucault, 1977; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Sartre, 1956/1966) and during the past 20 years or so by north American and Australian philosophers (e.g., Bowman, 1998; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1999; Johnson, 1999; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; O’Loughlin, 2006; Peters, 2004; Shusterman, 2000, 2004), sociologists (e.g., DeNora, 2000, 2007; Turner, 1996), anthropologists (e.g., Csordas, 1994; Rasmussen, 1999; Stoller, 1984), ethnomusicologists (e.g., Berliner, 1994; Blacking, 1977; Mans, 2004), psychologists (e.g., Clarke & Davidson, 1998), and neurologists (e.g., Damasio, 1999, 2003).

Embodied Narrative and Music

In the first part of this paper I referred to artistic and musical encounters as models for dialogical connection. These interactions consist of qualities that are non-verbal, going beyond the textual. In this discussion, it is useful to examine some of the differences between the material of music -- the auditory,
versus the visual. I then reflect on the nature of music improvisation as an interactive response with others and its implications to research. Next, I focus on the processes of musical communication, discussing how similar principles operate in embodied narrative. These principles exist both in the private realm of communication in attending to participants’ narratives, and in expanding the intimate “I-Thou” realm of communication to public audience. An underlying theme is that meaning, inherently social as well as personal, emerges from embodied cooperative human activity.

The nature of sound

Distinctions between vision and sound have been noted from various perspectives. The Viennese conductor and philosopher of music Victor Zuckerkandl observed that “In seeing, touching, tasting, we reach through the sensation to an object, to a thing. Tone is the only sensation not that of a thing” (Zuckerkandl, 1956, p. 70). In contrast, musical laws are dynamic. Zuckerkandl writes that musical principles refer to “states [,] not objects, to relations between tensions, not to positions between, to tendencies, not to magnitudes” (1956, p. 364). In the same vein, musicologist David Burrows has noted that we see the world as a noun and hear it as a verb (Burrows, 1990).

The theme of constancy versus mobility is developed by philosopher of music and music education Wayne Bowman. Bowman has pointed out that there is no sonic counterpart to the constancy and objectivity characteristic of vision: sonorous experience is invariably the experience of process and change—change of direction, of quality, of intensity (Bowman, 2004, p. 38). Cultural historian, Walter Ong comments that “All sensation takes place in time, but no other sensory field totally resists a holding action, stabilization, in quite this way. Vision can register motion, but it can also register immobility. Indeed, it favors immobility, for to examine something closely by vision, we prefer to have it quiet” (Ong, 1982, p. 32). An important feature of sound is its association with an energy source. Sound, writes Ong, cannot be sounding without the use of power. A hunter can see a buffalo, smell, taste, and touch a buffalo when the buffalo is completely inert, even dead, but if he hears a buffalo, he had better watch out – something is going on. In that sense, all sound, and especially oral utterance, which comes from inside
living organisms, is ‘dynamic’ (Ong, 1982, p. 32). These reminders of the vitality of sound and its close association with life force are relevant in narrative inquiry.

As our colleagues in other scholarly disciplines, we in music education have often privileged the visual and the textual (which in an age of print and graphic more than musical literacy carries a strong visual aspect) over the embodied, the auditory and the textural. Drawing on our musical experience provides a rich ground to examine the nature of auditory experience. Sound, notes Bowman, puts us in the world as no other sense does. It is a distinctly bodily sense that asserts itself with immediacy and urgency.

Seldom a take-it-or-leave-it kind of affair, sound can caress, grip, or violate the body. It is experienced with an inwardness typical of no other sense, such that the boundary between sound and self is quite porous: sound does not respect the periphery of the body in the way that vision does. It circulates in, around, and even through us, both individually and collectively. (Bowman, 2004, p. 38)

Bowman (1998, 2004) elaborates on the centrality of embodiment to both performing and listening, highlighting their cross-modal nature. Constructing, reinforcing, and reconstructing of realities and identities that constitute embodiment are not only musical but encompass broader social and cultural identities (Bowman & Powell, 2006). What specifically are the qualities that enable this unique worldmaking?

Emphasizing the responsive quality involved in listening to music, sociologist Tia DeNora writes of a kind of “latching”\footnote{ Latching, Bowman suggested, in reading my paper (2006, email communication), is mutual, rather than “one way.”} in which listeners’ bodies engage in movements that are in some way homologous with music’s properties\footnote{Brian Sturm (2000) addresses a similar theme in the experience of people who listen to \\textit{stories}, with particular attention to the qualitatively different state of consciousness that audiences enter, for example, time distortion (the lengthening or shortening of one’s subjective perception of time). Here, too, we note the operation of a narrative compass. The listener’s memories and past experiences are activated, so that the story experience becomes a combination of living the story and reliving the memory featured centrally in the experience.} (DeNora, 2000). DeNora points out that even though music's aural features occupy only time, they come to constitute material and social space: Unlike visually locatable materials, which occupy particular spatial dimensions, music, like scent or aroma, may be diffused across an entire space at once. In that sense, sound defines a conversational space, whether it is a conversation...
between two, a focus group, or a larger presentation. Sound and music define the parameters of particular spaces (inside/outside, or core/periphery) through their audible range.

The different ways in which the human body possesses (and responds to) sonic features are directly relevant to the process of fieldwork, operating in interviews and in observations. DeNora observes that 1. Our being is *rhythmic* in its breathing, blood pressure, heart rate and pulse, some of which are audible, others are inaudible and some audible only through medical devices such as stethoscopes or blood pressure cuffs. 2. We emit sonic variation when we act in relation to, or come into contact with, objects and/or others. 3. We perform and edit bodily sound. When we speak, we employ musical qualities such as rhythm, pace, pitch, volume and the variation of these parameters. 4. We possess, to varying degrees, specific capacities for sound production. DeNora quotes a Shepherd and Wicke comment that “[t]o hear a voice, a musical sound, is to 'have knowledge' of the corporeal and somatic state which produced it. The reaction is both sympathetic and empathetic” (1997, p. 180, in DeNora, 2006). 5. The body may move in ways that simulate or partake of musical pace, rhythm or pattern and these processes may lead to iconic associations between music and motion: elevated or lowered; strenuous or light, gentle or frenetic. Listeners may, in entirely embodied ways, map arousal levels on to these iconic features in ways that recalibrate their bodily states - as when, in studies of listening practice, respondents described how they used particular music to achieve emotional and embodied states.

As observers, we perceive nontextual qualities in embodied features of action. To use DeNora’s examples (2006), it may be difficult to perform in a tender manner while clenching one's muscles, jaw or fists, or, conversely, to express hostility when one's hands are shaking. It may also be difficult to conduct a socially satisfactory conversation when participants are not mutually orienting to background stylistic and paralinguistic parameters of talk, such as volume, pace of speech, and timbre. Drawing on multiple senses, embodiment and text combine to create a message. In our role as researchers, musical sensitivities are powerfully present when we “tune in” in observations, and listening.

While we use these sensitivities in our daily life, musical engagements in particular require that we explore ways of embodied doing and becoming. Eleanor Stubley (1995) discusses the processes
through which performers develop as musicians. Central to this development is a search for identity rooted in “simultaneous awareness of difference from and connection with the other” (Stubley, in Bowman, 2004, p. 101). Performance, then, is not a mere technical act in which one shapes or executes “the music”; rather it involves living in and through the music (Stubley, 1995). In these processes, music making integrates thought and action, blurring the boundary between the roles of body and mind in the making of musical decisions. In performing, one is so deeply immersed in one’s body that its movements define one’s total sense of being. At the heart of music making, Stubley concludes, is a quest for “symbiotic tuning” – of body, mind, instrument, sound, and the musical actions of collaborative others. Learning to perform is thus “learning to experience the self as an identity in the making... learning to reach out and create a playful space in which the self is open to the possibilities of an other” (in Bowman, 2004, p. 101). It is these qualities of creating space and symbiotic tuning, I suggest, that we should bring to fieldwork (e.g., in the conduct of interviews) as well as to the process of communication (e.g., when we present a paper.)

The role of improvisation in attending to embodied narrative

Inherent to musically based interaction is a state of mind that is responsive and improvisational. Improvisation is particularly vital to qualitative research because qualitative research focuses on naturalistic settings in their complexity. Improvisation treats the unexpected as engendering opportunity to learn about the setting and the participants, as an opportunity that allows the researcher to redirect our attention in response to those she seeks to understand and represent.

The central role of improvisation in research has been largely uncharted territory. Improvisation has also been marginalized in Western classical music, a tradition that is typically associated with

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8 While improvisation is largely absent from methodology textbooks and courses, it is implicitly addressed when writing about the process of research as an integral part of the conduct of research, for example, in the natural sciences (e.g., Watson, 1968), in math (e.g., Aczel, 1996), and in the social sciences (e.g., Ablemann, 2000; Myerhoff, 1978). An explicit reference to improvisation in research has been raised by Penny Oldfather and Jane West (1994) as “a playful attempt to employ a metaphor of qualitative research as jazz,” to understand the fundamental qualities of qualitative research. The jazz metaphor, they suggest, creates a pathway for making explicit the tacit understandings that enable us to make our way as researchers without fully orchestrated scores. As jazz is guided by a deep structure of chord progressions and themes, qualitative inquiry, Oldfather and West claim, is
discipline and predictability (Nettl, 1998). Similarities between the two traditions—scholarly and artistic—are worthwhile to note. Both academic research and western “serious” music require sophisticated skills, technical and theoretical knowledge, distinguishing research from “folk theories” and “folk music.” A research methodology that aims at an “I-Thou” connection toward empathic understanding (similar to music’s aim to reach, stir, and connect), however, requires that we respond to the others’ actual (and therefore unfolding) presence, that is, that we _improvise_ beyond established procedures.

Just as folklore described the richness of folk cultures⁹, ethnomusicology and its study of various musical cultures including jazz has described the intricate patterns and tremendous wealth of improvisation. Improvisation is central to many musical genres and cultures that require performers to respond appropriately to unforeseen challenges and opportunities. Rather than a wholly unpredictable act, improvisation involves disciplined, knowledgeable, and highly attentive response to an emerging reality. Responsiveness is grounded by a particular context that is fluid, allowing for unanticipated development, and that expands the musicians’ “I” through this improvised interaction. Berliner, in his classic study of jazz improvisation, captures well the qualities of this interaction.

Energized by its vitality, transported by its affective powers, and awed by its elegance and cohesion, listeners might well imagine that jazz was thoroughly composed and rehearsed before its presentation. Yet jazz artists commonly performing without musical scores and without a specialized conductor to coordinate their performance. They may never have met before the event nor played together in any other setting. Transient and unique nature of jazz creations: each performance evolving ideas, sustained by the air waves, vanish as new developments overtake them. (Berliner, 1994, p. 1)

Clearly, discipline and systematicity are not antithetical to improvisation. Rather, reflecting a worldview that recognizes the fluidity of “I-Thou” connections in creating a narrative, whether musical or verbal, informal or scholarly, discipline takes a different form. It draws on a connectedness to what is present in its fullness and depth, rather than following a pre-conceived script.

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guiding epistemological principles, socially constructed values, inquiry focuses, and findings emerging through analytic methodologies such as constant comparison.

⁹ The study of folklore with its emphasis on folk stories has documented the depth and complexity of cultural narrative. Equally important is the acknowledgement that all people, including lofty academics, carry, and at least to some extent enact and reproduce their folk theories.
The quality of improvisation in interviews and observations is acknowledged by the terms “open-ended” and “semi-structured,” indicating a distinct style of interacting with participants of study (and, more broadly, with freshness of perceptions in the field versus pre-ordained conceptualization). Indeed, open-ended interviews draw on fundamentally different sets of skills from formal interviews. Attending to the currents of the conversation, responsiveness to narrative, and the ability to identify themes and issues beyond our preconceived organizers takes both concentration and flexibility. When researchers recognize the encounter as an embodied communication (along the distinct sonic features described, for example, by Bowman and DeNora), embodiment can become a tool as well as a text. In this encounter, the researchers, venturing into new intellectual (and often emotional) terrains, are willing to let themselves be touched and changed.

Just as musical improvisation takes place in a variety of settings (e.g., the studio, the stage, or local bars), so do the activities of narrative research occur in various forms and settings. The quality of improvised, that is, highly attentive responsiveness, is ever-present in data analysis,\(^\text{10}\) in generating new categories and in the process of identifying themes. An improvisatory style during field based interviews and observation can shape research design. As I have found in my own work, research settings have expanded (in response to emerging puzzlements as well as opportunities) to include, for example, participants’ homes (Bresler, 1997) and teachers’ private artistic contexts (Bresler, 1991). These new contexts provided compelling frames of reference and deeper understanding of participants.

Another key aspect of research involving improvisation is collaborative, team research (Bresler et al., 1996). Collaborative research, communal by definition, emphasizes interdependent voices and diversity of perspectives within a connected group. Characteristic of a small ensemble (rather than an orchestra or a large choir), teamwork typically consists of individual "parts," each with its own timbres and characteristics, yet all interacting to create a whole. In the research project on arts education reported in Bresler et al. (1996), the intensity of conversations, the conflicts and their resolutions (resolutions interpreted as acknowledgment of others' points of view, rather than agreements) were experienced by the

\(^{10}\) a textual activity, typically mediated by our computers in the privacy of our offices.
group members as embodying aesthetic quality. That quality emerged as part of focused, attentive listening and sharing, targeted toward common goals and endeavors, yet integrating a variety of perspectives.

As the dynamics of this research group illustrated, diversity is a useful tool for expansion in an “I-Thou” encounter. In our research group, for example, we were grounded in different pedagogical orientations, from teacher-centered to student-centered; from dramatic and oratorical to didactic; from hard-driving focus to a leisurely focus on "fun"; from process exercises, to a focus on product. Other examples of diversity in the make-up of our research team members included diverse backgrounds in arts discipline (music, visual arts, dance); artistic genres (e.g., classical, jazz, craft, folk, religious, “child art”); gender; cultural and ethnic diversity; and professional identities (music specialist; classroom teacher; performer; ethnographer). It was the encounter of these different, complex identities in play through improvised, interactive meaning making that allowed us to expand shared meanings. Consequently, in our interpretations and data analysis we brought these perspectives to fuse our horizons. As our own interpretations surfaced in our meetings, these led us to additional questions which guided us in our data collection (Bresler et al., 1996).

Given its fluid, unpredictable nature, improvised activities (which cannot be pinned down in the same way that fully scripted ones do) do not typically command the reverence traditionally allotted to “written” works of art, for example, the kind to which Broudy refers when he talks about enlightened cherishing (1972). However, life itself, lived creatively and meaningfully, requires improvisation, distinguishing a life lived from a life endured.

Both music and research involve the seeming contradiction of hard work that employs sophisticated skills and the playful spontaneous, responsive frame of mind that accommodates disciplined improvisation. It is disciplined improvisation that creates the interplay between script and exploration, scholarly tradition and innovation.

Nested Narratives: Communicating to Audience

An interplay between the private and the public
Doing qualitative research, just like performing music, involves mediating back and forth between the private and the public. The private, often intimate “I-Thou” relationship between the performer and the music, is intensified by the expectation to communicate to an audience (or the actual reality of live concerts and live presentations). The performance of music, then, involves tri-directional relationships: 1. Connection to the music one rehearses and plays, which propels 2. a dialogic connection with oneself, drawing on ideas and emotions. This dialogue is enhanced by 3. communication (actual or anticipated) with the audience which adds an embodied aesthetic space of the public dimension. With more than one performer, a fourth relationship, communication among performers, is added.

The responsibility to communicate to an audience intensifies an “I-Thou” relationships. As I experience time and again in my fieldwork, it is the expectation to communicate that heightens my observations and listening (much different from my narrower ways of seeing and hearing during typical, day to day encounter). This intensification, in my experience, is similar to the experience of encountering and rehearsing a musical piece with the expectation one will be performing it for others. (It is also reminiscent of my experience as a teacher: the prospect of communication enhances involvement with materials.)

The act of communication – as a performer, teacher or researcher, whether verbal or musical - involves translation of a sort (which is, of course, always an act of creation) between a private engagement and a public one. This private/public process involves the same blurring of “inside” and “outside,” self and other, that dialogue does, discussed earlier in this paper. The act of writing (like composing, performing and listening), “casts doubt on conventional boundaries between individual and society, the cognitive and the social, language and action” (Atkinson, 2003. p. 10). In that respect, it is interactive and dialogic.

The aesthetics of communication, present in both music and in research (and, I believe, can exist as powerfully in teaching) involves a complex state of embodied cognition and affect. It also juxtaposes empathy with distance (Bullough, 1953/1912). As classical performers know, losing the aesthetic distance during performance-- being “swept away with” our feelings--can be disastrous. In research, losing this
balance surrendering to sheer self-expression can result in simplistic, uncritical advocacy. It can easily turn into an “I-I”– self-centered stance, loss of much awareness of the other. More often in communicating research, the negotiation of this delicate balance results in a style of cumulative learning rather than independent voice.

An interplay between the evanescent and the stable

A second level of translation that is involved in writing research reports is that of translating evanescent experience into a stable product, a theme I have elaborated upon (in Bresler, 2005). A written text metamorphoses lived, fluid narrative into a stable, permanent form. This stability comes with a price: in the process of writing, the personal and contextual aspects of lived experiences can come to appear decontextualized. This decontextualization, it needs to be emphasized, is only one of appearance, since each encounter by a reader is concrete and carries its own context in what, at its best, would become an “I-Thou” relationship.

That quality of encounter is nicely captured by Tom Barone’s (1990) comment that when used for educational purposes, a text of qualitative inquiry is better viewed as an occasion rather than as a tool: an occasion for the reader to engage in the activities of textual re-creation and dismantling. The reader, writes Barone, constructs the reality of the text, a reality that resides neither in the literary work as “object-in-the-world,” nor in the subjective mind. Rather, the reader “moves toward the text, exploring, while traversing, the landscape of meaning” (Barone, 1990).

The interactive nature of reading and the focus on the reader as central to this interaction was framed by Louise Rosenblatt (1978). These transactions consisting of “traversing the landscapes of meaning,” have been an important focus in the area of music listening during the past fifty years, from Meyer (1956) to Reimer (2006) and Barrett (2007)11.

Interactive processing of reading and listening pervade the various stages and locations of qualitative research. And they are recursively present at the level of communication: we expect our readers to explore and traverse their own landscapes when we present talks, or create papers. It is that

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11 See also Dura (2006) and Peterson (2006).
faith in the presence of an invested reader or listener, the prospect of fused horizons, that keeps us going at the sometimes tedious aspects of crafting and polishing verbal text. This faith provides a forceful motivator to engage in the many cycles of editing as I do now, or in the countless rehearsals before a concert. In contrast, the actual live performance, teaching, interchange, or presentation of a talk resembles the flow-like form of “an experience” (Dewey, 1934), triggered by the presence of an embodied audience that interacts with it.

The role of the audience, of receptive, negative space or silence (to use an auditory term), is crucial. Silence, as folklore researcher and storyteller Betsy Hearne has noted, is not a vacuum to fill, but “a presence to respect” (Hearne, 2005). The act of communication brings the story to life in response to, or rather, as Hearne points out, in partnership with, listeners in this context. Examining the distinct connections that the senses cultivate, anthropologist Paul Stoller has observed that silence does not imply a separation between teller and audience. “A person’s spatialized gaze,” writes Stoller, “creates distance. Sound, by contrast, penetrates the individual and can create a sense of communication and participation. Outer and inner worlds interpenetrate in a flowing and dynamic world, a world in which sound is a foundation” (Stoller, 1984, p. 563). This sense of communication and participation (referred to earlier, in Bowman, 2004, and DeNora, 2006) is at the heart of embodied lived narrative. As musicians, we bring to the process of inquiry our cultivated musical sensitivities and, most importantly, perhaps, our highly active, engaged habits of listening.

On the Power of Musical Structures --and Their Limitations

As befitting a paper on narrative, this coda centers around a story, a story that I have shared elsewhere (Bresler, 2003, 2005) now revisited. In thinking about it for the NIME presentation, my interpretation of that story has deepened. It now has a twist. As the story goes, I was invited to work with Elliot Eisner on a research project in education involving classroom observations. Trained as a music performer with no background and little knowledge in education, I was baffled about what, of the barrage

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12 The 2003 version of the story addressed the power of interpretive zones in listening to different disciplinary perspectives; the 2005 version highlighted the role of musical sensitivities in interpretation.
of classroom activities, to attend to. In that experience of being overwhelmed within the oceans of my ignorance, I turned to an area of expertise, music analysis. In this moment of “Aha,” classroom life assumed a coherent form (introduction to the lesson, its development, closure), with a distinct orchestration (teacher as a conductor, students organized in various ensembles, each with their distinct timbre), characterized by certain dynamics, textures, and rhythms. This epiphanic experience when my music-based meaning making was proclaimed legitimate by Eisner defined my conversion from a musician to an educator.

Tellers, as Betsy Hearne (2005) has observed insightfully, are also listeners, not only to the audiences’ reaction, but also to their own internalized story. Often through projected listening, the teller hears his own narrative in a new way. The original point of this story was the power of musical dimensions as illuminating qualitative inquiry. The retelling in this paper highlights the **limitation** of musical structures and the use of musical lenses as structural devices. What now seems central to that epiphany was what propelled the use of musical lenses, my improvised drawing on internalized, cross-sensory ways of making sense in a different discipline, in response to a new (and initially, confusing) phenomenon. These musical lenses were, indeed, illuminating – for that study. Had I continued to apply these lenses in “automatic pilot” fashion, the responsive, improvisational quality that served me well initially could have become a recipe, a fixed way of proceeding. A way of seeing, as Elliot Eisner has commented, is also a way of not seeing. My formal musical lenses could easily have become blinders, blocking me from perceiving the richness of settings, from hearing new narratives that do not conform to western musical forms (with their beginning, middle, and end) or or their notion of vertical harmony.

As a preventive against an “automatic pilot” response, the notion of a dialogue in an “I-Thou” relationship encourages open-endedness and freshness, providing a “negative” space where the other can enter in her unpredictability. Indeed, each new study, each new paper, requires a lingering caress and mutual absorption to cultivate an “I-Thou” relationship during its specific encounter. Each beginning carries the potential of further insights.
The shift of meaning in my own story applies more broadly. Narratives, aural or written, grand or small, are occasions, and, as such, are ephemeral. As we grow, so does our meaning making. Even when shared in honesty, narratives are, by definition, selective, reflecting our own perceptions, which are ever-changing as we change. It is with a sense of this ephemeral quality that we should treat them, recognizing that they can be powerfully illuminating, but are not to be confused with the Truth that postmodernism acknowledged as impossible.

Geertz (1973) suggests that after a grande idée has become part of our general stock of theoretical concepts, it becomes a permanent and enduring part of our intellectual armory. Our expectations, then, are brought more into balance with the actual uses of the grande idée, and its excessive popularity is ended. At that stage, “it no longer has the grandiose, all-promising scope, the infinite versatility of apparent application it once had” (Geertz, 1973, pp. 3-4). I suggest that narrative has indeed become a permanent and enduring part of our intellectual armory, and that we now want to examine more carefully its liabilities and limitations, and where these hazards of narrative inquiry can take us. We have learned much through narrative. Our awareness of the disciplines, the world, and ourselves, has grown immensely. In education and music education, for example, our understanding of what teachers say and do and of the intricate relationship between these two, has expanded considerably. Examining the limitations of narrative as a tool for all social science inquiry, I find the concept of embodiment with its inherent emphasis on constant change provides a balancing framework. As I reflect on the pendulum swings-- the persistent oscillation between the Apollonian and the Dionysian-- and anticipate the next grandes idees as occurring in a zone between the textual (narrative) and the textural (auditory, embodied) experience, the concept of embodied narrative seems timely and generative.

References


I am indebted to Betsy Hearne for sharing with me a wealth of readings in folklore, and opening up for me this new field. Heartfelt thanks go to Wayne Bowman, Eve Harwood, Gail Hawisher, Betsy Hearne, David Hebert, Jason Helfer, Rhoda Feldman, Su-Jeong Wee, and Alyson Whyte for their careful reading of this manuscript and insightful comments.