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**Moving parts in imagined spaces: Community Arts Zone's movement project**

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## Moving parts in imagined spaces: Community Arts Zone's movement project

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### Abstract

Movement is relatively invisible in literacy theory and pedagogy. There has been more recent scholarship on the body and embodiment, but less on connections between movement, body and literacy. In this article, we present the Community Arts Zone movement project and ways that the study opened up spaces for creativity, experimentation, and palpable identity mediation. Embodied space locates human experience within material and spatial forms. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomal ontology and Lefebvre's spatial theories, we examine how movement can be utilised to enliven pedagogy and to motivate people. During the research, classrooms, gymnasiums, and studio spaces became spaces that "the imagination seeks to change" by asking students to construct stories with their bodies. In the article, we present vignettes from our research study as telling instances showing the inherent strengths of movement as a form of literacy.

**Keywords:** embodiment; space; multimodality; movement; literacy; identity; collaborative practice; phenomenology

[A rhizome] is a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entranceways and exits and its own lines of flight. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21)

### Introduction

Like the rhizomes that Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1987) describe in their writings, this article shares moments when bodies move around spaces in a constant state of becoming without a middle or ending, always changing "in the middle." Applying the term rhizome within the reported research pushes our argument because there is a palpable sense of emergence implicit to Deleuze and Guattari's framing of rhizomes in *A Thousand Plateaus*. It is a useful term for the unfolding, in process nature of the movement work on display in this article.

The phrase "in the middle" captures an indeterminate quality of becoming. That is, at any given moment, a rhizome can move into what Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1987) call a line of flight – a rupture in a rhizome which explodes into a line of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p. 9). During our research together for the Community Arts Zone (CAZ) movement project, we witnessed rhizomes moving in different directions in space and every once in a while, lines of flight when the project came alive. Relating research reported in this article to Deleuze and Guattari's ontology, we focus on *the becoming of bodies* as ways of opening up imagined spaces (Lefebvre, 1974/1991) for young people. In the research, bodies exist in classrooms like rhizomes that expand spaces and ignite imaginings.

Movement is a form of literacy that is one of the more in-the-moment, spontaneous literacy practices. Movement exercises generated lines of flight and

produced space. Drawing on more of Deleuze and Guattari's ontological theorizing of becoming (1987), we also apply line of flight to moments when movements converge into strong, relational sense making that students recognized. During the research, lines of flight became manifest when movements were in sync within groups of children and teenagers and when agentive practices were on display. Although the CAZ movement project was largely about bodies moving to music, in the end, it was space in physical and figurative ways that presided as the dominant theme. More specifically, movement work coupled with one or two other modalities like written narratives opened up pedagogic spaces in ways that we did not think possible. Classroom and gymnasium spaces noticeably changed when students engaged in movement exercises.

Bodily movement and gesture shape and reshape people by allowing both individuals and groups to work in unison, or apart, to convey ideas, thoughts, and imaginings. Applying Lefebvre's (1974/1991) theories of space as produced and reproduced socially and sensorially, this article presents how students inscribe agency and think through a series of movement exercises and tableaux.

For the purposes of the article, we focus on analyzing physical and spatial orchestrations to push for more work that places learners as embodied and emotional beings at the centre of analyses (Buchholz, 2015; Enriquez et al., 2015; Leander & Boldt, 2013; Lewis & Tierney, 2013; Medina & Perry, 2014). We begin the article by situating movement within a Deleuze and Guattari framework, we then examine the presiding theme of space and more specifically, opening up space when movement is introduced as a presiding channel of meaning making.

### **Generating lines of flight through movement and literacy**

There has been some conflation of the terms movement and literacy into the phrase, movement literacy, by theorists who describe it as, "knowing *through* movement, knowing *about* movement, and knowing *because* of movement" (Kentel & Dobson, 2007, p. 150). Our definition of literacy within the CAZ research rests firmly on a belief that literacy involves several modes in play at once and these modes layer and are at times foregrounded and backgrounded during meaning making. Across all of the CAZ projects, literacy entails several modes working together and this presiding definition certainly pertains to the CAZ movement project. Indeed there is a growing tradition within Literacy Studies of research that focuses on the body and embodiment as part and parcel of literacy experiences (Enriquez et al., 2015; Leander & Boldt, 2013).

In our project, movement and thinking through the body were fundamental and connected strongly with other research studies that apply Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) call for understanding bodies as involved in social action and "as becoming rather than being" (Buchholz, 2015, p. 9). The appeal of applying a dimension of Deleuze and Guattari's work is that rhizomes and lines of flight aptly capture a web of interactions between people, objects, sounds, spaces, other bodies, that is beyond the rational and concrete. As the research in both schools progressed, it became clear that students involved in this project moved out of their habituated ways of being, knowing and doing after doing movement work. Sitting in desks, standing for the national anthem, lining up for recess, these types of regulatory and habituated forms of movements were replaced with jumps, leaps, poses, and gesturing. The movements that students performed required

expression, energy, nimbleness, and freedom. It was unbridled performativity within an environment that they were accustomed to view as narrow and didactic.

One of the best ways to illustrate unbridled performativity and a line of flight is to draw on moments during our research study as telling instances of practice. In the elementary school that we feature in the next section, there was a group of four boys who were often chatty, sometimes unruly and who clearly needed to move more. Glenys presented a movement exercise called verb chains where groups of four received a paragraph with verbs in boldface (see Figure 1) and they were asked to act out the verbs. Verb chains is an activity that Glenys teaches in her drama education work with undergraduates that involves people being the verb – “don’t be the doer, be the done to” as she says. People take a verb like “beat” and give their own interpretation of what that is – existing within the verb as it were. When Glenys presented the activity, one group of boys in the corner of the classroom looked confused, larked about, and rolled their eyes. However, when this group of boys enacted each verb, we were surprised to find them serious and focused (even arguing) about interpretations of verbs like pump, circulate and filter.

## Verbs- Circulatory System

The heart **beats**. Blood is **pumped** and **circulates** throughout the body. It **leaves** the heart through the arteries and **travels** and **flows** into smaller and smaller tubes until it **reaches** the blood vessels. Oxygen is **delivered** and **exchanged** with carbon dioxide. Blood **returns** from the blood vessels and **travels** through the veins to **return** to the heart. The lungs **filter** out the carbon dioxide and **oxygenate** the blood. This cycle **repeats** itself about once every minute.

**Figure 1: Verb Chain Movements**

They asked Glenys for clarification and advice on verbs like “filter.” They practiced the verb chains several times. The verb chains allowed each boy to experiment with their bodies taking large, small, dramatic, rapid and slow movements and working in sequence to move through each one. Each one did it in a different way and respected each other’s interpretations, or at least they did not question or mock their interpretations. The movements were tubular like with one cascading into the next one in a fluid way leading up to **oxygenate** as a culminating line of flight. There was a seriousness to their movement work and, at the same time, as a literacy practice it felt so natural and somatic.

Through their work on “performative pedagogy”, Perry and Medina (2011) have shown how people can rethink and call into question conventional forms of meaning making by representing and thinking through bodies. Within our research, games as simple and enduring as tag became a way of uniting and melding together people who did not know each other into one space. The research relied heavily on what is performed and

enacted as opposed to what is thought, meant, or practised. It was about collaborative practice and about bodies moving naturally through gut instinct and spontaneity.

The research created a new, different pedagogical space by asking students to complete movement exercises, sometimes to music, sometimes in silence. The research design involved visits to two schools observing teachers and students engaged in their everyday rites and practices and through scaffolding and movement strategies, a pedagogical space was transformed. To access initial perceptions and impressions about incorporating movement into the classroom, there were student and teacher interviews about their experiences with movement work and their thoughts about the relationship between movement and literacy. After initial visits and interviews, Glenys taught basic movement techniques – to ease teachers and students into using movement safely and with confidence – and presented the proposed assignments, while Jennifer documented what took place over the course of the eight weeks. Throughout the research, Jennifer noted body movements, positions, musical responses and sound effects, gestures, degrees of engagement, drawings and images, words written and spoken, and gestures. Applying phenomenological methods, she focused on the essence of the experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). To do so, Jennifer took photos, drew pictures, and had brief conversations with student participants about how they experienced the movement work and later revisited these ideas during interviews.

The CAZ movement project rests firmly on Glenys's training with Jacques Lecoq, "one of [the theatre's] most imaginative, influential and pioneering thinkers and teachers" (Murray, 2003, p. 1) at his *École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq*. Although we are not theorizing through Lecoq's framework, we signal his influence on Glenys's practice. Glenys believes that movement is a universal language that people lose when they enter the school years, despite the fact that, as Lecoq (2006) observes, "Children...replay with their whole body those aspects of life in which they will be called on to participate. In this way, they learn about life and, little by little, take possession of it" (p. 1). Once a child enters formal schooling there is a dramatic change in how much movement they are allowed, and how much time they spend in desks, thereby ignoring what they have already intuitively come to know and rely on thus manifesting Lecoq's claim, "the body knowing before we know" how to move and think (Murray, 2003, p. 153). Throughout her career and during our project, Glenys incorporated elements of Lecoq's methods into her teaching, modifying movement exercises based on spaces, environments, and actions to provide "a method for analysing and evaluating ... [to expose the] "invisible poetry lying in the gaps 'between words', [creating] "a playful tension between two very different ways of understanding or explaining" (Murray, 2003, p. 156) whatever subject was being explored. One specific technique for Lecoq movement is to extract active verbs from any event, sequence, process or phrase in order to replicate the actions, attitudes, and ideas, using the ensuing verb chains to inspire close analysis and movement. For example, she would ask students to mime brushing their teeth then, to switch to full body movements to move like the toothpaste in their mouths. Glenys further explained this technique by describing a context such as a kitchen with all its attendant sounds and images and making them verb-rich activities (e.g. chop, sizzle, rattle) to invite certain kinds of movements. In other words, these verbs are metaphors to translate movement. As Lecoq (2001) describes it:

We consider words as living organisms and thus we search for the 'body of words'. For this purpose we have to choose words which provide a real physical dynamic. Verbs lend themselves more readily to this ... each contains an action which nourishes the verb itself... (p. 49).

### **Research methodology**

The research study took place over two months during the winter and spring of the 2014 academic year. There was an elementary and secondary school involved which are described below. In terms of research methods, we took fieldnotes, and Glenys took significant photographs and filmed students (purely for data analyses purposes). Even though the focus of the article is on rhizomatic patterns of production and the production of space, we feature fieldnotes later that are tied, in some ways, to practice and meaning – but with production threaded throughout. We interviewed all of the teachers involved in the research and each teacher identified students who would be willing and interested in being interviewed at the end of the research. To analyze the data, we applied grounded theory and Wolcott's (2001) framework of interpretation, description, and analysis and we tended to privilege interpretation and analysis, especially examining our etic biases as modes of inquiry. We write from different perspectives, one a multimodal and literacy scholar and the other a movement expert and these biases are the filter through which we tell the story of the research study.<sup>1</sup>

### **Emic-etic data analyses**

The study took place in two suburban, neighbouring cities, with distinct populations. The cities share demographics with long-standing White working-class families and more recent immigrants who have migrated to Canada. Framing social class is not clear-cut and often risks sounding deficit about communities and people. There are researchers who represent social class with a deft, sensitive touch (Collier, 2014; Hicks, 2002; Jones & Vagle, 2013). Falling back on such careful research, we have tried to sensitively frame social class in a manner that Code (2000) describes as “responsible inquiry that entails an effort to be ‘true to’ the everyday practices of knowing” (p. 217). The communities where CAZ took place are White, blue-collar towns with some unemployment over the years, primarily due to the collapse of the automotive industry and a lack of other employment opportunities. Children and teenagers involved in our research were from this population and as researchers we were often faced with our own lack of awareness about the everyday practices of our participants. In brief, we had false assumptions and in the process of uncovering everyday practices, we thought a great deal about responsible inquiry and what that actually means. One false assumption was that student participants had some experiences with extra-curricular arts activities outside of school and access to technologies and that these affordances were a part of our participants' lived experiences. During interview conversations, these assumptions were challenged and hearing their stories gave us the “rich back story” (Flewitt, 2011) that ethnographic perspectives can provide researchers and that clearly play a role in data analyses and our written accounts of the research. Although we both live in this community, false assumptions were made

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<sup>1</sup> The research study has received ethical clearance from the Brock University Research Ethics Board (File # 13-016 Rowsell), the District School Board of Niagara, and the Niagara Catholic District School Board.

on our part and through the process of getting to know each other, we felt more confident about our responsible inquiry. One of the many enriching aspects of this research were the educators who were so in tune with their students everyday and who shared their stories and their lived realities. It is through these stories that we were able to add more depth and precision to the research.

As we wrote up the research, the concepts of emic and etic helped to tease out biases, blind spots and assumptions during our data analyses. Through constructive feedback from reviewers, we went back to our data and created a table that featured emic facets and etic facets of the reported research. Ethnographers seek to acquire an emic or insider perspective by uncovering how people in a given culture think, feel, value, use language, and engage in particular roles and responsibilities (Bloome & Green, 2015). Ethnographers walk an often nebulous line between emic and etic or outsider perspectives as they move between their identities as an outsider/researcher with efforts to fit in and be an insider. We walked this line during the research and our reflexivity obviously informs findings in the article. To make the analyses more cohesive, we created a table with an emic facet column and an etic facet column with segments drawn from interviews, fieldnotes and photographs to illustrate our differentiation. Table 1 below shows an example of some emic vs. etic thoughts.

**Table 1: Interpreting Emic vs. Etic Beliefs**

<i>Emic Facets</i>	<i>Etic Facets</i>
<p>... Again it's just getting them to explore I think just what they can physically do with their bodies. Sometimes just getting them to think about how you move and how you can use different parts of your body to move and create things. Um and then I think the other complication might be that we do have kids that are actors and kids that are tech. They're willing, they're always willing to do stuff but the challenge will be to get them think outside of that box too.</p> <p><i>Interview with Glenys and Demi<sup>2</sup> (High School Teacher) May 2014</i></p> <p>.... Movement exercises involved having your own body awareness like how can you stretch this way or you know just kind of exploring, not the everyday kind movement. Beyond the sort of more the abstract, thinking and thought and um. Just exploring your limitations to right so you</p>	<p>David actually surprised me the most because he never struck me as someone who would participate at the level that he did. He is a very mathematically inclined person and always seemed a bit rigid and afraid of making a mistake. It was nice to see him open up and enjoy himself.</p> <p><i>Conversation between Jennifer and Language Teacher, June 2014</i></p> <p>Such tight quarters in Kathy's room, hardly room enough to move around and desks and chairs everywhere. We are going to have to set up the room ahead of future sessions. A group of students had trouble completing activities in the corner of the room.</p> <p><i>Fieldnote from March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014</i></p>

<sup>2</sup> Pseudonyms are used throughout to protect the identity of participants and contexts.



may not think you can do something but how can you, you might not be able to do this, but how can you do this? Ya.

*Conversation between Glenys and Demi*



What the emic-etic table did for our analyses is to make it more systematic and detailed in our thinking and it allowed us to look across the whole corpus of data to highlight when we imposed outsider views and how much they contrasted these with emic views – or simply to note the difference and make our biases more transparent. In the table above, for example, views of the body spotlighted differences, even tensions between the two. As an insider to the school culture and with in-depth understandings about the diverse student body, Demi spoke from an emic perspective about students involved in the research. She talked about how different populations of students interpret movement. Drama students hoping to be actors or involved in media had a closer relationship, greater comfort and ease with movement and expression, whereas students in the technology education stream are less at ease and free with movement. Demi spoke from lived experiences with these students, appreciating that there are varied ways of viewing body work and how movement work is taken up. When Glenys spoke with Demi, they discussed how the mechanics of movement comes into play, with some students experimenting freely with movements whilst others feel hesitant or even incapable of doing certain movements.

An interesting finding in our study is that we anticipated body image would play a role in movement work with students, with students feeling self-conscious about their appearances. However, body image only arose with a small group of middle school girls in the elementary school who did not want to be filmed or photographed. Body image therefore did not constrain movement work per se.

### **Research Context**

In terms of the specific contexts, the elementary school is a K-6 elementary school. The school is a faith-based school and we worked with an experienced grade five teacher. In our jointly written fieldnotes, we agreed about our initial perceptions of the school:

*It is a public Catholic school and the teacher, Kathy, in her late thirties to early forties is committed to interactive, problem-solving teaching. We would describe her teaching as an inquiry-based teacher with structure added in to manage the large class. Glenys sees her as an inclusive educator – gently steering students to answers and stepping in when the need arises. The class is active with noise, but productive noise. When we met with Kathy a few weeks ago, she was concerned that we would find the class loud and a bit chaotic, but it was clear to us today that students love the environment and feel comfortable talking, interacting – even in a small, confined space.*

February 2013

When the research began, Kathy's program dovetailed well with our movement research. What we agreed to do was to harness our movement work with her science unit on the circulatory and digestive systems. By the time we arrived for the movement sessions, the students and Kathy had created long lists of active verbs based on the circulatory or digestive system. Then, students in small groups (3-5), chose any five of the listed verbs for their group, and using their whole bodies, translated each "circulation- or digestion-based" verb into a "frozen picture" or tableau that were stages of the circulation or digestive process. For example, for digestion, some of the most popular verbs were: chew, swallow, disintegrate, squeeze, and expel. Students completed tableaux of digestive processes and they each created a movie trailer that charted out their tableaux before connecting the tableaux through movement.

The other context is a grade 9-12 high school, which is the second oldest high school in Ontario. The high school had more ethnic diversity than the elementary school and more of an entrepreneurial lens on curriculum (that is, more of an emphasis on trades like hair dressing and auto mechanics). The research participants in the study were grade 12 ESL language learners teamed up with a smaller group of grade 12 advanced drama students. There were two teachers involved in the study; one was an ESL teacher with 18 years of experience and the other was a drama teacher with eight years of experience and she is also a playwright. The ESL students came from such far-flung places as: Vietnam, Togo, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, China, the Philippines, and Korea. These language learners were reticent and concerned about the project because it was so unstructured and all of the movement work felt out of their comfort zone. The advanced drama students were more comfortable with the movement and tableau work. The eight-week movement assignment that they completed was based on the notion of a hero's journey that they would tell through a series of tableaux. Between each tableaux there were also movement transitions – so there was therefore posed work and movement work existing in tandem. To complete tableaux, they had to consider what a journey is (e.g., a long, arduous journey like Odysseus on his long trip home to Ithaca, or a shorter, but no less meaningful journey, like falling in love and getting married). There were six groups that varied strongly in how they wanted to tell their journey story. By way of examples, one was the journey of two people falling in love and with family conflicts about the union and eventual resolution to the wedding day. Another was a grander journey with a young man going off to war and eventually returning home.

### **Space the imagination seeks to change**

Lefebvre (1974/1991) argues that space constitutes human relations and practices. Social space where individuals live and practice their everyday lives can be viewed as a tool for thought and action. Lefebvre considers space in relation to macro constructs such as the ways in which capitalist regimes and nation-states frame space as "owned" or as public or private and how these demarcations hegemonically leverage both power and status. This concept of framed or owned space emerged in both contexts when students engaged in quintessential schooling practices like sitting in a desk filling out a worksheet or reading texts silently at their desks. These normative, compliant types of activities imbued a heavy feeling to both settings. In contrast, the movement exercises that Glenys taught and that students enacted allowed for significant agentic variations or interpretations of

stories or sequences of events such as a journey story or enacting the circulatory system. The negotiation of what these movements would look like within groups and the act of moving produced a social space that unfolded in multiple ways.

According to Lefebvre, there are rules and sanctions around the use of land or space that can reveal interplays of the powerful and the powerless. Thinking about Lefebvre's work on the production and reproduction of social spaces, it was clear to us then and now that even after a few weeks of working with the grade five and grade 12 students, classroom and gymnasium spaces shifted dramatically when students engaged in movement work. Lefebvre claims that spatial practices invite the social and the sensorial and these spatial practices produce and reproduce certain sorts of actions. During the research, "framing of the social" manifested themselves when students negotiated how to represent an idea through their bodies. When faced with a concept like food moving around in their stomachs or a soldier heading off to war, they would argue, negotiate and debate about what movement best fits this message and how to orchestrate tableaux to express that action. In our fieldnotes we describe these moments as lines of flight that transformed spaces into imagined spaces.

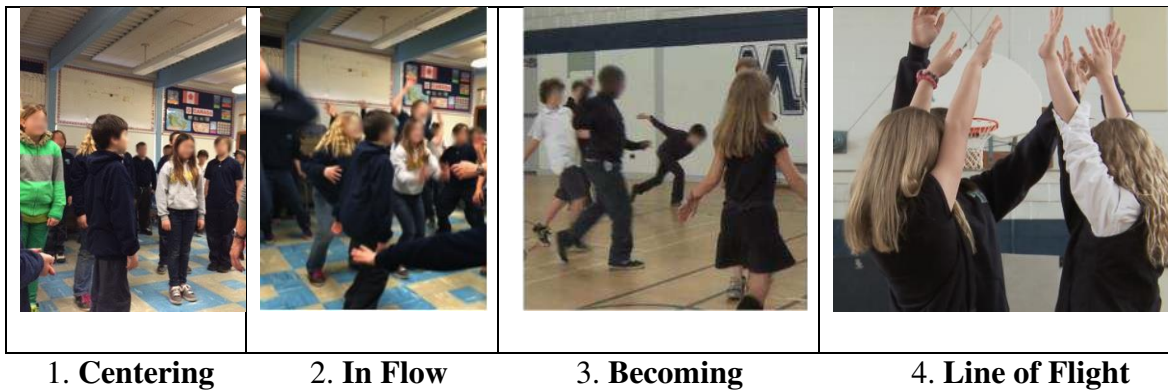
Both pedagogic spaces resembled typical schooling spaces. The grade five context had desks in different groupings, a chalkboard, a white board, a teacher's desk, computers at the side of the room, and different posters, notices, and a Canadian flag. The physical space felt crowded, stuffy, and sometimes even claustrophobic. But, after spending time with Kathy (the teacher) and 28 students, the classroom changed transforming our initial impression of a cramped, messy room into a space with enthusiasm, excitement, and a sense of belonging. Indeed, the cramped feeling faded and in its place, there was a melding together of bodies with music. The grade 12 space was in a basement gym that had largesse but very little character – it was dark and long with pillars that separated out the space. In terms of its physicality, the gym was a big, empty room with chairs and tables on the sides of the room, and a low ceiling. There was a large chalkboard at the front and the room had dimmed, sombre lighting. Nevertheless, when bodies started to move and collide, the space became a lived space filled with energy and joy.

Drawing on spatial theory, Lefebvre (1974) starts from a belief that "spatial practice embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation" (p. 33). There is an acknowledgement in his work that people do things in physical spaces that elicit sensory responses. In his work, Lefebvre (1974) outlines three axes of space: "perceived space" of everyday life which signifies how our perceptions react to material worlds as they exist, influenced strongly by sensorial responses; "conceived space" as the particularities of spaces that can be concretised by individuals like cartographers making maps or architects drawing designs for rooms; and, "the lived space" of the imagination which enlivens creativity and artistic interpretations and inspirations. As bodies moved around in a state of becoming much like Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) descriptions of rhizomes in *A Thousand Plateaus*, these axes of spaces moved in and out of each other. Lefebvre is clear that these three axes are always present, but sometimes foregrounded and backgrounded depending on the nature of the space.

Thinking about the grade five classroom as a perceived space filled with emotions, when we presented students with the movement project as a series of five

tableaux that depict their science unit on the digestive system, they were reluctant, hesitant and their body language showed hesitation, but once they engaged in movement tasks with Glenys, their bodies softened and became what their teacher described as “nimble” and slowly, the perceived space transformed into a space of serious, thoughtful movement practice. As a conceived space, the classroom that from the outset appeared crowded, dark, messy, chaotic and full of 28 bodies in a small, confined space, opened up and felt more expansive. Certainly after five weeks of movement tasks with Glenys and once they had completed their short films of five tableaux, they moved into a large gymnasium and it was at this point that the lived space came to fruition.

Moving into the school’s gymnasium, two filmmakers filmed the grade five students for the CAZ documentary and that was when the imagined space came alive. In Figure 2, we represent a steady movement across two spaces from a centering activity in their classroom to the realization of their movement work into a line of flight in the gymnasium. It is a line of flight because the four students came together into a structure that they built and that drew them together in a relational, semiotic chain. It represents a *line of flight* because their rhizomal movements of becoming were realized in the moment and there was a palpable impression of sense making and then they moved onto another set of movements. For the centering exercise, students closed their eyes, listened to their breath and felt their sense of weight transfer as they gently moved their bodies forward and backward – in that moment, the classroom space expanded for them. There was not a rowdy, silly feel to their movement work, but instead, a patient, measured feel to their movements that we capture in the second image as “In Flow”. In the third and fourth images, “Becoming” and “Line of Flight”, we adopt Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) phrasing to depict how students seemed to experience a flow and becoming leading to a crescendo that we think of as a line of flight or rupture that then moved quickly into other rhizomes of movements.



**Figure 2: Rhizomes in Spaces**

There was no attempt to be structured, but there was an effort to be calm and to focus. There was a democracy, or at least an effort to be democratic and to listen. There needed to be a consensus when they reached their line of flight.

### **Vignettes as instances of practice**

To illustrate our theorizing of the CAZ movement project, we profile what we call instances of practice or moments in fieldnotes when spaces transformed and when students moved in and out of states of becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The first vignette took place when we first introduced movement exercises into the grade five classroom. Kathy, the teacher, was on-hand to help manage the group while we demonstrated the movement work.

#### ***Instance of practice 1: Opening up spaces***

*The number of students in the class took us aback. The desks took up a lot of space. There were many students with different issues such as attention issues and a girl who was a selective mute. They were used to going off on their own. It took them a while to come into movement. They were fine if they had the teacher right there. The movement work underlined the issues with focus problems for the students. It took a while to calm them down – they went crazy and could not focus on the task. We both felt strongly that the space would not work.*

*Kathy was the suggested teacher. She is self-effacing, shy, and more comfortable with kids than adults. She had an uncanny ability to know when to release them and when to let them in. Her classroom was a Christmas tree, all of the time. You would think that her classroom was utterly chaotic, but it wasn't. She was brilliant at getting the best out of each child.*

*The lesson of the day involved making bridges of straws, popsicle sticks, masking tape, and they used a hair dryer to test their constructed bridge's efficiency, weight, and durability. It was a mini-lesson that exemplified her entire pedagogy – kids can do it their own way – they had to come up with a product and answers and they had to come up with the answers collectively.*

*The mood and space shifted when Glenys did centring. Glenys told students to listen and feel how all of the muscles are working as you go over the soles of your feet. Find your centre and the internal listening that shut them down. Once we did that, the whole mood shifted.*

February 7, 2013

Kathy's open pedagogy involved using blocks of time to work with materials and solve problems. To contrast the lively nature of the bridge construction, Glenys quieted the mind with the centring activity. Laughing at first, once children closed their eyes there was an almost immediate stillness that filled the room. Students worked at their own pace and Kathy was attuned to each student's rhythm. In other words, Kathy tended to foreground Lefebvre's first axis by having students view their classroom as a perceived space and by encouraging students to think through their senses. Though the actual space was

cramped, Kathy masterfully made students experience the space as open, lively, and with room for freedom. Watching her class at work, there were clusters of bodies congregating in different parts of the cramped space, content and focused and working through tasks at their own pace. But, the moment described above involved noise, some rowdiness, and excitement, especially when they tested their bridges in front of the class. The students imagined the space beyond any physical or material constraints.

***Instance of practice #2: Follow the leader***

The other vignette happened with the high school group during an introductory exercise called *magnetic attraction* where there is a leader and a follower – each person using a different body part to lead or to follow (e.g., the leader uses right elbow as point of direction, follower uses left shoulder with an eight-inch separation between shoulder and elbow).

*Then, the music of Raphael Gato Fuentes (Glenys’s husband who is a composer) created a mood-based atmosphere. So, something slow and inspirational versus slow and suspenseful or something spooky and dark to set the mood and put bodies in motion. The trick is that it is not popular music – there are no connotations – no connections – it has not visually mediated so it won’t co-op your thoughts. It is also architectural – students can respond physically and emotionally. They can position themselves like buildings on a street or like statues. There was an interposing of music and body parts in space. The music picks you up and carries you along. Movement helps with focus – “it fills in the emptiness and the silence.” March 15, 2013*

On this occasion, Glenys inducted students into a movement, embodied mindset. Students required time and gentle encouragement to get over their inhibitions and simply play with music and movement. Glenys presented an activity that allowed students to play with body relations and with positioning bodies in different ways to transmit a message. Moving beyond words to direct action and then adding in sound pushed students to think about concepts in very different ways.

What surprised both of us, once again, is that these teenagers were comfortable facing each other and engaging in movement exercises that entailed close proxemics. We imagined laughter and blushing, but instead we encountered serious faces concentrating on deliberate movements. The mix of language learners and advanced drama students situated themselves all around the expansive gymnasium and mimicked movements that were open-textured and filled with interpretative possibilities as they quickly transitioned into another mirrored movement. This is where the coupling of Deleuze and Guattari’s with Lefebvre’s notions on the production of space work so well together – they place great emphasis on “coming in being” (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 67). There was a *becoming* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) with a coming into being in the gymnasium as a conceived space that moved into an imagined space

through music and movement. The emergence of selves in a social space led to various representations. Connecting to Lecoq, the emergence and representation continuum in the act of becoming hints at Lecoq's 'the body knowing before we know.'

***Instance of practice 3: The Greek chorus***

*Glenys and Demi (the teacher) used music to make movement fluid and it worked well. The beauty of Raphael Gato Fuentes's music is that it does not have lyrics and combines softer songs with active ones. The music noticeably loosened inhibitions.*

*After the Greek chorus exercise, students then worked on their journey that followed five phases: 1) Awareness; 2) Departure; 3) Obstacle; 4) Fulfillment; and, 5) Return. Students were asked to write down phrases that made them think of each phase. I worked with a few groups and again the language learners had some difficulty with vocabulary. In particular, the group of boys – Simon and his friends – struggled with ways of capturing awareness. I too had difficulty starting with awareness as the beginning of the journey. Consulting with Glenys and Demi, we changed it to a reason why one goes on a journey. I spoke at length with a teenager who moved from the Philippines to Ontario and how difficult it was for him to adjust to Canadian life. Then, I spoke with a teenager from China who moved to the area to learn English and she had a very difficult time with her host family and her parents had to come from China to live with her here. The story reminded me of how brave they are to come on their own to a new country because they are still teenagers after all.*

*After working on their journey stories, students got into pairs (deliberately pairing language learners with native speakers) to do a marionette activity. Glenys modeled the activity with a student showing how to pretend that they are attached to strings and the strings control movements. May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013*





**Figure 3: Teenagers engaged in Movement Work**

Abandoning fears and self-consciousness, the teenagers became inventors and their embodied actions conveyed certain sorts of meanings, whose 'translations' seemed to embody echoes of their first language. By that we mean English language learners could express with their bodies what their second language, English, could not convey, but that their first languages did. As Lecoq (2001) remarks: "According to the language being used, words will not all have the same relation to the body" (p. 49). The Greek Chorus ignited a series of lines of flight by the students working together. The concept of crafting a story through poses and then movement transitions bound groups and helped them move through a series of becomings. Figure 3 depicts a particularly memorable line of flight when a shy language student from the Middle East came out of his shell and became Odysseus in their tableaux of an arduous journey.

***Instance of practice 4: Seen/unseen***

Moving back to the grade five classroom, there were some students who did not enjoy the movement work. More specifically, there was a cluster of girls and boys who often told one of us, "I do not want to appear in the documentary and please do not make me do my tableaux in front of the group". We respected their wishes. A revelation for us came when we suspected that a selective mute girl asserted herself into the most lively and engaged triad of girls to do movement work. Once again, our false assumptions were that selective mute translates into shyness and a disinterest in physical work in groups. We were definitely wrong about this and this comes out strongly in the following fieldnote:

*There is a day during the document filming that I recall so vividly. It was in Kathy's grade five classroom when Glenys asked students to plan out and orchestrate five tableaux of the digestive system, that would then have 'appropriate mood' music added and that the Four Grounds guys would film. I remember the resistance that we had from a cluster of boys and girls. Glenys and I were worried that the boys wouldn't take the activity seriously, or, that they would be reduced to*



*uncontrollable laughter, or, that they would be bored. I remember one student in particular who came out of her shell when filming started. Natalie (pseudonym) had been diagnosed as a 'selective mute' at the beginning of the school year and she had hardly spoken a sentence since then. Kathy allowed her time and space to work gently into things. To our surprise, with a little coaxing, she joined the movement activities—in group and pairs work—although at first, she did not add to the verbal negotiating. However, over the next few weeks, when asked questions during the movement sessions by Kathy, Glenys, or me, she began to answer very quietly, in short phrases. This change translated well into her movement work, so that by the end of the sessions she was adding longer phrases and short, but complete sentences to her group's planning conversations, and despite a high level of noise from groups talking simultaneously in 'preparation mode', she was speaking clearly and loudly enough for her small group to hear her. April 15, 2013*

When we probed Kathy more about Natalie and about particular students, Kathy kept going back to the basis of her teaching – “it is all about listening – building that foundation with them where they feel like they can talk.” There was something about the somatic, embodied practices that we completed that allowed Natalie to be seen by her peers in ways that were not deficit. Spoken communication was at arm's length from her and it freed her to make meaning in alternative ways.

### **From limp flowers to nimble movers**

A secret to the success of the CAZ movement project rests on the distance that it created between rhetoric like “grade-appropriate development” or “emergent reading to fluent reading” versus somatic, natural expression. The research was at arm's length from top-down, value-added, neoliberal kinds of agendas, and on a simple level, the project allowed two groups of students to move around and be nimble. On a deeper level, the project constructed a new imagined space for children and teenagers to express themselves and to rupture into lines of flight. McDermott (2005) once said that “language, literacy, and learning are about being in the world. They do not have to be about a rush to teaching” (p. 123). In our modest study, the only teaching that happened was a movement expert sharing techniques and exercises.

At the beginning of the research, when we interviewed Kathy about her grade five students she shared that they “could be like limp flowers” during the school day in her classroom. She said, “these kids live difficult lives at times and .... I want to create a creative, fun space for them.” Both of these reflections struck a chord for us as we finished up our data collection – we returned to her sentiments as we wrote up this article. During student interviews and brief conversations, we had windows into the realities of these students' lives. Realizing our etic perspectives were imposed on this culture, we relied heavily on Kathy and Demi and their emic, rich understandings about the lives of their students. Our aim in this article has been two-fold: one is to show how a pedagogic space opened up, figuratively speaking, when students express themselves through their bodies; the second aim is more couched and hidden, which is to amplify or animate the

need for a far bigger, nuanced, rhizomatic picture of literacy. Of course, you could very well ask, where is literacy in this article? Like other articles in this special issue, it is everywhere – it in bodies, in voices, in silence, and in gazes. Literacy is profoundly human and natural and as such, has so much to do with the natural meaning making that we witnessed throughout the project.

Returning to Kathy’s observations, at the beginning of the research we saw limp flowers, but we most certainly saw the opposite – excited, energetic, vibrant children in motion. In their cramped classroom or in the expanse of their gymnasium, it really did not matter, they moved in deliberate, thoughtful ways and not in chaos and disorder (which is one’s first impression). Put to music and film in the CAZ documentary, their movements looked orchestrated and elegant. It truly was a space where the imagination changed. Movement as a literacy or a form of meaning making (which is how we prefer to view literacy) became an area of deep connection for these learners.

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### **Notes on Contributors**

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