

## Forging Innovation

In my classroom in Birmingham,  
my students are writing their narratives

and dreaming of how they'll make  
and do—these our great innovators,

our hope. We look at an image, maelstrom  
of color and fluid lines, Thornton Dial's

gift to us today that reminds us to see  
differently, to put aside our limits

on imagination, release our cosmic  
possibility like Sun Ra's jazz, born

here and heard everywhere. I wonder  
how much place can form and shape

brilliance—if thoughts of space in Huntsville  
or fiction that sears in Monroeville could come

from anywhere else? What is clear to me:  
the past is rich and deep, stories written

on the hills, the beaches, the roots of trees,  
paintings, books, songs, our collective history.

And here, in this classroom, I know  
the future is equally blessed. My student

looks up for a moment, catches my eye,  
and says, "I want to try out this idea."