

A Day with the Mountain:
Phenomenology, Wonder, and Freeskiing

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“Why the word spiritual? Well I don’t know any other word to describe an experience that has so much power and gives so much love” -Mark Abma (Freeskier)

Abstract

A Day With The Mountain is an inquiry that ventures into the experience of self-movement through the context of freeskiing. This inquiry focuses on both my experience with three freeskiers; Leah Evans, Josh Dueck, and Mark Abma and my personal experience with freeskiing. The intention behind this inquiry is to challenge, celebrate, and evoke the self-movement experience in order to gain understandings of something so fundamental to human development. This intention is met by asking the main research question; ‘What is the experience of self-movement?’

Self-movement was fleshed out in this inquiry within a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology aims to evoke human experience through descriptive writing, which also proved to be the main challenge of this study. Stories, poetry, and images within a narrative entitled *A Day With The Mountain* were used to address this challenge and to invite the reader into deeply textured experiences of self-movement. *A Day With The Mountain* is a day of freeskiing where accumulation, threshold, breakthrough, and release make up the rhythms of the experience; these same rhythms also serve as the chapters of this text. Woven within the evocative writing of the experience of freeskiing are theoretical insights into self-movement, movement itself, of wonder.

Emerging from this inquiry are ideas and questions about self-movement and movement that challenge the ground of formal physical education. I sense a potential pedagogical approach that combines movement, self-movement, and wonder as presented in this text. The emerging pedagogical approach focuses on evoking wonder, situates movement as a realm of possibility, and self-movement as possible freedom. The margins of self-movement and movement itself remain beyond the horizon of this text, and those margins are in need of more evocative description. Continuing to inquire into self-movement may reveal new possibilities and expanded understandings of self-movement, which may have significant pedagogical potential.

Key words: self-movement, movement, wonder, phenomenology, and writing.

To Siri...from love, to love, in love.

Acknowledgements

A strong spring breeze swirls through the Bow Valley ruffling my writing paper. The towering peaks of the Rocky Mountains stand in front of me as the remaining snow from the winter melts in the warm afternoon sun. I sit on my back porch inhaling the spring air and am filled with gratitude for this moment. This mountain scene seems like an appropriate space to acknowledge those who have contributed to this research that has been so powerfully influenced by these very mountains.

Since the beginning of the journey of creating this text, I have been motivated to experience the world differently. This opening of experience has at its core an opening in me with relation to self-movement, movement, and wonder. I now experience the world anew because of this project and it would not have been possible without the support, compassionate challenge, and guidance of the following people:

Dr. Pierre Boudreau who supervised my wondering and wandering in movement. Pierre, the words to describe the depth of my appreciation for you reside in silence, stillness, and invisibility...they cannot be spoken, moved, or written; they can only be felt. I can only hope you feel the deep appreciation I have for you.

I would like to express deep gratitude to Dr. Barbara Graves for her support, guidance, and belief in me. Barbara, thank-you for contributing to the supervision of my work with such care and integrity; I cherish and am inspired by your ability to balance academic earnestness and playfulness.

To Dr. Pat Palulis, Dr. Penny Werthner, and Dr. Awad Ibrahim, thank you for your efforts as the committee members of this research. You succeeded in inviting and guiding me to the cliff edge of my abilities, in pushing me off, and then in catching me before I crashed completely. My sincerest gratitude for the three of you.

I am very grateful to Leah, Josh, and Mark for co-creating this project with the experiences you all shared with me. I am grateful that you not only gave permission but were also excited to have your names, stories, and photos included in the text. Perhaps more importantly, however, I am grateful that you three continue to find freedom in movement by fueling your wonder by risking something, being vulnerable to the unknown and, in doing so, bringing to life new experiences of self-movement.

To my mountain friends; Keith, Cory (the Condor), Kristy, Ty, Michelle, Kendra, Andy, Sarah, Evan...mmmmmmmmmm drop! Of my mountain friends I have to write a special acknowledgement for Dave. Busch-man, we've shared many experiences in the mountains...from three-sixties to attempted misty's, pungee jumpin' to pow huntin', broken skis and your broken spleen. All the experiences we've shared together are present in this text in one way or another. Thank you for your friendship; it extends beyond the scope of the mountain herself.

To Adam, Ad-rock you're a full-spectrum friend that continues to open my heart to a life of love. Jah!

To my family, my parents Anne and Paul, my siblings Elle-J, Rianna banana, Porchie-Poo, and Stevie-wonder. I love you all!

Thanks to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the University of Ottawa faculty of Education, and the University of Ottawa in general for all the support you have given me.

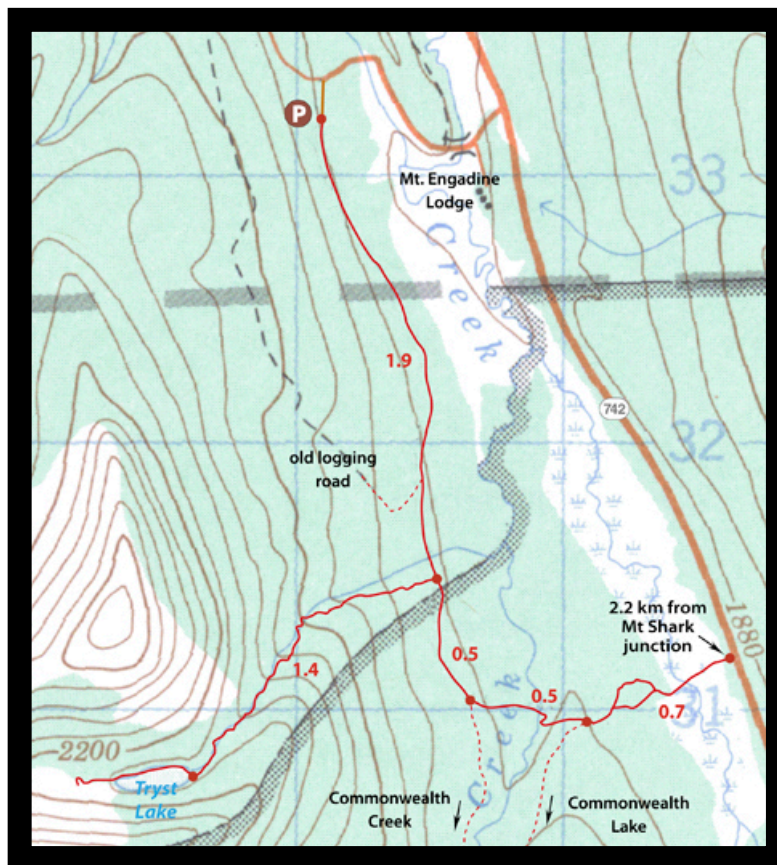
And finally to Siri. This project is dedicated to you because the most wonderful, magical, and mysterious possibilities of movement live in you. Thank you for sharing your magic with the world...and I am so blessed that you choose to share it with me. You break me open, and I love you.

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Trail Map:

Topography of the (Con)textual Terrain



* Topographic map of Tryst Lake, the location of *A Day With the Mountain*

A Spiritual Connection, An Impulse, and An Intention for Inquiry

The energy of Whistler village is steeped in the warmth of summer. Wrapping the surrounding lakes people bask in the sun's rays. I have come to interview freeskiers for my Masters study about the success elements of elite freeskiing. Mark Abma approaches in ski pants, walking upon perspiring asphalt. His ski jacket is slung over his shoulder, and winter is in his stride. We shake hands, and I thank Mark for being a part of my project. Mark and I make our way to a quiet place to chat, Mark begins describing the experience he just had of skiing on a nearby glacier.

During our conversation Mark uses a word to describe his experience that captivates and temporarily suspends my awareness, a word that vigorously propels my wonder in self-movement. Mark tells me that his connection with freeskiing is spiritual. I ask him why he would choose such a word to describe his experience, and he replies, "I don't know any other word to describe an experience that has so much power and gives so much love" (Coleman & Orlick, 2005, p. 34). For longer than I can remember I have been seduced into creating self-movement experience in the magic and mystery of movement. This study was inspired by the conversation with Mark and experiencing the power, love, and spirituality of self-movement.

Although I had already felt the presence of power, love, and spirituality in freeskiing, I had only started to find the words to describe this part of my self-movement experience. Almost every freeskiier I interviewed for my Masters Degree project used the word spiritual to describe the self-movement experience in freeskiing. That project was an opening to this current text, and is a part of my ongoing inquiry into self-movement. The immense meaning I found (and continue

to find) in self-movement, the sense that there was something more to self-movement than I was able to articulate, and the conversations about the ‘more’ with other freeskiers created an impulse of intention for me to sink more deeply into my experience in self-movement and to write this text. I was urged on by the feeling that a study in the experience of self-movement could provide ways of describing the experiences of self-movement that existed beyond my articulation. I was inspired with the thought that an in-depth understanding of self-movement as generated from an inquiry *in* the experience of self-movement could contribute to society’s ever-present attention to health and wellbeing, as well as shed light on the pedagogy of self-movement.

This initial chapter is a textual trail map that shares the topography of the (con)textual terrain we will be entering. (Con)textual in that the chapter will share the specific *context* of this inquiry as well as important elements of the *text*. With this trail map my intention is to invite the reader into the terrain of this text.

Entering The Terrain of *A Day With The Mountain*

Marcel (1950) writes that movement itself is a mystery in need of evocative description rather than a problem to be solved. The intention of this text is to share a descriptive account of a self-movement experience in freeskiing to evoke the magic of self-movement, the mystery of movement, and to acknowledge that both are unsolvable human phenomena. To achieve this intention, to attend to the mystery of movement, and to evoke the experience of self-movement through descriptive writing, I employed a phenomenological approach.

The aim of phenomenological research is to turn to a phenomenon which is of significant personal interests, a phenomenon that commits me to the world (van Manen, 1997). Phenomenology seeks to articulate human experience by evoking “things themselves” (Husserl, 1911/1980, p.116). In this orientation to research, descriptive writing is used to share how I orient my actions, behaviors, intentions, and experiences as they emerge from and are lived in the life-world (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999; van Manen, 1997). According to the phenomenologist Husserl (1964), the life-world is the pre-reflective, pre-theoretical attitude, it is a world of lived-experience, a world that knows neither exact space nor objective time and causality. Heidegger (1927/1962) and Merleau-Ponty (1962) radicalized the turn toward researching the life-world experience by speaking of phenomenology as the study of Being, the study of our modes-of-being or ways-of-being-in-the-world.

In phenomenologically inquiring into self-movement, I contemplated the notion of experience itself. My theorizing about experience turned to the existentials of temporality, spatiality, corporeality, and community (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) which combine to create the life-world (Husserl, 1964). In this theorizing I questioned experience as either being a lived or a living phenomenon. Such questioning of the ontology of experience was not new to phenomenology and my readings of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger strongly influenced the path of my questioning and theorizing. What surfaced was that experience with a certain perspective can be viewed as live(d). Experience is living in the life-world, always ongoing; and yet we can focus our attention upon a condensation of energy within that living experience, of which we can say that *an* experience has been lived. The implication of this understanding of experience (with regard to self-movement) is that an ongoing continuum exists, a momentum of

self-movement, and that self-movement experiences are linked together like uninterrupted ski turns down a mountain.

Turning and shifting through the uninterrupted ski line of self-movement experience feels to me, at its origin, like being in a snowstorm with flakes flying all around in a seemingly random chaotic manner. Trying to follow all the flakes at once is dizzying and confusing. The *epoché* is a phenomenological tool to help with writing from within the dizziness and confusion. The *epoché* is an act of focusing similar to focusing with a camera lens, where the photographer, knowing that at any moment the focus can be shifted in or out, decides the detail of the image. The intention of this focusing is to make the familiar strange, and the strange familiar (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). Husserl (1964) called the phenomenological *epoché* ‘bracketing’ because of his close connection with mathematics. Husserl’s understanding was that it was possible to bracket events of our experience and then, within that bracketing, reflect upon the experience itself.

As an example, in the snowstorm, I can narrow my focus upon one flake as it swoops towards me, and lands upon my sweater with a few other flakes. I gaze at the flake amongst flakes and play with my focus. I can expand my gaze to observe all the flakes on my sweater, and I can also narrow my gaze upon just one flake. Just as I can focus upon one flake upon many flakes, I can focus upon one ski turn amongst many turns made upon a mountain. Extended further I can focus upon one self-movement experience amongst all the self-movement experiences of my life. *A Day With The Mountain* is a form of the *epoché* as it is one day amongst the many days which I have skied, and happens to be the one I have chosen to share with this text. Within the text the specific descriptions are also *epoché* experiences; they are the flakes, the turns, the stories within a larger self-movement experience.

In phenomenological inquiries the experiences chosen within the *epoché* undergo a means of reflection to tease out meaningful elements. The radical reflection is a term that describes the phenomenological reflection which permits us to discover what Merleau-Ponty (1962) calls the spontaneous surge of the life-world. The radical reflection involves, “the awakening of a profound sense of wonder and amazement at the mysteriousness of the belief in the world. This fundamental amazement animates one’s questioning of the meaning of the experience of the world” (van Manen, 1997, p. 185). The radical reflection is an act of the living body consciously sensing itself, both as the hand being touched and the touching hand (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). In this reflection the “enlived-body, accordingly, is present to itself not only as nexus of sensing but also as locus of movement, even as a system of movements” (Smith, 2007, pp. 47-48). With experience written in and on my body and mind, I turn to the radical reflection practice to connect more directly with my body and mind in order to invite living qualities of experience in the present. In this type of reflection, the distance between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ is traversed as the body (and experience itself) is acknowledged as living (Welton, 2004). At the intersection of tactile sensations and kinaesthetic sensations, distance is traversed and *lived* experience returns as *living*.

The *epoché* state, and the radical reflection help me get close to a state of a “perpetual beginner, like a child who has learned nothing, can take nothing for granted, and so confronts the world of experience directly and naively, in wonder” (Mathews, 2002, p. 34). The *epoché* and the radical reflection are means “...to make reflection emulate the unreflective life of consciousness” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964a, p.185), to be able to return to the world as lived in an enriched and deepened fashion.

A main question in phenomenology is “how can we let that what shows itself be seen in the very way that it shows itself” (van Manen, 1997, p. 45). Merleau-Ponty (1962) offers an answer to this question: “(by) re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world” (p. vii). But how does one re-achieve such contact with the world? Merleau-Ponty (1962) again provides an answer suggesting “turning to the phenomena of lived experience by re-learning to look at the world, by re-awakening the basic experiences of the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. viii). How do we do this? By investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it (van Manen, 1997). This suggestion by van Manen opens up a whole bunch of questions for me; what is the difference between living an experience and conceptualizing an experience? Where is the line of difference between the two? And if it is possible to distinguish between the two how do I investigate experience as it is lived rather than as I conceptualize it?

Sheets-Johnstone (1999) writes, “a phenomenologist inquiring into movement would be remiss if she/he did not attend to her/his personal experience in movement” (p. 201). Freeskiing was chosen as the self-movement context because of my intimate connection with it, my extensive experiences with it, and my connection to the people living it. Freeskiing commits me to the world, and is the context that makes up the specific terrain of this text. My intimate connection is helpful to achieve a direct contact with self-movement. And the direct contact may help me negotiate the ontological questions of is experience lived or living? And is there a difference between living and conceptualizing experience?

Phenomenology “tries to ward off tendency toward constructing a predetermined set of fixed procedures, techniques and concepts that would rule-govern the research project” (van Manen, 1997, p. 67). Heidegger (1927/1962) talked about phenomenology as following certain

paths, “wood paths,” towards a “clearing” where the phenomenon could be presented, revealed, or clarified. Taking counsel from van Manen (1997), I have come to understand that the path of my inquiring needs to be simultaneously discovered and created in the research question and the questing that comes as its response to the questions. Just as the freeskiier has developed his approach and ability to read the freeskiing terrain, to be aware of vital information as it presents itself, and has the skills and tools to negotiate those shifts, the phenomenologist has to develop an approach rooted in;

A tradition, a body of knowledge and insights, a history of lives of thinkers of authors, which, taken as an example, constitutes both a source and a methodological ground for present human science research practices. Thus the broad field of phenomenological scholarship can be considered as a set of guides and recommendations for a principled form of inquiry that neither simply rejects or ignores tradition, nor slavishly follows or kneels in front of it. (van Manen, 1997, p. 30)

The textual description of freeskiing as a self-movement experience presented here in this text has been shaped by days, months, and years, of personal journaling, of writing numerous versions of this text, interactions with freeskiers, reading about phenomenology, and of course freeskiing itself. For phenomenological studies van Manen (1997) writes:

There is no research design or blueprint to follow. Although there is no compelling reason for structuring the phenomenological study in any one particular way, it may be helpful to organize one’s writing in a manner related to the fundamental structure of the phenomenon itself. (p. 167)

The main body of this text is a narrative entitled *A Day With the Mountain*. The terrain of this text comes specifically from the freeskiing phenomenon as experienced by the co-participants and myself. The form and structure of the text are intended to be an invitation for the reader to engage with a journey of inquiry while trying to evoke an experience of freeskiing. *A Day With the Mountain* was created by the accumulation, threshold, breakthrough, and release

rhythms of freeskiing. These rhythms of freeskiing create the framework of this text, throughout which the descriptions of freeskiing as well as theoretical threads of self-movement, movement, and wonder are woven. The chapters of this text are: *Accumulation: The Swelling Energy of Ascension* as the preparation of gear and awareness for a freeskiing day, and the identification of a topic of interest and generating knowledge of the field for me as the phenomenologist performing the research. *Threshold: Exposed On the Ridgeline* is where the freeskiing phenomenologist bumps up against tensions of the accumulating energy, and the struggle to make choices and to direct the energy of the experience. *Breakthrough: The Ineffable Descent* is where the depth of experience inter-weaves the freeskier and the phenomenologist so tightly that they twirl into one poetic voice. *Release: Letting Go and Celebrating* is where the accumulated energy, the compressed energy in the threshold, and the used energy in the breakthrough are exhaled, released by the freeskier. And *Stillness* is a chapter in which I reflect upon this inquiry journey.

Throughout *A Day With the Mountain*, my familiar world of self-movement became strange. I returned to a state of beginner wherein I felt the duration of wonder emerge as I attended more closely to self-movement and movement. Wonder became a familiar state to be in for me, where I could feel the qualitative composition of wonder itself, and to write my self-movement experience from within its midst. It was a privilege to experience, reflect, and write about movement within wonder. I have come to understand that wonder is the phenomenological attitude. As such this wondrous attitude helped me negotiate the constant movement between challenges and effortless flow that surfaced in this inquiry.

* * * * *

As freeskiing is the terrain of this inquiry, the mountain, ski equipment, and of course freeskiers themselves make up the topography of this terrain. The term freeskiing entered the world of alpine skiing in the late 1990's as skiers started incorporating more snowboard style into skiing. Skiers started going into areas on the mountain where man made jumps were created at the time for snowboarders only. Initially snowboarder's did not warmly receive the invasion of skiers in the snowboarder's terrain. Eventually the transition occurred and the "snowboard parks" were renamed simply as "terrain parks" for both skiers and snowboarders. Within a few years some skiers were taking the tricks and mentality of terrain park freeskiing into the rest of the mountain and the term "big mountain freeskiing" was born. Freeskiing had basically expanded to a style of skiing wherever you want on the mountain, however you want to ski involving lots of creating, risking, and wondering about what skiing is possible with the mountain.

A Day With The Mountain is a narrative of self-movement experience of freeskiers in which I have woven in threads of theory as well as the voices of three freeskiers Leah Evans, Josh Dueck, and Mark Abma through ongoing conversations with each of them. These three freeskiers were purposefully chosen as co-creators of this research. I am grateful for the words and images they shared with me to describe their freeskiing experience which helped me understand the freeskiing experience in more depth, and also helped me find language to create the *A Day With The Mountain* narrative. The voices of these three co-creators are throughout the text, with each of them contributing extensively in certain sections, Leah in the accumulation chapter, Josh in the threshold, and Mark in the release. They have landed in their respective chapters due to the nature of the content of their words and the links with the content of the chapter.



Leah Evans is a professional freeskier who travels the world creating new experiences in freeskiing. She is often filmed and photographed because of her smooth, aggressive, and creative skiing. Leah has created an incredibly successful events-based company called *Girls Day Out*, which focuses on women's development. The events of *Girls Day Out* teach women about sliding down a snowy slope, and a lot more. Leah and her group of female instructors provide a powerful environment to inspire health, creativity, and confidence. Body image, possibility, risk, surrender, growth, and pain are just a few of the possible experiences that surface during an event. With Leah's personal skiing she is consistently on the podium of International Freeskiing Association competitions, is a big voice advocating gender parity in freeskiing, and has weaved freeskiing into her bachelor's degree.

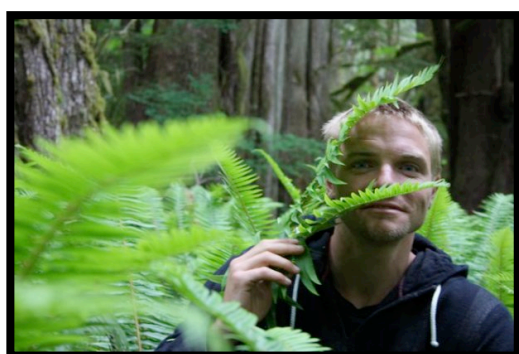
Josh Dueck is in my opinion an amazing freeskier and has been his whole life. On March 8th, 2004 Josh broke his back while demonstrating a front-flip to some athletes he was coaching. Josh's love for freeskiing never slowed. Perhaps it even grew after his accident and the mobility transformation he underwent. Within 9 months of



breaking his back Josh learned how to ski again, this time with a mono ski. Within only a few years after re-learning how to ski Josh was the 2009 World Champion in downhill alpine racing.

He then won a silver medal the following year at the 2010 Paralympics, and gold at the 2011 X-Games. All the while Josh continues to work on professional ski videos and photo shoots with the best freeskiers in the world. Josh frequently shares his story in public speaking engagements at schools, for companies, and in hospitals.

Mark Abma is also a professional freeskiier who travels the world creating new freeskiing experiences. Mark's efforts as a professional freeskiier have afforded him the opportunity to



search out the best skiing conditions and terrain. Mark says on his website that his “journey, though fantastic, has revealed a world in peril, suffering the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, with snow packs depleting and weather patterns becoming

increasingly erratic”. With these observations Mark sees that his sport and life on this planet are threatened. He also realizes that aspects of his own lifestyle contribute to these negative trends and that, to affect change, he must start with himself. Mark founded 1STEP with the intention of sharing his learning and experience in lessening his environmental impact and to support individuals and resorts that want to do the same. 1STEP is a charitable foundation dedicated to mobilizing winter sports communities worldwide to combat climate change and enjoy winter sports in the most sustainable ways possible. Mark has a unique connection to this inquiry because he was also a participant for my Masters study. In a very real way, Mark's contribution to the latter significantly inspired the creation of this text. He was asked to be a co-creator for this inquiry because there was much more that he and I could share with regards to the possibilities of self-movement experience. In many ways we both felt that our conversations in my Masters

project were unfinished and that we both wanted to enter them with a more in-depth questing and questioning.

All three of the co-creators have contributed tremendously to this inquiry. There are parts of the text where the words of the three co-creators themselves are shared, and there are parts where their words may seem invisible. However, the influence of the co-creators is present throughout the text because the experiences of freeskiing that Leah, Mark, and Josh shared with me have significantly shaped the way I understand self-movement and the way I describe freeskiing.

* * * * *

Throughout the text key words are repeated as a re-presenting of significant meaning. ‘Click-Click’ is the sound of clicking ski boots into ski bindings indicating a shift of awareness within the freeskiing experience. ‘Lub Dub’ represents the beating of my heart in a state of wonder. When the word ‘breathe’ is shared, it is an invitation for the reader to pause and take a deep breath, a moment to rest, reflect, and wonder. I offer these pauses as an opportunity, a moment for a deeper appreciation of the fine line, the balance between inhale and exhale.

I would like to take the time now to call attention to a special citing of an author who is weaved throughout this text. I have found profound connection with the works of the Sufi poet, Rumi, and his poetry has found its way into various parts of this text. The book I drew Rumi’s poems from was translated by Coleman-Barks (2004). Rather than repeating Coleman-Barks throughout the text, I would like to honour his work as a translator of Rumi’s poetry right here,

and then indicate that I will cite Rumi, and the page number as a way of honouring Rumi's poetry.

Also, within the text five snowflakes aligned as such, * * * * *, appear between certain paragraphs. These snowflakes indicate a turn of tone, rhythm, or content within the text. At times the turn is significant enough that the snowflakes will be followed by a new subtitle, linking one turn into another turn, a left into a right. At other times, the turn is subtler, like a shift of weight or intention in the middle of one ski turn. Such a mid-turn shift within the text is enough that the change of flow requires some sort of indicator slightly more pronounced than simply starting a new paragraph but perhaps not significant enough to require a new subtitle.

* * * * *

A Day With The Mountain has taken many twists and turns as it was written within my journey as a freeskiing phenomenologist. I have selected words from Sheets-Johnstone (1999) that were speckled within a few of her paragraphs. I found that these words together express the intention of the twists and turns of this text which is to:

Reverse direction,
to shift perspective.
The turn calls upon us to attend to something long taken for granted
it asks us to be mindful of movement.
It thus asks us first of all to be silent,
and, in our silence, to witness the phenomenon of movement—our own self-movement
and the movement of all that is animate or animated in our surrounding world.
It asks us to language these experiences and to come to know them in ways that are
phenomenologically consonant with the dynamically resonant kinesthetic and kinetic
experiences they are;
indeed, it confronts us with this task.
The enterprise is demanding.

In acceding to the demands of a corporeal turn toward movement, we have the possibility of bringing to light an extraordinary terrain. (p. xvii-xviii)

Dillard (1989) writes that “when you lay down a line of words. The line of words is a miner’s pick, a woodcarver’s gauge, a surgeon’s probe. You wield it, and it digs a path you follow. Soon you find yourself in new territory” (p. 3). Both skis and pen took turns writing the line of this inquiry, a line that traveled along both snow and paper. My experience as a phenomenological freeskiier has been that I ski while I write, and write while I ski. I as a writer will be ski-writing into new territory, and perhaps you as the reader may find yourself ski-reading into new territory. And to launch into this new territory,

...*The line*, a poetic vignette to invite the reader deeper into the rhythm and tone of the *A Day With The Mountain* terrain we are entering.

The Line

My being is stirred with a sense of possibility as I gaze out my frosted window and see a snowflake gently floating to the earth. The single flake is joined by others, and without warning flakes of snow are dancing in the sky, and accumulating on the rising ground below. The snowflakes speak; they share stories, and in their voice I hear the lingering aura of opportunity from past experiences with snow, opportunity to fly, and fall in the possibilities of movement, and a rush of energy surges throughout my being.

Melting wax drips from the iron onto the base of my skis. My backpack rests on the floor beside me packed with food, water, avalanche equipment, and extra clothing. I slowly guide the iron back and forth in a smooth flowing motion. Simultaneously my body recognizes this smoothness, and thoughts of fresh powder-turns flow into my presence. I am overcome with a sense of excited calmness. The wax, memories, and my intention for tomorrow seep into my skis, and I smile. I'm confident that my friends are also in excited preparation.

The snow continues to accumulate, as does the rush of movement, and as the rush gains momentum the experience of time begins to shift. The chronological time between my preparations and pushing off a ridge diving into the fresh snow passes both painfully slow as well as oddly fast. In the swirls of this distortion of time, I suddenly find myself perched on the edge of this mountain of unknown possibility.

I wrap my hands around my poles firmly. I recognize the surface and instantly my body remembers. I lift my feet in my boots, which are connected to my bindings, which are attached to my skis. As clumps of snow roll off the tops of my skis and flop on the white snow, I realize that poles, boots, bindings, and skis no longer exist in separation. They now become extensions of me; I realize my body as part of the landscape, the length of my feet extended to the measurements of my skis, my hands the length of my poles. My heart pumps a little harder to push blood into the hollows of the aluminum poles, the air bubbles of the plastic boots, and the wood core of my skis. As they become saturated with hemoglobin and oxygen, the gear is alive. I embrace my physical body, my equipment, my mind, and this environment not as Other but as me.

I have been told that freeskiing is risky, dangerous, and even crazy. Yes, I am initially afraid. I am comfortable at the top of the run, out of the storm. And as I look down the mountain, I see potential dangers. I fear falling, I fear hitting something under the snow, and I fear the trees. And yet a larger fear exists. I fear hearing my heart calling out to me to enter my unknown possibilities only to ignore it because I am afraid of the risks. Fear is wonderful. Fear forces me to be present in the moment. The presence of fear is me, telling me, that something wonderful is present, and the possibility to engage with that wonder exists now. Embracing fear, and being vulnerable to what possibilities it conceals, tells me that I love life enough to risk dying and engage in a dance with all that she gives.

I look down the fall line of the mountain. My eyes scan the pristine untouched white slope. “The difference between poetry and prose is the turn on the page”. The words that Carl Leggo shared with me in conversation flash a smile across my face, as I stare out onto an untouched page. Do I feel like writing poetry or prose upon this sheet? What will this sheet write upon me?

My body leans forward in anticipation. I visualize three or four turns before the steepness of the slope pulls the rest of the mountain out of sight. My body extends further still into the visible and invisible terrain that I am becoming, as it becomes me. In the abyss, improvising with instinct and reflex will guide my flight.

I remain motionless at the top of the mountain; I am moving, moved. I can feel the mountain's energy ascending into my Being as I focus on the first turn. My awareness extends into the vastness of Nature's secrets.

As I push off the ridge, the accumulating momentum of movement reaches a threshold wherein the moment opens to the first turn. The snow begins piling against my knees and thighs. This first turn, however, started a long time ago, longer than I can remember. It's a reoccurring 'first' turn whose power began to return last night, surging through the veils of time within the veins of my body, brought close by the flakes of snow silently tapping upon the window of my house and my heart...

...Breathe...

...I bob up and down diving deep into the sanctuary of soft snow, using supple legs to seduce the contours of time, space, and earth.

The snow piles higher against my body rolling up my chest and blasting off my face. The contact of the weightless crystals upon my face is revitalizing, a literal blast of vital energy that

charges through my body like a lightning bolt splintering into every cell. The blast continues and flies over my head. I am completely surrounded by trillions of snowflakes. I am submersed in the Whiteroom. The carriage of movement shifts beyond the physical. The snowflakes embrace and transport my Being.

Breathe...

The mountain and the moment are powerful beyond measure. They create a spiritual dance with gravity where the moment is the maestro and the rhythm. Steps are created in the intertwining of life where death itself is embraced as a loving waltz. Every fiber of my Being is awake, attentive to the moment and to the presence of possibility.

I travel through the forest. At first the trees pass quickly, my mind calculates, and my body moves according to the messages. I move to avoid the trees, but then I listen to the message from my body, and my mind moves according to his messages. I no longer see trees. The spaces between emerge.

As movement reveals new nakedness, new understandings of physical space are conceived. The distinction between particles and the space surrounding them is losing its original sharpness. The void is now recognized as a dynamic quality of paramount importance. The physicality of this experience is inseparably linked to the unknown. The experience of that linking can only be understood and described in terms of its interaction with the rest of the world. Space, the in-between, is now void of being a void. The energies emitted between objects become space replete with possibilities and animation rather than space void of meaning. The force of

possibility continually plays with perception of movement. Possibility as a force opens further still to possibility as a force-field, a vast field of possibility within which I move and moves within me.

The experience of movement is invited deeper. Body sheaths, being sheaths, and becoming sheaths continue to surrender to thresholds and breakthroughs in self-movement.

Breathe...

I feel the trees; I become more aware of their presence, more sensitive to their desires. They don't want to hit me, as much as I don't want to hit them. We meet on neutral grounds, respecting each other's space. I continue to pass through the forest without a separation from the forest. I dance with the trees; they move to expose space; I move to enter those mysterious spaces.

higher...

flying

My flight is directed skyward. I am lifted off the earth

...invited by gravity to meet

on grounds of harmonious surrender.

We embrace and I then descend back towards the earth

falling,

Deeper...

...understanding gravity,

respecting her powers and intentions.

Flying (im)possibilites...

Falling (im)possibilities

Once again my Being caresses the surface of the snow. I feel the familiar touch of the snowflakes that catch me as I descend into their embrace. But something is different. There is no separation from air and snow. No sense of falling. I continue to fly on a cushion of air and snow. My body, the mountain, and the unknown have been embraced in the love, joy, and excitement as well as the fear, tension, and nervousness of deep wonder. I meet my wonder in this terrain and surrender to her movements.

The qualities of my body's shifting freedom, the measurements, ability, efficiency, and vulnerability become apparent as my body itself is passed over in silence for the occupation of the landscape of the moment, of deep movement consciousness. This is not a forgetting of the body, it is a remembering, a re-membering with the depth of movement.

Breathe...

...into the line,

into...

...the magic and mystery of self-movement.

* * * * *

Accumulation:

The Swelling Energy of Ascension



It's Friday morning, snow starts to fall really heavily and I'm sitting inside in class. By the afternoon I am like "oh my god I can't sit here anymore." My excitement throbs throughout the day as the snow continues to fall, knowing tomorrow is Saturday and I am going skiing! –Leah Evans

I really enjoy the excitement and the anticipation of waking up early in the morning, getting geared up, and getting in the car. I really try to appreciate that anticipation and that journey even though it can be difficult at times because of weather or people or my mood, but I can usually do a pretty good job of appreciating that experience. The anticipation really starts to explode whether you are using a chairlift, or a cat, or a helicopter. It just continues to ramp and ramp and ramp. That experience, when shared with friends, is that much more amazing, where you don't even have to say anything; everyone is just feeling that same energy and that vibe and that excitement to get up there. –Josh Dueck

The White Breath

Exiting my house I am greeted at the door by the distinct smell of winter. My nostrils flare slightly with the passing of cool crisp air into my lungs. Distant, dark clouds threaten the cloudless sky above. The chill of winter envelops and penetrates the environment, a penetration so profound, it occupies the depth of my lungs. As I open my mouth, the chill exits from within. The moisture of my breath is cooled and appears as a visible vapour. The white breath rises into the air, and I follow its path directing my gaze upwards.

For the freeskier seeing warm breath exiting one's mouth and transforming into frozen crystals is the first sign that snow will soon fall.

The thick clouds roll through the Bow Valley between the Rocky Mountains that line Banff and Canmore Alberta carrying water that swirls and rises as the valley ascends into foothills, and into the steep slopes of the high-alpine. The water in the billowing clouds crests the mountain tops and connects with dust particles in the air. Silent music orchestrates the marriage of the two and a dance begins. Twisting, and turning, tumbling and twirling, the water-dust couple grows and morphs into crystals. Snowflakes. With gravity as the maestro, the couple descends in its crystal form to the earth, joining others in an amazing accumulation.

As the snowflakes slowly start to accumulate on the earth below, I feel a swelling of energy slowly start to accumulate in me. I feel an energy cultivating as possibilities are created with every flake of snow that comes to rest on the earth, and that energy will soon be directed to gathering information and preparing gear for the day of freeskiing at Tryst Lake tomorrow.

Storms are powerful experiences that, unlike individual illness, can cause shifts in the public pulse of life. When snow falls forcefully, human motion slows down simply because of visibility. As snow accumulates on roads and sidewalks, the pace slows even more, at times halting daily routines with road closures preventing schools and businesses from opening. These shifts in life, these ‘interruptions,’ are important as the change of rhythm creates opportunity for reflection and perhaps even wonder. These shifts in life slow down the daily routines, and, for me, the flakes accumulating on my jacket are the initial signs of a promise (others might see it more as a threat) made by current weather reports stating that we can expect to see snow accumulations as much as 30 centimeters in town, which often means greater accumulation in the nearby mountains.

* * * * *

I open the door of the house I am renting, enter the house, and shake the few flakes of snow that had gathered on my jacket. As I take off my jacket and boots, a familiar shiver runs through me, a shiver that happens when exiting the cold out-of-doors and entering a warm room. The shiver that is as if I am trying to shake the lingering chill off my body by leaving it near the front door, only to put back on when I leave later.

Passing my bedroom I head to the washroom to freshen up, and as I pass, from the corner of my eye I catch a glimpse of my open journal and a book lying on top of each other. Instantly, I am brought back to the reading, reflecting, and writing that I was doing earlier today. The reading, reflecting, and writing that stirred me to leave the house for a few minutes to let what I had been exposed to sink into me a bit more.

The reading was about self-movement. It was certainly not the first text about self-movement I had read. It was, however, a text that has been shaking my understanding of self-movement, at least my conceptual understanding of self-movement.

For a phenomenological study intending to get into the experience of self-movement, I was drawn to the question of “What is self-movement?” This question instantly exposed me to how foggy my conceptual understanding of self-movement was. I would ask myself “What is self-movement?” and upon reflection I instantly went to physical motion as the description of self-movement. However, with my education in sport psychology and mental training, as fast as I would go to the physical I would ask “What about the mental element of self-movement?” And at one point I wondered “What is the movement part of self-movement?” I turned to the literature of physical education and kinesiology, the two main fields of self-movement study (O’Sullivan, 2004). When I first turned to the literature, it seemed that movement itself as a word, a concept, and an experience had been taken for granted. Authors were presenting the word movement in their texts without qualifying what they meant by movement, or how they were using it. As I read on, it became clearer that authors were writing as if any reader of their text would share the same understanding of movement. In asking myself “What is movement?” I felt a corporeal knowing of how I experience movement, and what it is, however, it became very clear that I could not articulate the understanding of my own perception of what movement is.

It wasn’t until I started reading the book that lay open on top of my journal that a conceptually different understanding of movement beyond the physical started to grow. *The Primacy of Movement* is the book written by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1999), and it quickly

became the conceptual cornerstone for my inquiry into self-movement. *The Primacy of Movement* connected into words and concepts the power, love, and spirituality I had been experiencing my whole life in my self-movement.

I flop onto my bed next to my journal and *The Primacy*, and peek out my bedroom window to see that dark snow clouds now block the sun. Flakes have increased in size, number, and the speed of descent. They are now rushing to the earth at a feverish pace. I pull a blanket over my legs, and with the flakes rushing by my window, I continue my reading, and movement rushes into my presence.

Movement: Its First Rush and its Primacy

Movement moves me before I move movement.
(Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p. 245)

Surging through veils of time within the veins of my body, there is a rush of movement. A rush that as a freeskier, is ignited by the presence of snow. This rush of movement is more than just a temporary rush of excitement or adrenaline; it is "...an upsurge of feeling, literally a *rush* [italics in original] that comes over and flows through me...discernible as childhood vitality, playfulness, exuberance, spontaneity, and delight" (Smith, 2007, p. 51). This childhood vitality is steeped in wonder, a state of animation and appreciation for being alive. At times the rush is barely felt, and at others it is unmistakably present. This returning to the rush of movement is a re-turning to the childhood vitality of being born *into* movement.

In the beginning, after all, we do not *try* to move, *think* about movement possibilities, or put ourselves to *the task* of moving. We come straightaway moving into the world; we are precisely not *stillborn*...In the beginning, we are simply infused with movement—not merely with a *propensity* to move, but the real thing [italics in original]. (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p. 136)

Sheets-Johnstone (1999) elegantly continues to describe the pulsing primordial and pre-reflected power of movement and to honour her words, her awareness, and her articulations, I have left this string of words intact.

We all start out the same way: as infants. And we all learn to move ourselves: without words, at our own pace, directly from our own bodies in an environment of possibility, on the basis of primal animation. Primal animation and tactile-kinesthetic experience are at the core of our infancy and remains the unsurpassed core of our adult being.

Not only did we all learn to walk and to speak, but prior to these fundamental “I cans,” we all *discovered* ourselves in the acts of sucking, swallowing, crying, kicking, turning, stretching, reaching, smiling, babbling, and much, much more. In the process of discovering ourselves in all these ways, we expanded our repertoire of “I cans”; we learned possibilities of movement and became progressively aware of our capacity to move effectively with respect to these possibilities—by moving ourselves. It is important to emphasize that in these situations, we were precisely *discovering* our bodies, not *controlling* them. In attending to and exploring our primal animateness, and in thereby learning the myriad ways in which our bodily movement related us, and could relate us, to a surrounding world, we were apprentices, not would-be masters, of our bodies [italics in original]. (p. 270-271)

As movement conceptually became an “environment of possibility” (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p. 270) more questions began to surface. I found myself asking: How can we celebrate, share, nurture, and challenge the primacy of movement? How does one continue to discover oneself in movement? How does one continue to learn and live one’s animation in movement? How then is this learning shared with others? What approach acknowledges, respects, and nurtures such a challenge? These questions are difficult because elements of experience seem to slip beneath the alphabetic language, existing in a primordial language beyond the ‘facts’ of objective thought.

Experiences of self-movement seem to point beyond the immediacy of the context in which they occur most prominently (Polakow, 1984a), existing beyond memory, and before language (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). The challenge for me is how do I proceed to construct what is beyond the reach of my memory and before alphabetic language? In particular, how do I proceed to construct living experiences of movement? How can these self-movement experiences be invited into movements of ink and paper to understand and share their meaning and magic so crucial for our movement-conscious development (Smith, 2007)? The most direct answer is to move, and “in moving, challenge ourselves anew to learn our bodies” (Fink, 1995, p. 64).

Excavating the experiences of our stories that exist beyond memory is a difficult task. Grumet (1988) calls this process thinking back through our mothers, the willingness to stretch our selves backward through history to umbilical mysteries of flesh and earth. To accumulate words from my self-mover story that lie beyond my memory I embraced the counsel of Grumet, literally turning to my mother. Who else would carry even a glimpse into my experience of movement that rests beyond the embrace of memory, at least my own memory? My mother’s experience of sharing the magic of movement with me is something that will remain with both of us in unspoken understandings within our mysteries of flesh and earth the “amniotic fluidity, ‘liquid warmth’ and ‘inner surf’ of the womb” (Ackerman, 1990, p. 78). I turn to my Mother asking what are some first turns and rushes of movement that we shared together. The following descriptions start with experiences beyond my memory of movement. They are embryonic experiences of movement that formed me before I formed movement. Within the descriptions from my Mother, a shift takes place. Movement continues to form me, and I begin to consciously form movement.

Letter From Mom, June 14, 2007.

I water-skied with you around six weeks after conception (July 6th 1978) at which time I only suspected to be pregnant. That summer was filled with swimming and working at the cottage and around the house. I was the ceramic tile person and often wondered if the fumes from the glue had an effect on you. Also, I tried replacing a light that was not disconnected, so we both received a bit of an electrical jolt. Not too big I think.

I remember lots of uterine action; you were always kicking, and moving side to side, but in the 8th and 9th month your full length stretching in the womb was dramatic. I could feel little feet pressing up into my lungs and your head right down against my pelvic floor. After three hours of labour, you popped out around four o'clock. Is that why you love the number 4 so much? During the transition time, just before you were delivered, you made a huge roll in my uterus. It was a definite downward dog yoga posture as if to be ready for the push through the birth canal. The lights were low when you came out, and you nursed right away at 7lb 11oz.

From six weeks to four months you loved the jolly jumper, experimenting with rolling and jumping forward. At around four and a half months I found you standing in your crib crying. You had pulled yourself up to stand but couldn't get back down so became frightened. That business of standing up is not normal for a child of that age. You progressed rapidly through the crawling stages, and you were walking by eight and a half months and running by nine months. There was no sitting around for you. At this point, anything that resembled a stick and could move or smack another article on the floor captivated your interest; you were progressively experimenting with these items. No one had shown you hockey or baseball purposely, but you must have observed this while we were with other people. You bit Lia a few times in frustration while playing around her or wanting what she had. You enjoyed playing in the water at Sunrise Lodge but were cautious. The ride-on toys were a big hit with you, and we found you one day at age two and a half tripping up Guelph St quite far from our house on Olive Ave. That was when we knew we had to move, so we chose Gadsby for the court and sparse traffic.

You also loved to colour and play with anything, leaving designs on the long strips of newsprint that I had hung on the wall. There were some cool artistic results from that exercise of having the paper available. You were three years old when we moved to Gadsby and there were lots of kids to play with besides Lia and Rianna. You learned to go up a ramp on your tricycle but soon had to try what the other kids were doing on their bikes, which you learned to ride in about 10 minutes, and then up the ramp you went. Crazy. You played catch with anyone you could convince; you had swimming lessons and were tobogganing by age three, climbing trees, running in the court, and skating by the time you were five. If you could jump from one spot to the next, that was what you would prefer to do rather than walk. Dad says he remembers you loving to jump on the beds. At age eight you were experimenting with jumping off a five-foot wall with umbrellas to soften the landing.

You had to be disciplined from time to time, and you would literally climb the curtains in the bedroom when you were sent to your room. You owe me a few rods put back up, but I think you have repaid those pull downs many times over with all the things you've done for us over the years. You were a creature who was constantly in motion until you rested, and then you could really concentrate. Your ability to play with Lego or work with crafts was expressed in long periods of concentration.

Many more experiences to share, and I'd love to share them.

Love,

Mom

* * * * *

In the shift of becoming actively aware of my involvement in forming my own movement experiences I acknowledge an accumulation. The accumulation is of my ability to start articulating my self-movement experience that more closely connects with my live(d) experience of movement. Merleau-Ponty's (1962) *The Visible and the Invisible* has now joined my journal, *The Primacy*, and myself on my bed. Reading Merleau-Ponty is for me like skiing a very difficult line. Both experiences demand of me a full-being-focus. If my focus slips for a second while skiing a difficult line I would fall and tumble down the mountain exposed to the risk of being vitally injured. If my focus slips while reading Merleau-Ponty, or other texts I find challenging, I risk loosing my turn, tripping, stumbling, and falling over a word, a sentence, an idea, or thought only to tumble down the page, out of control skipping over the terrain of his work. If such a slip occurs I may find myself pulling myself up off the bottom of the page, breathless, disoriented and confused. Aware of this risk, I flip open *The Visible and the Invisible* and re-read one of my favorite passages.

With the first vision, the first contact, the first pleasure, there is initiation, that is, not the positing of a content, but the opening of a dimension that can never again be closed, the establishment of a level in terms of which every other experience will henceforth be situated. (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 151)

Upon reading these words I think to myself that birth must be a dramatic ‘opening of a dimension that can never again be closed’ one which establishes ‘a level in terms of which every other experience will henceforth be situated’. And if we are born into movement as a realm of possibility, then the dimension we are opening, which can never again be closed, is a dimension of discovering ourselves in movement possibility. Perhaps the possibility we are presented with in birth is so expansive that the birth experience into movement becomes the level in terms of which every other experience in movement will henceforth be situated. Van Den Berg (1952) writes that human movement is a way to demonstrate the harmony and discord of man and his world. Perhaps our self-movement experience in relation to the possibilities of movement itself provides such a context in which we can observe our harmony and discord with our possibilities in the world.

Remembering my umbilical past has helped me to loosen the ties that bind me to isolating notions of alterity. There is an interesting transition from beyond memory to vivid memories, a transition where night turns to day, day to night, and the dusk and dawn in-between fill with questions and curiosities, uncertainties and blurred experience.

Forming Movement: Continuation and Development

I open the fridge and start packing a lunch for tomorrow with Sheets-Johnstone, Merleau-Ponty, and Van Den Burg having followed me to the kitchen. My Mom's words have also followed me, and, while I put together a sandwich, memories of youthful self-movement surface.

As I began to form movement in my youth, the forests, ponds, streams, and lakes were the wooded classroom of movement education. This classroom catalyzed an invitation into a playfield of possibility, which, over time, shifted to include parks, soccer fields, hockey rinks, and volleyball courts. One activity I remember vividly loving to do was sliding down the steep driveway of my childhood home, belly down on my skateboard, like a surfer sliding down the face of an ocean wave preparing to pop to his feet. Unfortunately, there was no popping to my feet. The curb that lined where the driveway met the court was too thick for the wheels of my skateboard to roll over. The board would stop upon hitting the curb, and I would skip into the court. I used to do this for hours. Unbeknownst to me, my Mom was often watching me. I finally figured out a way to un-weight the wheels of my skateboard and hop over the curb.

Many experiences in athletics would follow in sports such as hockey, soccer, baseball, tennis, basketball, track and field, and volleyball. A profound experience in my self-movement development, unfolded when I was 12 years old. Dave Busch and I were in the basement of my childhood home, and Dave helped me put on a pair of hard plastic ski boots. I was somewhat familiar with the feeling because of how much time I had spent in hockey skates. Dave then lined up a pair of skis and "CLICK-CLICK" with two clicks of the bindings my passion for skiing

exploded. An excitement ensued that could not be contained. The feeling of stepping into the bindings and being connected to skis for the first time remains intimately present with me. That connected feeling is refreshed every time I step into my bindings.

Of that initial experience, I recall rolling my ankles and thus the skis from side to side on the carpeted basement floor as Dave's shoulder provided support. I remember feeling the weight of the skis and how awkward they felt as extensions of my feet. Amazing because skis now feel so familiar and comforting. I remember Dave telling me how similar skiing is to skating, "two metal edges, frozen water, a forward stance with lateral movement, and a big one...the hockey stop!" One of the first things I remember asking Dave about skiing is how to stop!

Of that basement introduction, what resonates unmistakably is the feverish feeling that boiled and expanded. The expansions of that feeling occurred as I asked questions and Dave answered, as I became more familiar with how the equipment felt and moved, and from knowing I was going to be sliding down a snowy slope the next day. Perhaps this same feeling was present before I slid down the driveway on my skateboard, stood in the crib, and stretched in the womb.

Lub-dub,

Lub-dub

The feelings trembled and flapped in his chest

like a bird newly put in a cage.

(Rumi, p. 226)

The trembling and flapping in my chest turned up the following day, the day after Dave first introduced me to skis and ski boots, as I began to slide down the snow with skis for the first time. My younger sister Rianna is quick to remind me that she taught me how to ski and was there to witness my first turn. I do not visually remember my first turn, but what I can remember is the feeling. I am reminded of the feeling at the beginning of each ski season, prior to making the first turn on a scary run, or the first turn of a line I'm really excited about. That same feeling and bodily reactions reappear while I write about these experiences. It is a feeling of wonder felt most in my chest and upper belly, a spontaneous state of presence, variably weighted with fear and longing (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). Da Vinci (cited in Sheets-Johnstone, 1999) speaks of a cavern he came upon while wandering in nature. He speaks of wonder as being the force that pulled him to the edge of the cavern and pulled his body forward, and if it weren't for his knee pressed against his forearm and leaning upper body, he would have fallen in. Da Vinci recognized that his knee represented his fear of the unknown of the cavern, and his leaning body and deep seeking eyes as his longing to find something wonderful in the dark cavern. He speaks of wonder as the play between ominousness and desire, where we are simultaneously drawn toward and away from a particular phenomenon of life. This push-pull affect of wondering about and in the tensions between the known and the unknown is omnipresent in my freeskiing experience.

I don't remember the colour, make, or size of those first skis, boots, and bindings; those material facts of that experience have receded deep into my memory. What I vividly remember is the feeling of my heart speaking loudly fueled with confident energy pulsing from the solar plexus. This feeling is wonder presented as more than words, fleshed out viscerally, carnally.

Throughout my life I have followed this feeling of wonder in movement, surrendered to it, challenged it, fought it, and as I write these words I feel its familiar energy present while I sit on the floor.

* * * * *

The smell of the iron is familiar and sends my body into a whirlwind of memory and excitement. Like Pavlov's dogs salivating at the sound of a bell, the smell of the iron used to wax my skis signifies that I will soon be skiing, and I am in a state of full-body salivation like a powder hound. I am ready to re-turn, so to speak, to the experience of movement that transports me away from my everyday reality to the reality of the realm of possibilities of movement. I know, at least theoretically, that I can enter this realm of movement in every experience. But living in movement as an experience of possibility doesn't always happen for me. Freeskiing for me is just a specific self-movement context that I am familiar with, and the power of the experience, especially with the mountain, aids the transformation.

Entering this world where I am consciously aware of movement as a realm of possibility, I am then somewhere else. There is a doubling of physical space experienced. The physical experience of movement seduces me to its surface, and is also a porthole inviting me to pass through its veiled surface into the depth of movement. My wonder in movement is used to traverse this veiled physical surface to negotiate the space between seeking and entering, to dive into an unknown depth swirling between reflective and pre-reflective, being pushed and pulled by wonder.

According to the Yoga sutras, consciousness is a dynamic concept. Consciousness is a seedling that sprouts from the soil of our soul towards the perceived experience of life. Our ‘sprouted’ consciousness is “an active, impressionable and engaged channel flowing simultaneously ‘inward’ and ‘outward’ involved in a direct relationship with the world” (Iyengar, 2002, p. 42). Growing from the trunk of consciousness are the branches and leaves, representing the sheaths of our awareness. The sheaths of awareness are called the Kosas and are described as, anatomical, physiological, mental, intellectual, and blissful. These sheaths of awareness, according to the yoga sutras, correspond in many ways to the integrated physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of the experience of self-movement as a realm of possibility.

Above the tool table where I wax my skis there is a poster fixed to the wall. It is an image of the legendary freeskier Trevor Peterson. The image is of Trevor peering over the ledge of a cornice looking into the unknown possibilities that lie below. Trevor’s form is silhouetted on the edge of the unknown, and, just like Da Vinci looking into the dark cavern with “deep seeking eyes” (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p. 329) there is an air of wonder to Trevor’s form. Beside Trevor on the poster the words “There comes a time when one must risk something or stand forever with one’s dreams” hovering above the unknown abyss below. The words were taken from one of Trevor’s journals, words that came from his self-movement experience in relation with the mountain and freeskiing. Haskell (2000) quotes Trevor Peterson, the same quote that I first found in a ski magazine, the same quote that followed me around on a poster, and the same quote that is now in me, “*There comes a time when one must risk something or stand forever with one’s dreams.*” Haskell also writes, “Risking the unknown pushes perceivable limits” (p. 29). It is inevitable that I must risk something to enter the unknown terrain of possibility. By choosing to enter the unknown, by wanting to be in that unfamiliar unpredictable environment intending to

see what's there, to find something wonderful, something full-of-wonder, I am exercising my freedom as a self-mover.

Birds make great sky-circles
of their freedom.
How do they learn it?

They fall, and falling,
they're given wings.
(Barks, 2004, p. 243)

Letting go...

Falling...

Freefalling, and in falling growing wings

to fly

expanding possibility,

creating more freedom

The poster is no longer physically fixed to the wall. It stayed posted on my wall in various rooms for years, from my childhood bedroom, to rooms throughout university. The poster is fixed to the wall through my minds eye. I see it often on walls around me, projected from within. Trevor staring deeply over the edge of the cliff he was standing on, staring past the edge of his comfort. It seems that Trevor also stares past the edge of the poster, staring into me. I have stood many times on carpeted floors, in front of Trevor who stands on the snow-covered floor of a mountain, between us the void of the unknown. Both of us staring into *it*, into the exposure of the unknown with fear and longing...and the accumulation continues.

Continued Accumulation: Leah's Experience

While organizing my gear and almost hearing the large flakes flop on the rising snowpack outside, my body swirling in the fear and longing for tomorrow's ski day, I think about Leah Evans and some of her freeskiing experiences that she has shared with me in conversation. Throughout my conversations with Leah I was often struck at the depth of experience that was in her stories. There were many stories of experiences on the mountain such as great turns, learning new movements, jumping off cliffs, and winning competitions. And with all the great days, turns, and moments Leah was also careful to acknowledge the difficult days, days with freezing weather, poor snow quality, grumpy moods, and days of pain an injury.

Leah shared with me freeskiing experiences and many other life experiences. Leah was quick to tell me that her idea of the mountain extends far beyond the physical form of the mountain, and that freeskiing is more of a way of life for her than just a physical activity or sport. The lifestyle of freeskiing for Leah is about interaction, with her own self-awareness, with her friends, with a larger social web of people around her, and her connection with her environment. Leah talks about her freeskiing experience as being a balance between real life and a fantasy life. And whenever clouds start to cover the sky and snow starts to fall Leah's connection to her fantasy life returns.

It is mid-summer, and I'm calling Leah to ask her a few more questions. She has just returned from northern British Columbia where she was working as a fire fighter for forest fires. During our conversation Leah shared with me a particular experience that shows her deep

connection with freeskiing. The experience unfolded years ago, yet Leah says it remains present with her because it was so meaningful.

In Rossland when we get snow, we get big time snow. I remember this one storm when I was in grade twelve...

It's Friday morning, snow starts to fall really heavily, and I'm sitting inside in class. By the afternoon I am like, "oh my god I can't sit here anymore". My excitement continues to accumulate throughout the day as the snow continues to fall and knowing tomorrow is Saturday, and I am going skiing!

With the snow still falling, I find myself gazing out the window and I drift into a conversation with myself about freeskiing. I think of how freeskiing derives from times when I've had a really good laugh with my friends. Freeskiing is feeling differently than I normally do. It takes me away from my daily life being one with my equipment and with the environment. With freeskiing I can encounter something hard something soft, and I have to adjust to that. It's a big connection with nature; it's that interaction. Freeskiing just makes me feel really good. It is not a set formula. I can try something new, or I can even go off of the snow. How often in your daily life can you jump off of something and have that movement in the air?

It's amazing how a sheet of snow can make me excited like that. Just seeing it automatically surfaces this internal connection with passion, and I get really excited; it kind of overtakes me, and I don't know about time in that feeling of openness.

While I sit in class, thoughts of powder and the snow falling outside triggers a connection to a day I skied at Island Lake lodge.



We got 100 centimeters of snow and just got buried. Oh that was so fun just skiing within the trees all day. Every turn was so deep and the snow was so light. And the runs, oh my god they were so long. There was one line that was an open corridor with only one tree. A thrill exploded in me when I saw it, like seeing an amusement ride that you have not seen before.

Making those turns I could feel my hair bobbing and the snow rolling over my face. It felt surreal. Having that open corridor with nothing marked on it means creativity too. Because when something is open, I am more open to different ideas to put on it. A blank

canvas is white, the snowfield is white, and both are waiting for me to write my signature on it. With the openness of being open-minded I allow more ideas to come in, and that gives space for a lot of creativity. Being the person who gets to write with my skis into that open corridor is really awesome.

I just get immersed in this life of snow, and I am not thinking of anything else except for how good it feels to be in that snow, and I am just super happy from everything that is surfacing from that experience right then. And now I'm immersed in this life of snow, but I feel the distance as I'm in class and the snow is outside. But this tension, this excitement is a part of the snow.

I wonder who else is getting charged up here in class now.

I survive the day at school and get home. My parents are away for a party with their friends. I have my learner's driver's license and I do not want to walk to town; so I take out the car without permission. I drive to town without knowing that my parents had set the trip odometer to zero. They find out that I drove the car, and I admit to it. The punishment is that I cannot go skiing tomorrow.

I'm Crushed!

It is Friday night and the snow continues to fall. Knowing that I am not allowed to ski tomorrow is tormenting me. "You can't do this to me!" I say to my parents. I don't know if I have ever been upset like this before. I'm not mad at someone or something; I'm mad at myself because of missing out on the experience.

Tears are uncontrollably rolling down my cheeks. I cry, and cry, and cry, and I think my parents realize that this is punishing me a lot. I'm crying so much because I feel the closeness of that fantasy world of freeskiing, but I can't sink into it. Being within the freeskiing lifestyle if I have something like an injury that takes me away from freeskiing then my whole life gets affected because that state, that connection with nature, is distanced.

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! My alarm sounds to wake me up. But I'm already awake. Usually when it snows, I can't sleep because of how excited I am for a powder day. It is basically like caffeine, like a natural stimulant. I'm super charged and I get up early and nothing fazes me. There is no pain to wake up. Last night I could not sleep because of how sad I was to miss out on the experience. I get out of bed and put on all my ski gear thinking if I put it on my parents might let me go.

With all my gear on I head downstairs. My parents say I can go skiing today but that I am grounded after that. The accumulating energy bursts and I swirl with excitement, and action to get to the hill.

* * * * *

My skis are now upside down, bases up. While watching clear drops of melted wax fall from the hot iron, splashing and cooling white on the base of my skis, I think about Leah's connection with snow, how excited she gets, and how snow connects her to a world where life is experienced differently, a world that Leah describes as a fantasy world. Life is more playful even as the possibility of injury or risk increases. I find it amazing how Leah's immersion in this life of snow casts a spell of sorts on her where she is not thinking of anything else. The immersion occurs of course while sliding amongst the flakes of snow with her skis, feeling her hair bobbing from side to side and the snow rolling up her body. That connected sensation is also present when she sees a single flake of snow falling to the earth, and the sensation increases as more flakes tumble together and start to accumulate on the earth's surface. However, Leah's connection extends far beyond her personal freeskiing connection with snow.

Leah says her connection is one of expanded awareness with openness, creativity, and making the familiar strange. She says her connection "is a connection when I get into something and all of a sudden my awareness is beyond myself." Leah's connection was certainly influenced by her freeskiing experiences on the mountain as she says "I feel when I am skiing I am able to be more open-minded and to see things differently." Leah quickly became aware that her freeskiing connection included a strong sense of community, the social element of freeskiing:

I've had really great chairlift conversations when there's that little capsule of time when you can share your dreams, or share an experience, or if you need a shoulder to cry on or lean on. Freeskiing for me is not just the turns you are making with the mountain, but maybe those turning points that you have with people, on the chairlift as an example. Those connections make me feel like I belong to a community and gives me something to look forward to every year.

As Leah continued to pursue freeskiing and started to compete she realized that the sport was male dominated: the numbers of men to women in the sport spoke to that. In addition to just numbers Leah noticed a discrepancy with prize money and the value of women in the competitive scene of freeskiing. This did not sit well with Leah, it caused a weakening of her connection with freeskiing. So she did something about it. She started to voice her concerns about the inequality in freeskiing and combined her personal experience with academics as she started and still is studying women studies at University. Part of Leah's life's work now includes giving voice to women in freeskiing but that quickly expanded into creating a program for female's to learn about themselves and others through freeskiing. Leah's 'Girls Day Out' ski program was created and has been successfully running for over three years now. Leah has attracted a passionate group of women instructors who create experience based teaching environments where young women come to the events and share a weekend freeskiing. On her 'Girls Day Out' website with regards to her intention with the program Leah wrote,

Girls Day Out is a community, we all have our roles within skiing and I want you to learn yours. Additionally, I want to challenge you to be the best person you can be and follow that journey. Be it helping a friend learn how to ski or winning the world tour. I want to educate you on what is happening in the female big mountain ski community and how we can work together to raise the threshold of female skiing.

Along with ripping around the mountain learning about themselves in their own experience, Leah and the other instructors include elements of nutrition, body image, mental training and so on into the curriculum of the weekend. Leah has told me that inevitably throughout the weekend at least one but usually many of the young women attending the event ask for one-on-one time with one of the instructors to chat about important life issues that they do not feel comfortable asking other people in their lives. The 'Girls Day Out' program is certainly powerful and Leah enjoys the challenge of nurturing her own connection by creating the program that intends for those in attendance to learn and find their own connection, their own passion.

* * * * *

The hot iron now runs along the flat bases of my skis. Thoughts about my conversations with Leah hang in the air. I am thinking about what Leah says about her ‘real’ life and her ‘fantasy’ life. For Leah at times school and work are referred to as real life, while freeskiing experiences where time shifts and words cannot describe the experience are fantasy. Perhaps when familiar life such as our relationship with time and space seems familiar it feels somehow more real, and when life feels strange such as when time is distorted, or space seems more malleable life feels more like a fantasy. I know for me this *Day With The Mountain* experience certainly was strange and yet was very real. The wax that drips and cools on the bases, is reheated and now seeps into my skis. My thoughts about reality and fantasy also seep deeper into the moment and dissolve from my awareness. The wax saturates the bases of my skis not only with wax but also with excitement and intention in preparation to slide down snow.

This excitement and accumulation evoked by snow as I continue to prepare can even surface in the middle of the summer, when no flake of snow is anywhere in sight. Simply thinking about or imagining snow triggers this transportation to a fantasy world. In this sensation whether immersed in physical snow, the sight of snow, or the image of snow, the rush of movement surges through Leah’s presence. It is amazing what that object of the snowflake can do. There are, however, many other objects that trigger this rush of movement for the freeskiier. As I prepare for tomorrow’s ski tour I run my hand along the base of my newly waxed skis and I too am transported to a different awareness; I feel my heart pound a little harder and the presence of movements exciting power circulates through my body evoked by the objects connected to freeskiing.

Van Den Berg (1952) offers an interesting description of this interaction between a person, other people, and the objects around them. His narrative describes a canceled meeting with a friend. This meeting is canceled after he has prepared the room with a log in the fireplace and a bottle of red wine. Van Den Berg goes on to analyze what he sees in this bottle of wine after this cancellation of the meeting: “What I was seeing was not a green bottle, with a white label...I was really seeing ...the disappointment about the fact that my friend would not come or about the loneliness of my evening” (p. 35). He admits he was seeing a bottle but at the same time the value the bottle had acquired after this cancellation. “We see things within their context and in connection with ourselves: a unity which can be broken only to the detriment of the parts” (p. 37). In our conversations Leah mentioned times when she could not ski due to injury, illness, or simply her schedule did not allow for it. When Leah cannot ski because of some obstacle, I wonder if seeing her skis, ski clothing, and even the snow connect her with disappointment of not being able to ski rather than the usual excitement those objects evoke.

With my focus now on the objects of freeskiing, the equipment, the terrain, and the snow itself, I am extended beyond myself, beyond the surface of my skin. In this connection I am extended to a more expansive experience of self-movement. I am extended into the snow and the swirl of memories and dreams of the future that it evokes. This extending connection can be called the mimetic impulse (Smith, 2006). The mimetic impulse is “the compulsion to become the Other” (Taussig, 1993, xviii); it is tightly linked with the chiasm which “prompts a movement toward the world and other people; it seeks similarity and opens up the prospect of a temporary overcoming of separateness” (Gebauer & Wulf, 1995, p. 314). I love the idea of being a member of a pulse beyond my individual beating heart. Within the mimetic impulse, self-movement

expands to weave the interplay of the human senses with a more-than-human communication. A communication between the body and mind, between the body and the surrounding earth, and the reciprocal participation between one's own flesh and the encompassing flesh of the world that we commonly call perception. With this expansion we can connect with a more sensorial, direct, and interconnected experience in movement, of becoming flesh of the world.

An Eternal Search: A Search for Words

Back upstairs in my bedroom, I am laying out my ski clothes. I chuckle as I twist one of the arms of my jacket to the side to give the clothes a manikin look. As I turn around, my eyes flash across my bookshelf and land on the collection of personal journals lined randomly as their various shapes press into each other. The many experiences and varying awareness that have accumulated over the years with the mountain and contributed to the development of this inquiry are written within those journals.

The mountain has seduced my wonder for many years in the form of slope. As a child slope sliding started on my driveway and then extended to nearby hills, and stairways, and sand piles (for summer skiing), then progressed to the local ski hills. By the age of 14 I was introduced to the Appalachian, the Presidential, and the White Mountains of eastern Quebec, Vermont, and New Hampshire. Leah offers a perspective of the mountain as an anatomical necessity of freeskiing that shifts beyond the physical form of a mountain.

I've come to realize that the mountain is not necessarily what the terrain is or what the lifts are like. The mountain is about the experience that you share with the people that are there. It could be a little tiny hill with one chairlift, or it could be Whistler, or France, or South America. The freeskiing terrain is having really good interaction with people, it

doesn't necessarily derive from the physical terrain you are skiing on. You don't have rules, hence the free, and you are skiing so you are doing whatever you want and it feels fun and it is not necessarily having a distinction of it needing a cliff, or a 40 degree slant and sure those things enhance the experience if you are with people who motivate you to do it.

You could be on a 200 foot slope covered by ice and be with people who are stoked and it will be fun, or you could be at Whistler with 20 centimeters of fresh powder and if you are with people who are not stoked you will not be stoked.

Yeah if you think clicking in and clicking out of your bindings frames the mountain experience then something is not clicking for you! –Leah Evans

* * * * *

At the age of 15 I flew from Toronto to Vancouver, landing in the darkness of night. I could not see the mountains during the flight or upon my arrival. When I woke in the morning I opened the drapes and there in front of me were the Coast Mountains of British Columbia. I remember standing, staring, paralyzed by their majestic presence.

The next day with my face glued to the window facing the mountains, I rode on a bus towards Whistler Mountain. The drive on the Sea to Sky highway had such an impact on me that I pulled out a scrap piece of paper and began to write. I was not a writer; it was not something I did. And yet I was overcome with the rush of writing, spurred on by my wonder of what was unfolding on that drive. There I was (and still am) compelled to write descriptive accounts of the experience, jotting down words describing the thick vegetation of the coastal rain forest, the waterfalls cascading down the slopes to my right, and the expansive bays and openings of the ocean to my left. I wrote all the way to the base of Whistler Mountain where the words stopped.

The singular magic of a place is evident from what happens there, from what befalls oneself or others when in its vicinity. To tell of such events is implicitly to tell of the particular power of that site, and indeed to participate in its expressive potency. (Abram, 1996, p. 182)

As Whistler came into view, I slammed against a threshold where words no longer contain the power to describe the experience; the moment took over. I have been pursuing the ability to surpass the threshold that keeps words away from experience, to evoke the experience with words, for a long while. I remember the first time I ever skied in deep powder. I was skiing at Jay Peak in Vermont with Dave. A recent storm had dropped about thirty or forty centimeters of snow, Dave and I had never skied in snow so deep. I remember the experience of turning my skis down the fall line of the mountain and as the snow started to roll up my legs and chest words started to tumble down from somewhere. With every turn the snow seemed to get deeper, and the words more present. By the time I had reached the bottom of the slope I was so excited about the run and strangely excited about writing about the experience. However, later that day when I turned to page and pen the words were nowhere to be found. I had left them on the hill, in the snow. Over the years of many ski turns the continuation and development of my wonder in freeskiing extended me into a world of words. In reflecting upon these initial experiences with mountains and deep snow I realized that my connection with freeskiing and the mountain became a search, or perhaps a quest, a quest for words to describe and share my freeskiing experience. I feel this quest has no end.

This quest for words to describe my self-movement experiences continued throughout high school and gained significant momentum upon graduating from high school. My childhood friend Dave Busch (the same Dave as the basement initiation to skis) and I embarked on a form of post secondary education: a road trip throughout North America. We purchased a 1986 dark

blue Chevy Beauville van, and named her the Vanimal. We gutted the Vanimal and furnished her with insulation, carpets, beds, and enough storage for our ski and climbing gear. And set off for what ... we did not really know.

The trip was replete with learning about our connection to our surroundings and ourselves through experiences such as, skiing in fresh powder that fell by the meter, altitude sickness while sleeping at over 12,000 feet in Colorado, understanding the Vanimal and her own mechanical struggle with altitude, and preparing food on a small camping stove. Throughout those experiences I wrote, and wrote, and wrote filling multiple journals during the trip with Dave. I enjoy returning to those specific journals, many of the same words that are in those journals have made their way into this text.

And now with four years of undergraduate schooling, a year and a half of masters, and five and a half years into my doctorate degree, I find myself at the precipice of the vast cavern of wonder of which I felt distanced from in formal education for many years. I find myself leaning with longing, and simultaneously fleeing with fear. I gaze into the cavern with excitement and nervousness, and with the desire to surrender, to let go, to fall into the depths of the cavern. *The Lure of the Transcendent* is a book of essays written by Huebner (1999). In the essay “The Capacity for Wonder and Education” of that book Huebner acknowledges a decline of wonder in formal education with his own personal experience and a call for the capacity to regain this lost wonder:

First, as an elementary teacher and educator I have had opportunity to witness the gradual change in children from the spontaneous, curious, poking, exploring, questioning, wondering child—a child full of awe in pre-school, kindergarten, even first grade to the stodgy, accepting, pliant, unresponsive student in the fifth grade, in the freshman year in college, and, indeed, in graduate school classes.

Only as a result of unusual teaching do we break through this mask formed by the repressive requirements of education to again see glimpses of the spark, the curiosity, and the wonder and awe of the young child. Frequently only at the doctoral level where the student can explore on his own, seeking out newness and strangeness, going down dark paths alone and without fear, urging his major professor to follow along—is the pre-school spirit of joy, of curiosity, and wonder regained. (p. 1)

I have gone down dark paths, but not alone, or without fear, as Huebner writes. At times the paths have felt lonely; however I knew people were near. At times I have been the most afraid, most confused, and most challenged that I have ever been, yet this fear was tethered to trust. Now as I create space for my wonder in formal education to surface once again, a familiar story is returning. This story is the education story of my curious exploration, creative adventures, and deep wonder. The walls of my current classroom are again painted with coniferous trees, the ceiling is made up of clouds, and these floors are tiled with earth, rock, and snow. Excitement, the stars, the moon, and the sun brighten this room. This room is shared with other creatures and is alive and breathing. This room is created, constructed, and governed by a more-than-human intention and craft. The clocks are kyrological where the quality of time speaks more loudly than chronological time, determined by the ebbs and flows of the rhythm of the moment.

* * * * *

Ascending The Mountain

I rise from bed abruptly, startled awake by the sense that someone is watching me. I must have dozed off amidst my reading and reflecting. When I open my eyes, no human is in my room, but as I peer through sleepy eyes and the frosted window of my room, I notice that the snow has changed. The snowflakes that now fall are huge. They look as though they are the size of dinner plates. It was their presence that summoned me from my sleep. The size and amount of flakes reflecting off of a nearby light creates an orange glow, and the falling snow feels as though a thick waterfall is falling down and around me. I feel pulled into the falls, surrounded and transported. There is no way I could fall back asleep. My alarm sounds, but I am still awake, mesmerized by what is happening outside my window.

Breathe...

After a bit of breakfast, and some morning writing, I grab my ski gear and exit my house. As my foot drops into the powdery snow collected on my walkway, I am transported to the mountain. Images of standing on the ridge and dropping into a line race into my mind. It is mid-winter, and visible breath is now a loyal companion. I exhale deeply after having shoveled a small trench in the freshly fallen snow to my car, pausing to watch my breath rising up into the crisp winters sky. After I pick up my friends and their gear, I direct the car down the forest access road towards the mountains. It is still dark outside. The sun will rise in an hour or so.

The drive is beautiful. Music, our intention, and our excitement quietly fill the car. One by one the stars on the horizon fade, disappearing into the brightening turquoise sky. The stars above remain pulsing with light in the lingering dark night sky. We pull over on the side of the road and park. This is where we will start our ascent of the mountain.



The music from the car is slightly turned up to reciprocate our excited energy, which rings through the air as we organize our packs and put our skins on our skis. Someone mentions how interesting it is that actual animal skins were first used on skis to climb mountains, and how now we have kept the name skin even though all the skins are artificially made. The music is turned off; we “CLICK-CLICK” into our bindings and start sliding across the snow to the magical sound of the silence that rings in the mountains.

Breathe...

At the foot of the mountain, out of the car, in the crisp winter air, and freshness of the moment, I instantly feel the pulse of a more-than-human community where “the kinesthetic and proprioceptive consciousness of moving while simultaneously being moved by forces and energies beyond oneself” (Smith, 2006, p. 4) are felt. Gliding forward, going with the grain of the fibers of my skins I also glide deeper into the mimetic impulse with each stride I take. I then notice the amazing amount of grip the skins offer when I pull back on my ski and the fibers split and cling to the snow, providing grip to move forward. Cory skis ahead and flips his avalanche transceiver to search and makes sure that each of our transceivers are functioning well, sending signals that we can detect should someone get buried in an avalanche.

We slide in unison along the surface of the snow gazing at the surrounding mountains asking them where we can ski, and then listen to the response they give. The edges of chronological time and linear space soften and a different experience emerges. We are dropped into a flowing presence distanced from the right angles and gridlock of linear space and the tick-tock of the chronological clock. This flowing presence is an experience orchestrated by the flow and interconnection of nature’s curves and swirls and jaggedness, and the *kyros* or quality of time. In this experience we create our own *kyros* our own quality, knowing that it is not our own, that it is governed, hinted at, and enforced by forces beyond our understanding, but not beyond our awareness.

It is through engagement in these natural playgrounds that I learn to be aware of and follow a calendar that is not solely anthro-egological, created by and entirely focused on human concerns. This calendar is more ecological, with human and more-than-human intentions in mind. Gliding past Cory, I feel like I’m in my head. Sliding along this valley floor is familiar

enough that I'm not in my head trying to figure out something about the movement. I just know that I can sink into this experience at a deeper level. A great way to sink into that depth is being present with my body.

As my skins continue to glide over and grip into the snow at a flowing rhythmic pace, I consciously direct my focus to my body. I wiggle my toes in my tightly fitted ski boots; I feel the tightness of my hamstrings as I extend into my gliding stride; I feel the slight chill in my finger tips as I have not yet physically warmed up to this ski day.

I attend to my hearing, listening to the sound of my skis over snow, the ruffling of my jacket, and of the silence of this environment that surrounds me. My eyes seem clearer as my vision extends wider and farther ahead than normally. It seems as though my peripheral vision extends so far to either side of me that I can actually see a little behind me. Attending to my body and sinking deeper into my stride I become aware of “the intercommunication or comingling of the senses” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 229). This synaesthetic awareness is the weaving of the senses, “the concerted activity of *all* [italics in original] the body’s senses as they function and flourish together” (Abram, 1996, p. 59). I find that especially while on the mountain the weaving of my senses, my synaesthetic awareness, expands my consciousness. I find I expand into my body, and become more connected with my corporeal consciousness, “A direct sensitivity to movement through internally mediated systems of corporeal awareness” (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p. 72). My corporeal consciousness then expands into my kinesthetic consciousness. “Kinesthetic consciousness defines an emergent, progressively expanding consciousness” (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p. 138). With my senses weaving into an expanding consciousness the experience of sliding across this valley changes. The experience of self-movement is changing.

I inhale deeply through my nose. The smell of the crisp winter air is refreshing, satisfying. I follow the freshness of the air as it floats into my lungs and is then picked up by my blood and transported to every cell throughout my body. Exhaling deeply the air leaving me tastes different than this morning; perhaps it's the freshness extending out of me. I feel like I am passing-beyond-myself extending into the landscape (Van Den Berg, 1952). This extension has been growing since I first saw my white breath, the first flake of snow that fell this winter, the smell of the melting wax on my skis. I'm confident, however, that the extension of passing beyond myself is not an experience with starts and stops, but more like the ocean tide with extensions and contractions, ebbs and flows, in connection with the landscape of movement. Following my exhale, and my extension, my awareness is brought to the line of trees we are approaching. The trees stand like silent soldiers guarding the space between the valley floor and the door of the mountain.

Breathe...

The wind of last night's storm has calmed. The clouds have dispersed, and the flakes of snow are no longer falling. There is about 45 centimeters of fresh storm snow on the ground. The accumulated energy in the possibilities of the snow is reciprocated by the energy of the group. The rising sun shares its first rays with the day as we ski across the flat open terrain of the river basin towards the trees of the valley. We are the first group out this morning, so we have to break

trail. We take turns in the lead, and, as I slide to the front of our group to break trail for a while, I feel the snow gently rolling up and cascading off my legs.

We reach the forest with sunrays gently shooting through the nearby trees. The arrows of sunlight grow and gradually illuminate the forest. Shadows of the trees slowly stretch full-length across the snow's surface. The awareness of moving with, and being moved by, forces and energies beyond myself is an animate awareness. I feel alive to the possibilities in this experience. "We respond through movement to the requirements of our surroundings and are also perceptually sensitive to the nature of this environment" (Whitehead, 1990, p. 4). To be able to respond to the requirements of my surroundings I must be aware of those requirements, and to have awareness of something is to be conscious of that 'something'. The contrast between the dark skinny shadows and the widening field of shimmering snow crystals is augmented by a colour shift as the forest takes on a golden hue reflecting the morning sunlight.

The new snow shifts and adjusts into its resting place in the trees. In the shift some of the tiny flakes slide off of branches and glisten their way down to the snowpack creating sparkling pillars of snow crystals shimmering in the sunlight. The reflecting light and the moving particles create both an ascending and descending movement in the pillars. We slide through the arrows of sunlight and the shimmering crystal pillars without speaking, as if to celebrate and pay respect to what is unfolding right now, to appreciate the magic of the moment.

This is an amazing experience with the sun glistening on the freshly fallen snow. Life somehow feels softer and peacefully silent. The snow insulates the earth and any worries I might have, as I feel wrapped in a blanket of possibility. I smile at my friends, at the snow, and at the

mountain and feel them smiling back at me. Someone once told me that all our friends live in our smiles. If this is true all my friends are fully alive in this moment because I'm smiling inside and out.

The slope begins to steepen and the space between the trees tightens. I gently collide with branches of the surrounding blue spruce coniferous trees. I also collide with the awareness that ascending a mountain is not always filled with smiles and sunshine. The snow that was resting on the branches is knocked off and slowly tumbles down my jacket, whisked away to a new resting place. Words, thoughts, and images quickly take shape in my presence, and then quickly dissolve. Much of my wordy awareness attends to the conversation I am having with the mountain. What is she saying today? Her words are presented with the amount of snow on the ground and in the trees. The light and the shadows indicate temperature on the snowpack. The mountain shares words from the surrounding air. Words of temperature, and wind, and clouds or the lack thereof all offer information as to where we can ski today, and hint if there are any avalanches lurking in the area. My vision is extended beyond the physical vision of my eyes; my mind's eye is opened.

In this experience my friends and I must continue to converse with the mountain, to listen to where impossibilities and possibilities exist. We must travel with respect and humility, we must recognize that the action of our intention is met with immediate consequences that are determined and implemented by the moment. In the words, thoughts, and images of this opening, the tensions I have with freeskiing charge in as the memory of a day of skiing at Sunshine Village Resort north of Canmore Alberta.

Tensions with Freeskiing

The line of cars crawls along the paved valley floor, at times completely stopped, a parking lot of running cars waiting to park. This is the most frustrating part, sitting in a running car burning gas, waiting to engage with an activity of such privilege. I am contributing to it. I breathe and am connected even more to the toxicity as I taste petroleum in my breath.

Exhaust rises out of hundreds of cars filled with expensive gear and wallets thick enough to afford the travel. The \$80 lift ticket, and perhaps a \$30 lunch makes me wonder about this activity of resort skiing, this element of freeskiing. The traffic, and pollution of resort skiing is particular to the weekends because of the common rhythms of humans in North America. Many people have weekends away from work, and some flock to the hill at the same time. I recognize that I am a part of this privilege and pollution, and that there is something very attractive about this activity; otherwise, people would not travel great distances to wait: wait to park, wait in lift lines, wait in bathroom lines, wait in cafeteria lines. And pay for all this waiting. Why is everyone here?

Keith and I find a parking spot, gear up, and start walking to the lift. I hear comments about how far someone had to park from the lift, and how long the walk is. I laugh at the irony of complaining about a five-minute walk to then engage in a physically and mentally demanding activity for hours. I comment to Keith that I like the walk; it is a forced little warm-up for the day of skiing. Maybe more hills should create a space from the parking lot to the hill so people have to walk and warm up. Maybe there would be fewer injuries, or maybe just more complaining.

To ski down a slope, we must obviously ascend its height by some means. Freeskiing resort access is gained by some sort of lift that at times is fixed to the mountain such as chairlifts, T-bars, poma lifts, and rope tows. There are also means that are not fixed to the mountain such as snowmobiles and snowcats, helicopters and small engine planes. And then there's the human engine, walking to the top of the mountain.

I harbour considerable tension with regards to the many means of ascending a mountain. All the methods save for walking, use fossil fuels to run their engines contributing to the depletion of non renewable resources of the planet, and produce exhaust that affects the atmosphere immediately surrounding their use, toxifying the immediate environment as well as that of the entire planet. The lifts that are fixed to the mountain have additional harm attached with them because most often their construction requires that trees be removed, scarring the face of the mountain. These lifts cycle all day long when the ski resort is open regardless of whether people are on them or not. Currently, there are ski resorts in North America that have procedures to make operations more eco-friendly; however, the extent of those 'procedures' is not clear.

The gondola doors close, and we start our ascent up the mountain. I watch as the line of people waiting for their turn fades in the distance. For the most part, Keith and I sit in silence. I gaze at the walls of trees that surround us, then look into the vast treeless corridor through which we are traveling. I think about the clear-cutting that took place for this Gondola, then gaze at all the ski runs and think about all the trees cut down for them to be made. As I wonder what happened to those trees, my breathing is shallow and quick, and I feel claustrophobic, breath stained with guilt.

After another lift line and lift ride, we are at the top. We decide to take a few warm-up runs before we duck the ropes and head into the slackcountry (It's backcountry in that it is beyond the boundaries of the ski area, but its slack country in that some mechanical lift is used to ascend the majority of the vertical rise). We ski a groomer, and another awareness of tension rises as I gaze down the manicured run. This space has already been cleared of trees, and then most resorts have to make snow, which includes chemicals and taking water from surrounding watersheds. Some resorts even use a technique called "cloud seeding" in which dust-like particles are shot into the sky providing water droplets something to bond with to form snow crystals. With snow collected both naturally and artificially on a slope stripped of trees, the resort then grooms the snow with another fossil fuel dependant machine so we (myself included) can enjoy a manicured plane to ski on. I wonder, is there anything natural about this resort skiing experience?

While wrestling with the tensions of this experience, I pull back my gaze expanding beyond the tensions I have in the moment and recognize the cloudless sky. I feel the warmth of the sun, and start my descent. As soon as I feel the wind, and the speed as my skis accelerate, the rush of movement surges in, and I am reminded of what seduces me to this. This feeling is amazing, and this project has been a process of expanding what that feeling is, why it is important to me, what it means to me, and how I can evoke it with writing. An expansion that has highlighted the tensions I have within this context of movement is more than I was previously aware of.

Keith and I meet at the bottom and decide that we don't want to wait in another line. We are warmed up and ready to slide into some different terrain, onto some different snow, into a different experience. As we duck the rope that has been erected by the ski patrol to create a line

and a barrier between ‘in bounds’ and ‘out of bounds,’ I feel a shift take place. This line really does mean something. Keith and I smile as we pick up speed sliding along the low angle terrain, floating on a few centimeters of untouched natural snow. It shocks me how the difference of skiing on snow without the added chemical can be felt; I find it similar to drinking glacier water from a stream rather than chlorinated water from a tap.

We slide onto a ridge and chat about where we want to go, where the mountain is inviting us to go and where it is suggesting we don’t. Avalanche debris, the terrain angle and direction, the sun, the wind, all contribute to this conversation and decision making process. These are the signs and trail markers of the backcountry. We choose a ridge off in the distance and a potential path to get there...the shift continues.

We slide across another low angled field of untouched snow that rolls over our ski boots splashing silently against our legs. I turn to Keith and ask, “Can you feel that?”

He looks at me with a smile and says, “Oh yeah!”

The shift is quite strong now. I look down at my boots and skis that bob in and out of the snow, and the tension I have with them presents itself again. This backcountry experience is not free of tension for me, not free of violence. I think about the resources needed to gather and manipulate the plastic and wood and metal that make the skis, boots, binding, poles, avalanche transceivers, and technical clothing. I think about the resources to have them manufactured in far off countries some of which don’t even have snow. I think about the resources needed to ship them and advertise them, and here I am using them. With the help of people like Mark who are pushing for change in the ski industry, some companies are changing the way they operate,

looking for more local shipping methods, using recycled materials as much as possible, and using new materials that are more sustainable, such as bamboo and less corrosive glues.

Breathe...

As we hike, I feel the presence of calmness within effort. It is a familiar presence and a tension that I embrace joyfully because it is my energy that is being used in this tension. The backcountry is a playfield of possibility that has provided for me many significant experiences in movement. Of main significance is that I have found freedom in self-movement. For me the freedom I have found is the freedom to be creative. While *freeskiing*, particularly in the backcountry, I feel free to see invisible possibilities presented in the visible world and free to create experiences within that visible and invisible balance. The backcountry on this day offers a glaring difference to the on-hill ski experience heightening some of the possible tensions with the experience of freeskiing.

We return to the rope indicating the ski hill boundary, give high fives, talk a bit more about the experience, then duck the rope and re-enter the hill.

Another shift.

Instantly, I am aware of people around me, the groomed runs, the man-made signs, the chairlift. This is certainly a different energy. We get into the lift-line, and I am aware of the noise, the groan of the bull wheel as it works restlessly, spinning and sending chairs airborne so people can ascend the mountain with passive effort.

I hear two young girls talking about how drunk they are going to get later tonight. I feel the toxicity of this place. As we take flight on the chairlift, Keith and I look at each other; I say to him that I feel as though we are unaware of what lies just beyond the ropes of our 'in bounds,' our oscillating awareness, the boundary between possibility and impossibility.

I feel wonder is very much present within the ropes of my 'in bounds' and yet I feel invited to duck the rope and follow my wonder to experience something new, grow into new presences, new awareness, to expand the pendulum swing of my balance. I know that the ski hill is a birthing place for new self-movement capacities. It has been for me for many years. I have experienced, and continue to experience, joyful moments on the slopes of ski resorts. I often enjoy watching the little ones in ski lessons sliding down the slopes in big snowsuits, arms and legs extended, looking like little starfish schussing along the ocean floor. I enjoy hearing the excitement in the voices of people sharing their accounts with fear, and danger, the near misses, and the tales of success, executing a new maneuver for the first time. However, I am just distanced from that excitement right now.

We ski down the cat track to the parking lot. Walking among the cars, I feel the presence of fossil fuel and cringe again. I enter a parking space recently occupied by a vehicle of skiers or snowboarders. The vehicle is gone but the space is not vacant; on the ground lie multiple empty beer cans, and some profane writing on a nearby car. I cringe at the sight. This lack of respect would be a recipe for disaster in the backcountry. I crunch the cans in my hand to bring them with me. This is my home, and I want to respect it and keep it clean. Leaving no trace is impossible; so I ask myself what trace do I want to leave?

The Presence of Words

This memory of the day at Sunshine enters and leaves my awareness within a few strides up the mountain at Tryst Lake. The tensions of freeskiing, are omnipresent in the experience as I grip my poles, feel my boots around my feet, and watch the tips of my skis surface from under the snow with each stride. I include the Sunshine narrative as it is important for me to acknowledge the tensions I have with freeskiing. Connecting to the tensions of freeskiing helps me continue to appreciate the privilege it is to engage with friends, the mountain, and the possibilities in movement with such expansive opportunity. This ski gear contains the power to shift me in the balance of tension and joy I have with freeskiing. My connection with the gear seems to penetrate everyday experiences. The gear calms my fluctuating self and connects me to an energy that is both within and beyond physical and mental awareness. I feel a spiritual connection with something ‘more’ something ‘bigger,’ forces beyond human comprehension. It is a connection that animates my wonder and appreciation of life. With regards to experiencing the mountains, Hans Gmoser, a founder of modern mountaineering in Canada and one of Canada’s most influential outdoor guides writes;

We wanted to inhale and breathe life again. We were rebelling against an existence which human kind has forced upon itself. We were rebelling against an existence full of distorted values, against an existence where a man is judged by the size of his living room, by the amount of chromium on his car. But here we were ourselves again; simply and pure. Friends in the mountains. Removed from the noise of our cities, removed from the meaningless and unimportant complications of our everyday life, we were close to the land we live on and what’s more, we were close to each other...This mountain to us is not a sports arena. To us it is a symbol of truth and a symbol of life as it should be. This mountain teaches us that we should endure hardships and that we should encounter the difficulties and not drift along the easy way, which always leads down. (Scott, 2009, p. 129)

Mental movements continue throughout the ascension of this mountain. At times I entertain the reflections, playing with the presence of words and images, but within a few strides I am deeply absorbed in the movement of skis and snow sliding up the mountain. Absorbed in movement that takes me beyond words. There is space and place for wordy thoughts in this movement, and the steady pace up the side of the mountain lulls me back and forth between wordy reflections and wordless presence.

Throughout the experience of writing this text I have been challenged to challenge the language of self-movement. Perhaps the biggest challenge has been with words, attempting to find and write words that acknowledge, evoke, and celebrate the shifting distinctive qualitative dynamics created in self-movement. I now realize that words inherently contain an ancient connection with an encompassing discourse of language, and that language exists as a more-than-human phenomenon. Human language is but a part of that “vast and encompassing discourse” (Abram, 1996, p.179). In this light, language includes and moves beyond human alphabets, words, texts, verbal thoughts and conversations to include the subtleties of visible and invisible gestural communication of a human and a more-than-human-world (Smith, 2006). Language remains connected, at varying distances, to a larger field of expressive powers. There is no element of life that is definitively void of expressive resonance and power. And as a self-mover I can learn how to attend sensually to the world, and how to tell my story (Leggo, 2008). The experience of freeskiing offers an opportunity to understand the importance of an expanded conception of language, an opportunity to communicate, to read the interaction of human and more-than-human between weather, snowpack, animals, and oneself, in order to write with the mountain, with the ski turn.

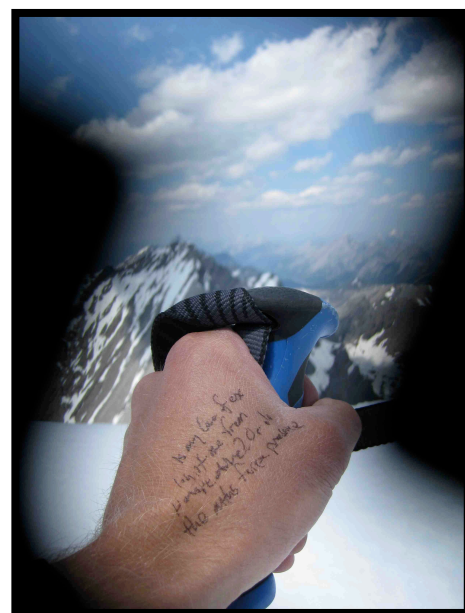
In experience I know that words are present, but where are they? I sense that they exist in me, with me, in the topography of now. What do the words do? Where do they come from? They appear, tumble, or surface from somewhere. They present themselves, and are presented in the moment, variably connected in, with, and from the lingering energy of some living self-movement experience. Entering the mountains, to experience the realm of freeskiing, opens the writing space for the writer in me to enter. It is the movement in freeskiing that has provided most of the words for this inquiry. I came to this realization during a summer hike of Mount Galatea in Kananaskas south of Canmore. I wrote in my journal:

Today while hiking Galatea I became very aware that the words for this inquiry exist in the mountains. This proximity to the heart and pulse of the project, while distanced from freeskiing (I don't have skis on), invites words into my presence.

While I walk along the approach trail, chatting with my friends, an awareness of my physical body and thoughts is vaguely present. As the terrain changes, so too does our conversation. The slope steepens, the rocks, variably situated and sized, have unpredictable stability. Our conversation pauses as focus is drawn to the unstable rocks, and I am aware of the way my feet feel in my boots as I negotiate the terrain, the state of my muscles, the terrain itself. As I warm-up and become familiarized with this terrain, my awareness calms, my steps are smoother, my muscles are stronger, and the rhythm of our conversation resumes.

I love this I find great joy in being in nature, in feeling my breath, in feeling my heart beat in my chest like a drum communicating in a reciprocal rhythm with my friends, a moving drum circle of hearts beating uniquely within the rhythm of the moment. The movement of this presence is pregnant with possibilities, and, as I hike, words tumble into my presence, and I am compelled to write...

...I stop and pull out my pen and start to write on my hand, ashamed that I did not bring my journal. Cory laughs and offers a notepad that he brings to record snowpack and weather alterations to be aware of potential avalanche activity. I write, and then hike, and then words, sentences, and paragraphs surface from within the movement up the mountain, and I stop to write... then continue to hike. The



rhythm continues, and my friends pull away as my pauses slow my pace.

I find myself smiling as I am animated by the experience, connected to movement, presented with words and feeling a power bigger than myself, bigger than this project; yet somehow it is myself. It *is* this project. I look at the ink on my hands and then the mountains in the distance, and notice the direct link between the two. I pull out my camera as I stop along the ridge and take two photos.



The first has my hand and the words in focus, and the second with the mountains in the distance in focus. I feel in this moment that both my hands and the mountains are simultaneously blurred and in focus, they are connected and informing each other.

* * * * *

While hiking, the oscillation between contraction and relaxation of body, of mind, of emotions creates a meditative space for words to flow. Words exist in this oscillation. They are released as I listen, see, interact with the rocks, the snow, the altitude, the exposure, the trees, the beating hearts, flowing breaths, and the aching muscles of my friends and myself. This connection of language to the land is another example of the mimetic impulse (Smith, 2007) and it seems, according to Abram (1996), that at such times of terrestrial connection it is perhaps not the person speaking, but rather the land speaking through the person. “I understand the words from the plan of this world, from the nature of the landscape from which these words are born” (Van Den Berg, 1952, p. 180). It is powerful to allow the terrain of the phenomenon of interest to speak to us directly, personally, by walking amongst its topography with bare feet “to feel the

stones, the hardness, the mud, the unevenness directly” (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p. 340). Perhaps in this mountain travel, it is the movement of freeskiing that exists in relation to the rocks, snow, thin air of the mountains, and myself that speaks through me.

Because we are composed in languages, because we know ourselves in languages, because we constantly write ourselves, and rewrite ourselves, and write our relations to others, we need frequent opportunities to explore and experiment with the rhetorical possibilities of texts, with the art and science of language use. Poetic inquiry opens up capacious possibilities for inquiring. So, I write poetry—autobiographical, philosophical, narrative, interrogative, lyric, ruminative, pedagogic, performative poetry—as a way to connect with others, seeking always a living ecology in the vast mystery of the earth. (Leggo, 2009, p. 152)

And now, while on my way up to Tryst Ridge, this moving meditation continues to produce words as I shift between sinking into the landscape and sinking into my inner self, encouraged by the rhythms of the experience. Some of the words may end up in the text, while some might simply link to some other words. But one thing is certain for me here: I have been writing this whole time. Just as Leah says that skiing does not start and stop by click-clicking in and out of ski bindings, writing for me does not start and stop by click-clicking my pen.

In one of my wordy reflections, the question surfaces, what is movement? In the reading I performed the common conception of movement was a physical objective concept with movement as being the displacement of an object in space. Within *The Primacy of Movement*, Sheets-Johnstone (1999) suggests that we must forego the common notion and the common dictionary definition that movement is merely a change of position, both of which are *factual* views of movement, she continues to write:

As beheld in the natural attitude, movement is the factual displacement of an object from point A to point B, thus a change of position. Our first task is to confront this view of movement and show how it not only conceals the essential character of movement but impedes a clear conception of movement from the start by centering attention not on *movement* but on an *object in motion*...in short, to elucidate our original kinetic liveliness, we need to clear a conceptual space in which it can appear. (p. 233)

So what then is movement?

In the texts I have read, human movement research was often performed within an objective conceptualization where movement becomes regarded as a solved phenomenon, taken for granted, thus existing beyond question. In this conceptualization of movement “the fundamental allure of movement is taken simply as a given” (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p.257). An intention of this inquiry is to “re-discover, beneath the objective idea of movement, a *pre-objective* [italics in original] experience from which it borrows its significance” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 53) while conceptualizing the physical experience of movement as the surface of an inexhaustible depth (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Within this conceptualization, movement returns to being an unsolved phenomenon, a mystery in need of attention, of being at-tension with, and in need to be described in order to evoke the wonder of movement (Marcel, 1950). What is needed is a means to shift through the physical surface of movement and dive into its depth.

I’ve started to tease apart my understanding of movement with Sheets-Johnstone’s (1999) conceptualization that movement is an environment of possibility that we are born into in which our self-movement experiences take place. In reflectively teasing apart movement, the relationship between self-movement and movement has begun to show the quality of its connections and divergence. Teasing apart movement and sinking into the space created by the reflection has revealed an unknown depth of movement. A mysteriousness of movement has been

presented, and it is with deep seeking, wondrous eyes that I move towards that mystery. I wonder: if self-movement takes place *in* movement, how then does the understanding of movement affect the experience of self-movement? How might the experience of self-movement be affected within the objective concept of movement? And how might the experience of self-movement be affected within a more expansive concept of movement? These thoughts of self-movement, movement, and experience come with me up this mountain. They have been my traveling companions for many years now, on and beyond the mountain.

Gaining about a thousand vertical feet, we decide to dig a snow-pit to read the snowpack and check the avalanche conditions. After shoveling straight down into the snowpack in front of us until we hit the ground or snow that is too hard to dig through, we dig out a flat ‘floor’ for us to stand on. In front of us is now a vertical wall of snow over 250 centimeters high by about a meter and a half wide.

In the vertical wall of the snow pit, we can literally read the entire season’s weather story. We talk together, loud enough for the whole group to hear so everyone has an idea of what is happening and can voice concerns, suggestions, and ideas. “The online avalanche bulletin that we checked before coming here said the area we are in received about 35 centimeters of snow in the last few days on top of a fairly weak layer,” someone says. “There were warnings of a slab forming about 30 centimeters into the snowpack” someone replies. A slab is a thickness of snow more dense than its surrounding snow and is one of the three essential elements for an avalanche to occur. The other two are: a weak layer (snow that has not bonded well with its surrounding snow crystals), which creates a sliding surface for the avalanche to slide upon; and a trigger, which is the element that cuts the bond of the snowpack. Triggers can be many things: a cornice

failure, the extra weight of a snowstorm or rain, an animal traversing the snowpack, and of course, the weight of a skier.

We see a familiar weak layer down near the bottom of the snow pack; it's the layer that formed Thanksgiving weekend and is suitably named the "Turkey" layer. "It's still very much in play in this area" someone says. "However, it's too far down the snowpack for it to release the slab that is forming in the upper third of the snowpack. It is not too much of a concern at the moment."

We see the storm snow, and our measurements show that more like 40-50 centimeters of fresh snow have fallen in this area, which means the slab forming below is more like 60-70 centimeters down. That's a lot of snow. Perhaps there is more here because of wind transport or simply because the storm clouds dropped more snow here. The bulletins cover a fairly large area, which is why doing our own observations is important. The storm snow is light and fluffy, and its presence and depth cranks our excitement through the roof, like bellows stoking an already raging fire.

We shovel snow back into the hole we've dug so that we, or anyone else, don't accidentally ski into it; then we survey our route with our new knowledge. The information from the snow pit applies to other slopes with similar degrees of angle, as well as aspect with regards to which direction the slopes are facing. We dig a pit similar to the angle we are about to cross, and one similar to a slope we would like to ski. We decide to traverse the open section directly in front of us, one by one, to decrease the weight on the snowpack and the chances of us triggering a slide.

The moving meditation of walking up this mountain occurs until we stop to chat, or to get water, or to adjust gear, and continues until we gain the ridgeline.



Today the trip has taken just over two and a half hours, and the ridge is now in sight. A few hundred meters from the ridge, the slope steepens beyond the usefulness of our skins and skis. We click out of our skis and shoulder them. We have to boot back the rest of the way to the ridge. With approximately 50 centimeters of storm snow, the going is slow, and, at times, we have to jam our skis in the slope and pull ourselves through the thick snow. The heat of the moment is cranked.

breathe

Step

Step

breathe

Step

Step

breathe

Step

breathe

Step

Flashes of training in the fall are present. I recall the sensation as rusty blood circulated through my body as it filled with lactic acid, and my breath desperately tried to cling to oxygen as I ran in the high alpine training for this moment. My smile contains the fitness from those experiences, and, although the sensation of rusty blood and airless breath again returns, I know it would be far worse had I not done the training. The pace is slow, our group is strong, and the procession of steps continues as the excitement of the snow overrides the pain and weight of fatigue.

The ridge is not only the peak vertical height we will reach today, but also it is a liminal point, a shift. The accumulating energy reaches a threshold.

Threshold:

Exposed on the Ridge



A lot of times when you are standing on top of some line, and you feel like 'no', but you do it anyway, and it works out. So what is that? What is right, and what is wrong? What is yes, and what is no? It's a tough one to figure out. —Mark Abma

The Razor's Edge

The slope in front of me flattens. My muscles relax as they are released from the angle of the steep slope we have just ascended. With the slope flattening, an expansion takes place upon the ridge. I inhale deeply, trying to catch my breath, and then pause. Exhaling, my vision expands into the view. Without the slope directly in front of me, I can see further. My sight leaps off of the ridge, taking in the vista. The neighboring mountains share similar characteristics as the one I'm standing on. At the base of these mountains thick coniferous forests cover the earth. Today the deep greens of the trees that make up these forests is muted by the fresh snow that has fallen. My eyes follow the tips of the trees that all point up the mountain. Jumping from one tree to the next my vision eventually climbs high enough where oxygen is scarce and the trees stop their ascent. This line between the trees and the high-alpine is an interesting threshold to pass, I often feel as though I am shedding some layer of protection and become more vulnerable as I pass beyond the enclosure of the forest and enter the exposure of the alpine.

The storm snow that has fallen is so plentiful that it seems like the bowls of the high-alpine are swollen and ready to burst. Natural avalanches triggered only by the weight of the storm snow are a likely occurrence on days like today. In the high-alpine my vision expands, my focus widens in attempts to take in more of the scene. The jagged cliffs that line the tops of the bowls and connect mountain-to-mountain forming the immense mountain range that is the Rocky Mountains come into view. My vision dances along this jagged ridgeline taking me north, then south, then west. Beyond the ridgeline that is in front of me lie hundreds of other mountain ranges as I move west through British Columbia all the way to the Coast Mountains. With my

vision now scattering in many directions both visible and invisible, a raven comes from behind me and dives down the mountain I am on. My eyes track his flight as he makes massive turns back and forth until he catches a thermal updraft and swoops high into the air before vanishing behind a nearby mountain peak.

I am left extended. My vision seems to be so wide that it wraps behind me, while I can still see my legs, the nearby mountains, and the mountains off in the distance.

Breathe...

Breath feels different

At times, upon the ridgeline of a mountain, the wind howls so powerfully that I have been blown sideways, or have dropped to my knees for fear of being blown off of the mountain. At times, the strength of the wind affects communication with my friends as words are picked up as soon as they leave our mouths, carried away by the wind so quickly that it is impossible to make out what someone is saying even if he is standing right next to me. At other times, this wind feels somewhat exciting. When I am able to stay warm, I like it. It feels humbling to be at the mercy of such strength in nature. At other times, the wind is so cold that hands freeze, lose dexterity, and become immobile stumps that cannot work the simplest things such as zippers, snaps, or buckles. It's interesting how something so simple as not being able to close a buckle could threaten one's life in the mountain environment. Managing snaps, zippers, and buckles with such focus is yet another experience in the mountains where the familiar becomes strange. But today is not one of those times. On this day, the wind is calm, the air is still, and the calm stillness of the air permeates into my flesh calming me.

Up on the ridge I continue the conversation with the mountain, my friends, and my gear, and the words of Gmoser return:

We could appreciate the friendly sunlight; we could appreciate a little ledge to sit on; we could appreciate the encouraging handshake of a friend and we were ready to trust each other, help each other and give to each other our everything. (Scott, 2009, p. 129)

My friends and I now stand on top of one of the peaks that were looking down on us earlier this morning. In front of us extends a thin knife-edge ridgeline that we are going to traverse to access the zone we want to ski. This ridge is very narrow and to the left, and the mountain falls with a dramatic slope of 60-70 degrees. To the right is an unnerving slope littered with cliffs and trees. We walk this ridge with slow and deliberate steps. My focus narrows to the earth directly in front.

There is something else other than my physical body present on this ridge, the presence of possibility; the depth of movement penetrates the moment...a change is occurring, and I feel a force as I start to walk along the ridge.

Pausing in the middle of the ridge, I notice that thin clouds wisp below me. I visualize Canmore in the distance. I can visualize the sidewalk I walked on yesterday, thousands of feet away. This image presents much more than what my mind's eye sees. Not only does my physical vision expand upon this ridge, my mind expands as well. I again wonder about movement and the possibilities of my self-movement.

Movement: A Depth and Force of Possibility

The physicist would tell us that the physical forces of sidewalk walking and ridge walking, are the same; the bio-mechanist would tell us that the motor ability needed to walk on these different terrain are also the same (or at least very similar). However, there is something quite different about the two experiences. A change has occurred in a force that often remains beyond my awareness; it is the force of possibility. Along this ridgeline with the mountain plummeting steeply on either side, if my friends or I were to fall, the possibility of becoming vitally injured increases dramatically. In presence of this possibility, I become more attuned to the power of the mountains; I sense a strong connection with them. With fear evoked in the presence of risk in this experience, the mental and spiritual elements of movement beyond physical displacement start to speak very loudly. I feel a heightened attunement to the power and love I feel in this place. Is this experience what Brunelle (1996) refers to as *La Délicieuse Incertitude*? Is this the delicious uncertainty of stepping into unknown terrain of movement experience and being presented with a new range of possibility? In this specific ridge-walk experience, the force of possibility shows itself as the possibility of injury. On the sidewalk there also is a force of possibility beyond solely the physical experience. The fear I feel within this ridge-walk experience reminds me that there is more to movement than solely physical displacement.

The object displaced in space is movement. My body in motion *is* movement. My physical body in motion presents a certain amount of the possibilities in movement available to me in a striking way. The striking nature of physical movement enchants me. The physical realm of movement is the surface of an inexhaustible depth (Merleau-Ponty, 1964a). Even entertaining the

idea that physical movement is just the surface of a vast unknown depth of possibility fills me with excitement. As I continued to tease apart concepts of movement the wonderful surface of physical movement began to morph into a threshold, into a porthole that opened into a cavern of wonder. As I continued to read more authors who were attending to movement itself, movement conceptually began to expand. The following are a series of words that I've collected from authors who have strongly contributed to the conceptual development of movement.

Movement is the foundational principle of nature.
Matter will surely not move itself.
(Aristotle, in Sheets-Johnstone 1999)

Movement, viewed and
experienced as a group of physical activities
that have inherent value and
therefore pursued as being worthwhile in themselves.
(Arnold, 1979)

Human movement,
a visible expression of an invisibly organized unit,
which leads a life of its own, fed by a spate of impressions,
which is conducted there by means of the receiving organs.
... *functional reciprocity*
of inner self and
the world.
(Van Den Berg, 1952)

Human movement
(does not so much emanate from a subject as it)
locates the subject
within a landscape
that appeals to his or her movements
and so situates
their meaning. (Smith, 2007)

Human movement
is an active response
that transforms
and restructures the
relation
between subject and world.
(Benswanger, 1979)

Movement
arises mimetically, not merely in the body,
but also in the
nexus and intertwining of bodily engagement
with the world. (Smith, 2007)

Movement,
the only reasonable and sufficiently uncomplicated label
to conceptually embrace
the interrelated terms
play, recreation, games, sport and physical education.
(Arnold, 1979)

Movement as a source of knowledge.
The very condition of all forms of creaturely perception.
A creature-perceived phenomenon.
(Sheets-Johnstone, 1999)

Rediscovery of movement beneath the objective idea,
a pre-objective experience from which it borrows its significance
and in which movement, still linked to the person
perceiving it is a variation of the subject's hold on his world.
(Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

In the beginning, there is movement.
Our very emergence as cognizing subjects is grounded in our original kinetic spontaneity.
What is already there is movement, movement in and through which the perceptible world and
acting subject come to be constituted,
which is to say in and through which we make sense of both the world and ourselves.
(Sheets-Johnstone, 1999)

Just as snow is a medium to freeski within, movement is a medium for the self-mover to move within. Passing through the veils of movement's surfaces may be like passing through the surface of water, wide-eyed with a diver's mask where suddenly an entirely different world is presented. Movement "is our point of departure for living in the world and making sense of it. We literally discover ourselves in movement" (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p. 136). In this new presenting world, the flesh of movement's depth appears in a kaleidoscopic momentum of physical, mental, and spiritual rushes, surges, stalls, and stillness. The possibilities in movement are both visible and invisible, both effable and ineffable, and we shift through the sheaths of movement's depths within a living colourful field of possibility.

The emotional interplay of fear and longing swirls within me, and the presence of possibility threatens to explode upon this ridge. I teeter upon the thin line as experience itself is seducing me into the unknown. The force of the threshold resists the expansion. I breathe deeply,
and take a step...

and another...

and another...

deeper into movement.

I continue to take step after step upon the ridge, entering deeper into movement. Reaching the end of the knife-edge section, the ridge widens, and steps become easier as the threat of falling and the possibility of dying decreases. Directly in front of me are about three meters of flat calm ridgeline. After those three meters the ridge ends and the earth drops away. This is where we are planning on skiing. I say that we are *planning* on skiing here because we don't know what the slope is like today. There could have been an avalanche, or the threat of an avalanche might be too high that we have to come up with another plan. This is where the field of snow covering this mountain creates the possibility to freeski down.

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,

there is a field. I'll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass,

the world is too full to talk about.

Ideas, language, even the phrase *each other*
doesn't make any sense.

(Rumi, 2004, p. 36, italics in original)

The accumulating energy of the ascension of this mountain swells and meets the edge of the ridge. Looking at the snowpack that covers the mountain I recognize that the snow is the field beyond wrongdoing and rightdoing that Rumi wrote about. When I lay down in that snow I feel that the world is too full to talk about, and the language that I am accustomed to describing my experience falls short. Between the inhale of the accumulation and the exhale of the breakthrough there is a pause. I feel the mountain ridgeline between ascending and descending creates a physical space of the pause between the accumulation and breakthrough. Upon this ridgeline within the threshold, the accumulated energy of the ascension condenses, and is pressed into the

limited space of the ridge. This is the energy separating me from the breakthrough. I feel the pressure in this space. I feel the tension.

The edge where flat ground meets the steep slope and exposed space seduces me. I am both excited and terrified at what I might see when I peer over the edge. I step to the edge of the ridge and lean forward trying to get a glimpse of the slope. The momentum of the energy I've accumulated with my movement up this mountain and across the knife-ridge continues even though I have stopped at the edge of the ridge to peer over. The momentum of the accumulated energy is like a freight train, a juggernaut. The energy continues forward and slams me against the invisible wall I've created at the edge of the ridgeline.

My toes dangle in the empty space beyond the edge of the ridge, like standing on the edge of a skyscraper. The accumulated energy is like a strong wind blowing over the building, pushing against my back, threatening to push me over the edge. I curl my toes to grip the ledge, stretching my body as tall as I can, leaning back against the wind, putting weight on my heels, holding my breath. I am nearly pushed off the edge into the exposed space and the breakthrough. I dig my heels into the snow to fight the push from behind. I'm not ready to surrender to this force. Not yet.

Breathe...

Giving in to my fear, I exhale and sink to the ground for safety. As I grab hold of the ledge, the accumulated energy of this day with the mountain and the continued accumulation of readings, conversations, and reflections about self-movement and movement roll into me. The

combined accumulation of context and text slams me against this invisible wall. I am pinned in this threshold. I feel like I am face down, pressed into the corner where a wall meets a floor, where the threshold meets the breakthrough. In the pressing energy of accumulated readings I feel the presence of words.

Words tumble and rumble towards me, an alphabetic avalanche. My consciousness is unable to control the collision. No fighting. Surrender. The accumulation grows relentlessly, and I am buried under the weight of the snowpack. It's dark and cold. The weight of words crushes my chest. Unable to breath, panic sets in... claustrophobia in open space. The invisible weight of words is industrious, transcending space and time; its presence can be felt anytime and anyplace.

Words. In the experience of challenging and embracing language with this inquiry, words have taken on new meaning; they have become more meaningful. Words are full of holes, but when considered as existing exclusively within an androcentric vacuum, that is relating only to human affairs, or having only one meaning for all people, words seem to be perceived as wholes. At times I have perhaps been oversensitive to a word in conversation or text, and perhaps not sensitive enough at other times. However, I have tried to be sensitive in the sense of the sensations of the intertwining of human, and more-than-human conversation. In this sensitivity I have challenged, embraced, and altered my connection with words trying to connect with the “distinctive nonverbal qualitative dynamic coincident with the manner in which we are moving” (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p. 423). The experience of freeskiing in movement is the womb of words for this phenomenology. In this womb I wonder how the conceptions of words occur? Because in the conception therein lies the concept. What nurtures this birthing process, and how is the birth attended to? What will happen to the words when contractions fade, and they are

presented to the cold bright world? What will happen if contractions fade and there is no birth, where the words rest dead in the womb in the pre-reflective movement experience? Like a snow cloud that silently passes by without dropping a flake? What prevented its sharing? I ask these questions, confident that I will never find a final, satisfying answer, confident that I need to get out from under this weight of words to birth at least a few.

An additional energy must be created here to surpass the energy of the threshold, to break through the wall, to literally slide down the slope. I peel myself off the floor, and push myself away from the invisible wall. I exhale and take a step back from the edge. Interestingly enough, what I saw of the slope on the other side of the edge evoked excitement. Again this state of wonder, this state of fear and longing. Before walking away from the edge, I can't help but sneak a peek back into the slope.

It is interesting the parallels I feel between the wonder of self-movement, and the wonder of writing. There is fear and longing experienced in both. The fear in writing is of not being able to find the right words, not being able to evoke experience in my descriptions. This fear exists because description that evokes experience is an ideal towards which we may aspire without ever being able to achieve because no description "is ever complete, no explication of meaning is ever final, and no insight is beyond challenge" (van Manen, 2002, p. 7). Writing offers rewards at a cost.

...writing separates us from what we know, yet it unites us more closely with what we know.

Writing distances us from the lifeworld, yet it also draws us more closely to the lifeworld.

Writing decontextualizes thought from practice, and yet it returns thought to praxis.

Writing abstracts our experience of the world, yet it also concretizes our understanding of the world...[and]

...Writing objectifies thought into print, and yet it subjectifies our understanding of

something that truly engages us...the writing of the text is the research. Writing exercises the ability to see...the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology is more a carefully cultivated thoughtfulness than a technique. (van Manen, 2002, p. 238-241)

Descriptive writing “that searches for human meaning can be a profoundly unsettling experience . . . because we come face to face with the allusiveness of infinity” (van Manen, 2002, p. 244). Evoking the vitality of this passage of in-between, of creating respiration between the borders of one’s mind, body, and surrounding possibilities in writing, is rare and difficult: “There is reciprocity, fluidity, and an intermingling of flows in my chiasmic experience of the world, yet there is also divergence and resistance within the chiasm” (Smith, 2007, p. 59). However, by acknowledging that no description is pure, that no interpretation is final, there is also a sense of freedom.

I sense freedom in knowing that what is written is, in a sense, locked to the physical space it occupies, locked in the words chosen; but it is free in the sense that it is open to space of interpretation and alterity...the embrace. Anything could be written relying on the belief that no interpretation is final, and thus almost anything can be accepted. I embrace the uses and dangers of writing, not as a sure method toward authenticity placed beyond question, but as a rhetorical strategy to gain understanding of self, others and the relations to the world (Bogdan, 1975; Shields, 2002). In the least, the idea that “anything goes” helps me move the pen. It helps get something on the page and creates a field of snow with which turns can be made. In this freedom the weight of words lightens and I can once again breath.

Surrender

Breathe

Wait

and

listen...

The respiration creates space for words. I turn to the ski-line, the pen-line, and the unedited naked language of self-movement. Small breaths create more space. Words melt into and onto my flesh, and into the flesh of the snow, and more space is created, more room to breathe. My chest has room to rise and fall, and words flow. These words have a different weight to them. They seem to carry a different message, a different meaning. In this space the magic of words once again returns. In their grief and joy, words restore the respiration between pre-reflective and reflective, even at a distance, even after having endured the indignity and betrayal of translation (Barks, 2004. p. xv). Words again present possibility in the latitude of letters.

Possibility in the pools of p's, the oceans of o's, the cupping of c's, the waves of w's, the
mountains of m's...

Possibility present in the presenting of letters and words as sentences
and paragraphs and the physical space in-between letters and the
vastness of the canvass they are written upon.

Possibility also on the backside of letters, what
colour is the other side of these words?

Possibility in the invisible presentation that
lies between the ink and the page,
in the space between.

Possibility in the words not yet written.

Possibility in stories not yet told.

Breathe...

* * * * *

Now that the momentum of the accumulated energy has slowed somewhat on the ridge, I
go back to the edge for a very quick peak. I feel a swelling of energy in my lower abdomen as I
look down at the first few hundred feet of snow before the slope disappears because of its
steepness.

Lub-Dub.....Lub-Dub

The valley floor below is the next visual point of reference. I am extended into this exposure of space, this vastness of possibility. The magnitude or intensity that must be exceeded for me to push off this ridge is thick. I turn my focus to preparing my gear and chatting with my friends to calm myself and prepare to ski.

Playful conversation fills the air. We take the skins off our skis. As the long strips of nylon plush fibers aligned like the hair on a dogs back are pulled off of the bottom of our skis, snow crystals clinging to the synthetic hair are thrown in the air and are illuminated with the sun that is now fully visible in the cloudless sky. It is a moment of snow crystal fireworks that I always love seeing. My friends and I pull out some food and water. As I bite into my sandwich, my mind voyages, and I reflect on experience.

Reflection and Living Experience: Bridging the Ski-Line and Pen-Line

We look back and analyze the events
of our lives, but there is another way
of seeing, a backward-and-forward-at-once
vision, that is not rationally understandable.
(Rumi, p. 27)

Milloy (2007) asks: “Can a text conceived, generated, and gathered in the womb of living experience and modified upon reflection still yield to living experience in its textual form? Can it hold the sensuousness, and the freshness of the living moment at the threshold of duration?” (p. 57). She answers her own question stating, “Well, yes, but is it recordable? In language? Can language, words, defy logos?” (p. 57). Abram (1996) writes that the mysteriousness of language should be acknowledged and left undefined. He also notes, “...by paying attention to this

mystery, we may develop a conscious familiarity with it, a sense of its texture, its habits, its source of sustenance” (p. 73). The same is probably true when it comes to the textual translation of a self-movement experience into words.

...a person cannot reflect on lived experience while living through the experience...
 reflection on lived experience is always recollective
 it is reflection on experience
 that is already passed or lived through (van Manen, 1997, p. 10).

From a physical perspective, one may say that the freeskiing experience starts when one clicks into a pair of ski bindings and slides down a snowy slope, and ends when one clicks out of the bindings and leaves the slope. However, as Leah has already shared with us the click-click into and out of ski bindings does not indicate the starting and stopping of the freeskiing experience; rather, it indicates a shift within the experience.

The duration of movement lingers beyond the physically constructed starts and stops of experience. In freeskiing the duration of self-movement lives within the appearance of snow, the white breath, within skis, mountains, and other freeskiers. This lingering occurs with the physical presence of these elements of freeskiing, and it also occurs simply with a memory of a past experience, or a dream of a future experience. This duration is more than lingering; it is living, the living movement in which we were born into (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). Experience is what we create in our relations with movement. But how is experience experienced? How can experience be described? How is experience theoretically understood? Can experience be theorized differently than a binary system of lived or living? Does it have to be theorized differently than a binary system?

Within these questions concerning experience, I feel as if I am skiing, turning, not smoothly, down the mountain. It's more like turning within a house of mirrors where I trip over reflections, and illusionary lines intersected and knotted with each other. Words, and answers, and more questions tumble and collide, and I wonder what can help me in this mirrored maze. These fuzzy images are ontological struggles with questions of the existential nature of experience; lived-time, lived-space, lived-corporeality, and lived-community (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Lived experience, according to Dilthey (1985), is in its most basic form our immediate, pre-reflective consciousness of life. However, I struggle with conceiving experience as having been lived. How can 'lived experience' be an 'immediate' connection to life if it has been relinquished to the past, as lived? How can the feeling of wonder that I distinctly feel while clicking into ski bindings for the first time be present many years after that lived experience, as well as nearly every time I click into my bindings? The feeling and understanding of click-clicking is present even while I write about the experience in this text. I am compelled to use the verbal suffix 'ing' acknowledging that life is *living*, and that experience remains alive in the middles and muddles where beginnings and endings are blurred (Butler, 1990). Another textual representation of the doubling of experience as lived and living is live(d) as used most notably by van Manen (1997, 2002). The wonder I felt surfaces not as a separate wonder but as the same wonder emerging again for the first time. In this understanding I acknowledge that the wonder I felt is the wonder I feel. My wonder pulses with different rhythms, intensities, and characteristics from experience to experience, yet I feel this pulsing coming from a source or heart of my wonder which I try to connect with often.

The expansive philosophical, conceptual, and theoretical considerations of experience include questions of what it means to *be* with the *being* of things, Being-in-the-world, Being-no-

longer-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1927/1962). And what does it mean to become, becoming-in-the-world, becoming-no-longer-in-the-world? The ski line, comprised of boot prints, ascending zigzagging turns, descending turns linked together upon a mountain, is a visible ‘being’ written upon the mountain. The line is visible until it meets with the tails of a skier, the creator of the line on the mountain. In front of the skier is a blank page of untouched snow and countless possible lines to be written. Focusing upon the skier as he makes turns extending the line down the mountain, we can say that that is the *living* experience for that skier. It is the experience as it is unfolding in the present moment. If we direct our focus to turns made behind the skier, we say that they happened in the past, and that the distinctive qualitative dynamics of those turns exists in a lived-experience. Focusing upon the untouched snow in front of the skier would be to direct our focus to some future unknown experience. Therefore the interconnection between living and lived experience can include the interconnection between notions of being, and becoming.

van Manen’s (1997) perspective seems to be that if the skier making the turns directs his focus to turns already made, this is a reflective experience, and this changes the living experience to include reflecting on an already lived experience. Continuing with the ski line analogy, the turn upon which we are reflecting, the turn of the past, is connected to the turns we are creating in the unfolding present moment. As an observer, you could visually focus upon a turn the skier made five turns ago and follow the line in the snow to the next turn, and the next, and so on until you are again connected with the backs of the skier’s skis as they continue to write in the snow. This to me is the connection of lived and living experience, the live(d) experience. The phenomenological reflective practice makes writing lived experience possible as an ongoing *living* experience.

Time is an interesting component of experience. We can focus upon a certain time frame of a living experience, for instance I can say on March 16, 2004 some friends and I went ski touring. We left at 6:00 a.m. and returned at 5:00 p.m. And then within that time frame the experience can be described. Thus, this part of a living experience is a condensation of energy, an event that we can situate in the past. We can call this specific experience a *lived* experience, which can be focused upon to share and evoke meaning. With experience conceptualized as an unfolding and ongoing living phenomenon, I reach the challenge of how to write about a specific experience within the ongoing, unfolding chiasmic experience.

The *epoché* returns as a phenomenological tool that helps negotiate this challenge. With the *epoché*, I recognize that I can focus upon distinctive qualitative dynamics of a living experience (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). The intention with the reflective phase of phenomenological writing is to turn up the sensuous volume of the qualities of live(d) experience.

In my journal entry dated July 29th, 2009, the day after hiking Galatea and recognizing that the link from context to text existed in the mountains and in movement, I wrote: “This morning I feel at a distance from the words and the experience of climbing Galatea yesterday. Am I in the writing space where an experience is so potent that it steals words? I have discussed such a robbery with a friend and writer, where she was unable to write for three days after her first surfing experience. Yesterday’s realization was indeed profound enough to steal words, yet I know I can re-connect with the experience and build the momentum of writing”.

The connection with the lived freeskiing experience starts with recognizing that the experience is living in me, in the flesh of my being. This recognition provides the confidence to sink into my own flesh, a flesh of being in the world, to excavate the experience and invite words to surface. Writing like movement “arises mimetically, not merely in the body, but also in the nexus and intertwining of bodily engagement with the world” (Smith, 2007, p. 57). This reflective process exists for me in the act of meditation. There is the moving meditation that provides words as described in the Galatea experience, and then the meditation continues when I get home. Sitting with the words that came from the field to my field-notes, I close my eyes and exhale and enter a meditation, a radical reflection.

There is a way between voice and presence
where information flows.

In disciplined silence it opens.
With wandering talk it closes.
(Rumi, p. 32)

The disciplined silence is here on the ridge; it is in the moving meditations on the mountain and is in my sitting meditations at home. The meditative practice of reflection is the disciplined silence; it is the way between voice and presence...where information flows.

It [meditation] lifts a veil of everyday ideas and thoughts and concepts that cloud your brain. When I sit down to meditate, it's generally to clear my mind, my energy field, which I feel around me, and bring it back to a point of balance, to a point where I'm balancing how much attention, how much energy I'm sending to my heart and my head. So instead of it being always in your head, I can change it to being more of a balance thing. (Bass, 2008, p. 2)

Engaging with the *epoché* as a focusing tool within live(d) experience, and the radical reflection as a meditation practice, leads to a deepened awareness of my inescapable involvement with the world, of the impossibility of marking out a privileged domain of ‘inner experience’.

Suzuki (1970) remarks “we say ‘inner world’ or ‘outer world’, but there is just one whole world. What we call ‘I’ is just a swinging door which moves when we inhale and when we exhale” (p.29). For Merleau-Ponty (1968), the relation of human consciousness to being-in-the-world is so intertwined and interwoven that there is no possibility of conceptualizing one without the other. The chiasm, or criss-crossing of the flesh, reminds “both of my implication in the world and of my inevitable separation at times from it” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, pp. 130-155). Smith (2006) poetically describes this chiasm of consciousness as:

The experience we have of being “flesh of the world,” simultaneously touched by it while making bodily contact, seeing, hearing and feeling ourselves in a folding, enfolding, unfolding bodily connection to it...motion is not just my imprint on the things around me, but equally their effects on my own intentions. It is the kinesthetic and proprioceptive consciousness of moving while simultaneously being moved by forces and energies beyond oneself. (p. 4)

Research in this chiasmic conception of experience is a “process of exchange that is not separated from the body but emerges through an intertwining of mind and body, self and other, and through our interactions with the world” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. xxii). Embracing the concept of the chiasm, is to acknowledge and appreciate the blurriness of human experience. Within meditative reflection, the presence of lived experience increases. The distance from a lived experience can be invited closer by listening to the story that is written, etched in blood, bones, muscles, and mind. Transcending the distance of space and time to transcribe pre-reflective presence in textual description is one of the most challenging aspects of this inquiry.

If experience is living and not just lived, then the question is not of ‘no longer’ or ‘not yet’ or of being or becoming. The question is perhaps, “How is the future present in the past, the past in the future, and the present in both” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p.60)? The question of experience, the being-becoming paradox, becomes a question of presence. Presence is the simple

yet complex concept that simultaneously calms and ignites my overwhelmed state with the question of what is experience and the challenge of writing it. In this understanding of presence the question becomes; what is presented to the mover and what is the mover presenting in movement? What is the nature of our being which is simultaneously a part of our ongoing becoming? The question opens further into what are the present possibilities in movement? I wonder...

Wonder: Pausing and Gazing

Wonder has been described by van Manen (2002) as a state of receptive passivity as opposed to the pervasive activism of the hustling restlessness and bustling commotion of our North-American society. Wonder as a state of slowness and reflection asks that “We live with the feeling long enough to feel its character and its demands. Genuine wonder is in this sense time-consuming, and, for this very reason, contrary to late twentieth-century Western life” (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p. 336). The simple act of pausing creates the possibility for the state of wonder to be felt because it connects me more with receptive passivity rather than pervasive activism.

The best way I have been able to pause has been to stop, step, and breath. While caught in the momentum of movement, I stop what I am doing, step away momentarily (even if it is simply a mental step) creating distance and shifting the momentum, and then taking deep deliberate breaths.

Breathe...

Gazing is not the same as looking. Looking is fixed in duality and linearity; there is a looker and an object being looked at. In contrast, gazing uses visual points as a sort of aiming mechanism, a method for becoming aware of what is beyond the mundane, factuality of the objective world by confining vision in order to expand it beyond objective orientation (Gannon, & Life, 2002). I stop where I am on this mountain, bend over, and scoop up some fresh snow on my glove. Like the snowstorm experience, I play with my focus, narrowing it to a single flake, and then expanding it to take in the other flakes on my glove. I rest in this moment and allow my gaze to expand further, I take in as much of the snowpack that is draped over this mountain, and that extends even further into the surrounding mountain ranges. My focus stretches wide and far to fit the whole scene into my eyes, while maintaining a focus sharp enough to experience and enjoy the sharp angles and crystallized arms of the individual flake. As my gaze oscillates in the moment between the single flake and the expansive storm, I deepen my breathing, my body is calm and relaxed, and my mind begins to slow down. When I shift from looking to gazing, I begin to experience a subtle shift in consciousness. The shift is occurring here on the ridge as I pause and gaze at the snowfield.

* * * * *

We have skied in this area before. We have dug a snow pit to check the avalanche conditions, a bit of food has been consumed, and all our avalanche beacons are functional. It is time to choose where to ski. Each person has a different view of the mountain. Each one is pulled

to different areas, different rolls, jumps, cliffs, and openings call to us. Depending on our experience and how we feel that day, we are pulled to different areas with different intensities. As my eyes scan the slope, I recall that Mark once told me, “I find it funny how people get pulled to different areas of the mountain because they gel with different features. It resonates with them, and everyone gets pulled in these different areas, some for the trees, some to the big bowls, and some are hucking themselves off the cliffs.”



I return back to the ledge with a sense of openness. The openness is like open arms and an open mind to possibilities of joy, creativity, and fun. Openness also like an open wound, sliced open and vulnerable to pain, restriction, and sadness. I lean in. Haskell (2000) writes, “We make choices each moment either to risk seeking our potential (which is a changing, unknown peak similar to how moving water changes the appearance of a wave crest) or to interact with the world in familiar patterns” (p. xiv-xv). An aspect of freedom then is the choice to enter

unfamiliar experience. Perhaps in such experience I may discover my limitations, restrictions, and impossibilities, which could be seen as impeding freedom. This is another aspect of the freedom of self-movement, the freedom to experience resistance or limitation from the choices I make.

I peer over the edge of the ridge into the depth of the exposed space. My heart flutters; I hold my breath. There is so much in the space of the exposure. Movement as possibility, as a force...I feel the force...feel the possibility. I see a cliff that is calling to me. On this ridge the emotions of our group are worn like our jackets. I can see who is really excited about where they are getting pulled to, what line is calling to them; I can also see nervousness and fear.

The group's conversation takes on a bit more of a serious tone as we narrow our choice and prepare to commit to a line. We talk about what we will do individually and as a group, should an avalanche occur. We talk about where the safe spots are, where people will look from so we can see the person skiing the whole time, or if in the steepness they will disappear out of our scouting view.

I feel great. I am awake, feeling clear, healthy and happy. This is affecting my line choice. I walk back and forth locked in ski mode, talking out loud. I look at the cliff again and say to my friends, myself, and to the mountain herself, "Oooo, can I go off that? What do you think?" "Yeah looks good," someone says. "Make sure you hit it from left to right cuz I see tree tops on the left so they might be in your landing."

As the possibility and proximity of this flying/falling experience approaches, the surging energy in my belly grows further still. Standing upon this ridge at Tryst Lake gazing down the fall line of the mountain, staring at the cliff edge that I am contemplating jumping from, previous flight experiences are summoned into my presence. Reminders of lessons learned, as well as memories of how exhilarating the experience of jumping into the air, fill my presence and prepare me for what I am about to do.

* * * * *

Flying or Falling

A friend of mine saw a photo of me skiing. She is a dancer and a dance researcher, and she asked me, “Is the experience in the air an experience of flying or falling?” I sat with the question for a while playing with thoughts of the perception of flying and falling and the emotional connection that I have with these two experiences. I then posed the question to Mark, Leah, and Josh.

Mark: It depends on how you are catching air.
When you are jumping off a cliff...



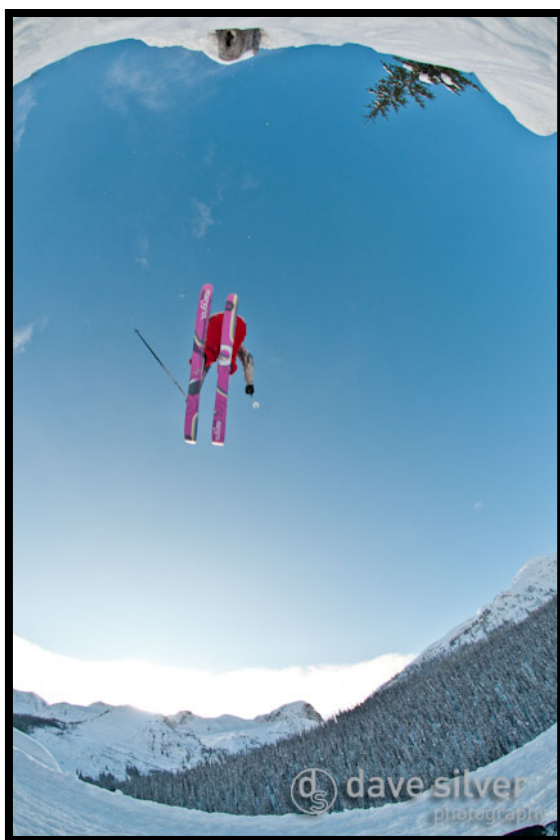
...then it feels more like falling.

When you are jumping off a tabletop, or any booter with some kick...



...then it feels like more like you are flying.

The greatest thing about catching air is the freedom. There is a minimal amount of resistance jumping off a cliff or booter. The feeling of floating is presented with this effortless moment in the air.



Leah: Forty feet never seemed so small. I had the takeoff landmark picked out, visualized and prepared in my mind. It was a moment when life stopped. It could have been a few minutes or a few seconds that I was airborne; either way it meshed into a feeling of flying, soaring above the ground with a mindful conscience.

Jumping is a story. Each jump has its own cover. Whether it is a table top in the park or powder entrenched double cliff drop, you make the decision if you are interested in reading more into the specifics of the jump or automatically dismissing it. If you commit to reading the first chapter, you will find your self quickly wrangled into the rising action, climax and literal falling

action of the story. Your rising action is a mesh of mental calculations, feelings and confidence. The climaxing moment dictates how the jump will unfold into either a flying experience or falling experience. A flying experience can be dictated as a time when you have accepted stillness and are embracing the airtime. Unlike a falling experience where the landing is dreaded and your body and mind are unbalanced. The denouement sews together your thoughts of the jump. If it's a 'happy ending,' then the experience resembles flying. Contrasting, if it was a negative experience, it's mentally stored as a falling occurrence.

What Leah says about 'the climaxing moment', resonates with two particular jumps I experienced in Revelstoke, British Columbia. One jump as an experience of falling and the other as flying, and both sensations were determined by the experience at the climax of each jump. In my journal dated January 1st, 2009 I wrote:

The snow underfoot feels different. The mimetic impulse connecting me to the moment throbs with a pounding presence. My organs and perception are opened, and something else speaks loudly, an instinctual voice from within me and beyond me. I am already within the rush of movement just standing on the ledge. The snow feels as though it's moving under my skis. I lift my skis one at a time and slam the edge into the snow to ensure I am not going anywhere. Ten feet below me is the edge of a cliff. I know there is enough snow for a soft landing, and the take off looks good. With dilated pupils, expanded capillaries, increased breathing and heart rate, I prepare to jump. The presence of fear and longing is unmistakable, felt here as the interplay between nervousness and excitement. My physical state simply moves with the moment, and my mind struggles to rationalize if I am nervous or excited, if I am ready for this.

I close my eyes and draw attention to my breath. I calm myself. There are no starts or stops here. There is a distinct, yet subtle, shift in the experience of movement. The seamlessness of the intertwining experiences is not just conceptually talked about and theoretically understood; there is an understanding in the fibers of my being, in the living experience. This thinking in movement is more than cerebral; it's a thinking where the body talks confidently with its cleverness. A corporeal consciousness invites my cerebral thinking beyond concepts, beyond just my brain and into this breathing moment. Now this living experience cycles, shifts, and swirls. I shift from an awareness of the possibilities of being on the cliff (the stillness, the silence, the calmness) to an awareness of the possibilities of speed of flying, falling, landing and crashing.

I point my skis downhill and slide towards the liminal ledge of change. The line of turning back is passed as the speed and the momentum is too great, and the ledge is too close to stop. I am vulnerable. Flight is inevitable. How will it be? Confidence and calmness in the air? Or will hesitation and regret guide my flight? The ledge approaches closer still a last second reminder, “Go! Hands forward! Commit!”...

...my ski tips pass over the ledge, and the space below presents itself. Now! Here! Right here! A wave of energy surges from the growing energy in my abdomen. The energy splinters through my body pressing my gut against my lungs, and seminal fluid swirls, and an electrical charge crackles through thoracic caverns and creases. The energy tries to escape through distended veins and dilated pupils, as a vomitous nausea spontaneously convulses through visceral and carnal presence. The charge is instantaneous. A sheath is passed and newness is greeted as the depth of space and consequence envelopes awareness and preparation. Confidence and excitement are birthed from this charge when a snowy, soft landing comes into view. Regret and anxiety shatter the joy when the lack of snow or complete absence of snow is presented as a consequence of a major miscalculation.

My palms sweat as these words are typed. My body remembers; I remember; we remember. The presence of nervousness and excitement are no longer separate; instead, they are simply a charged energy that I get to use to launch off this cliff.

In the air I pull my knees in tight, my hands are forward, my gaze is towards my landing, and I feel the air rush by my ears as I gain speed, while the distance between myself and the earth increases...and increases...and increases... “holy shit!” I am going much higher and farther then anticipated. As a surge of fear explodes from within, inviting itself into this experience with the tenderness of a sledgehammer, I hold my breath as a primal reaction to the fear and break my form in an attempt to increase my air resistance and slow my flight. I start to tilt backwards, then frantically move my arms in circles trying to remain balanced but it’s too late. The remainder of the flight is spent submersed in a sheath of suspenseful energy, fearing the impact. At the last second I tuck in tight again and cannon ball into the snowpack. My breath is forced out of me as my back hits the snow. The angle of the slope propels me forward, and I somersault over my feet. The impact is enough to rip both skis off of my boots, and, without the weight of my skis, I am flung for another rotation. I come to rest buried in the snow. I do a quick scan of my body, and, save for some bruising of muscles and ego, I am fine.

What does it feel like?

Definitely falling.

January 2nd, 2009. I am standing in the same spot as yesterday lining up the same cliff I skied off of and fell from. My confidence is much higher today because of what I learned yesterday, but that doesn't make the cliff any smaller. I point my skis downhill and slide to and over the edge of the cliff. This time, as the space presents itself and the distance between myself and earth increases....increases...and increases, and the fear begins to charge, I release the energy with a forceful exhale. I direct that energy to my form and hold it longer and feel the weightlessness of flight. Trees silently pass in my periphery, and I feel like an owl silently and gracefully gliding through a forest. With the combination of confidence, familiarity, and an appreciation of the visceral fear/love presence, I am calm in the air.



As I brace for landing by becoming more fluid with breath, my skis sink into the different layers of the snowpack, and I can feel them connect with the new storm snow and the older snow from previous storms. Each layer, while breaking under the weight of my skis, simultaneously takes some of the force, the impact. There is a gradual shift from my celestial flight to my terrestrial dance.

This is flying!!

Now as I continue to stand upon the ridgeline staring at the cliff in the distance with thoughts and memories of falling and flying, my thoughts are directed to Josh and his story in self-movement. Josh's response to the experience of taking flight was an experience of sending himself off a ski jump that forever changed his life. Josh's description of his freeskiing experience has direct connection to the developing understanding of self-movement consciousness. That is, in our self-movement we have situational awareness of the possibilities present in movement that create shifting freedom felt in every movement experience. Self-movement is freely variable: "It is a measure of the qualitative nature of movement and potential conceptual richness of our unfolding kinesthetic consciousness" (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p. 138). Josh's experience also offers a beautiful example that, when layered in an attitude of wonder, the possibilities of finding freedom in movement extend far beyond the physical dimension of self-movement.

* * * * *

The Freedom and Restriction of Possibility: Josh's Experience

“In the air is suspended animation, an experience where conceived perceptions of time are shattered... it feels like the world has slowed down.



When my movement is aligned, and the flow is good, then for sure it is flying through the air. No better feeling than being as free as a bird! When things are a bit off, then I do get the feeling of falling or dropping from the sky, which is a less peaceful experience, but non-the-less exciting.”

March 8, 2004 is a very important date for Josh. He has told me that on that day he was born for the second time in his life. He likens the experience to birth because life, as he knew it, became almost entirely brand new. Josh and I are in the office of his house. The walls are covered with photos of people smiling, most of whom are skiing. I scan the walls and the smiles as Josh is going through his computer looking for some other photos that we want to include in this text, photos like the one above of Josh jumping in his sit ski. In my scan I come across a photo of Josh, but at first I don't recognize him. I recognize his face, and his features, but the thing that made the image not look like him was that he was standing up...of course smiling and

doing something where the people around him are also laughing. I am struck by my initial inability to recognize Josh because he is standing up. I met Josh after he broke his back and have known him with his wheelchair. Josh's wheelchair and sit ski are as much of his body to me as are his arms and his legs.

"Hey John, come here and check this out". I head over to the desk and sit down beside Josh as video footage loads on his computer. It's the video of the jump and the subsequent fall when Josh broke his back. I must admit that I am a bit nervous to see the video.

Josh: Going through the old ski photos I stumbled upon an old ski video from March 8th 2004 [Our conversation pauses as the video plays, and I watch Josh launch off of a jump, sending himself so high into the air only to come crashing upon flat snow-covered earth rather than the slope of the landing area. Due to the angle from which the video was shot, the impact of Josh hitting the ground is not shown. I react to the video by gasping, shrugging my shoulders, and collapsing my posture as if bracing for impact myself].

As you can see, I over rotate a front flip and completely miss the landing. The first time my skis returned to the ground was on the flats of the transition after the landing, I landed forward and broke my back. A basic measurement from my peak height in the air, to where I hit the ground is over a hundred vertical feet. It makes sense as to why I hurt myself to the extent that I did, and I'm very fortunate that it wasn't any worse. I feel very lucky about that.

John: Do you remember much of the jump?

Josh: Everything.

I was ski coaching and was demonstrating how to do a front flip to my young athletes...

I'm on the in-run getting to the transition, and "oh fuck" I'm going too fast. I need to throw the skis sideways to stop, and I have a split second to do so. "Throw them sideways! STOP!!!"

I'll never forget the feeling of knowing I am coming in too fast and that it was a bad idea. The thing is that the speed I was carrying, and the fear that surfaced because I knew I was in trouble, led me to not commit to either a single or a

double front flip, and I knew before I left the ground that doing a single front flip with that velocity and the rotation I was about to set, is not a good idea. It was basically playing Russian roulette with a fully loaded gun. But ego overrides intuition, and I go for it anyways because I'm the man, and I can handle it.

Its too late, I'm going over.

As my skis leave the ground, I enter the air looking at the ground so far away. I know I am fucked.

In the air I try to stretch out the lawn dart as long as I can. I am trying desperately to stall the front flip so that it is not a complete disaster. But I do not fully extend. I hesitate because I have created disaster in my mind, because I know I am going to overshoot the landing.

This is the crux point: had I grabbed my knees and gone for a double flip, I would have easily rotated another front. Had I really kicked my hips out, I would have probably kicked it out to a big single flip. If I really committed to the trick and set my hips a little more, maybe I could have held the trick a little longer and just rotated enough and landed on my feet and broke both my legs. A hundred feet is a hundred feet, and I was going to hurt myself, but that might have been a scenario where I broke both my femurs, instead...

Instead I just open up and....

...I see the ground coming, "Oh man that is a long way down. I should be on the ground right now. Stretch it out! Stretch it out!" I am probably fifteen feet up from the lip and looking at about another fifty feet before I land, to flat, to nothing.

Going into the fetal position was a natural reaction after rolling down the windows for a little while [rolling his arms in a circular motion trying to gain some control in the air].

The ground jumps up at me. I smash into its immobile strength in the fetal position and before pain has a chance to surface..

...my world goes black.

[Breathe...]

I open my eyes and am met with a horrifying event; the look on everyone's faces. Laying on the ground, my story is being told to me...everything I needed to know is in everyone's eyes. The fear... the kids. I look in their eyes, and there are moments where the message says they will never ski again.

You know it is important to rewind a little bit further, and, just before getting to the take-off of the jump, had I put on the breaks, I would have stopped all of this. Now, we are talking about a lot of would have, could have, should have; we're reenacting a lot of different scenarios, and I think there is a lot of value in that you know we are looking at my mind set in a lot of different moments, and one thing that I want to be perfectly clear about is that there are no regrets.

* * * * *

Experiencing freedom and restriction seems paradoxically opposed, distant, and contrasted. But conversation with Josh and the experiences he shares reveals that they are infused with each other. Seeing the footage of Josh's, fall and hearing his first hand account of the event, is something I feel honoured to have experienced. I thank Josh for sharing his story with such intimacy, vulnerability, and trust. Josh's fall was one of many falls that he's experienced throughout his life as a freeskiier. It happens to be a fall which remains glaringly present in his life with some of the physical mobility challenges he faces and the emotional challenges tethered to the physical. Throughout his story in movement, Josh has carried an amazing attitude of curiosity and wonder. This attitude has helped him embrace, learn from, and grow with the challenges and thresholds that he has encountered. It also contributes to Josh's expanding consciousness of the possibilities in movement, and helps him continue to find freedom in self-movement.

Josh: To break it down I am just a kid from the Kootenay's who likes sliding down snow. My lifetime aspirations growing up were to be a ski bum. And so far I am doing a pretty good job of it, but in order to do so I needed, and continue to need, the support of others. My story in freeskiing has not always been easy, and I am forever grateful for those who support me.

When I started skiing, I did not fit in right away, but I knew that I belonged in the mountains. And that was such a beautiful feeling; there was no judgment, no pressure, no expectations. It was just raw playing in the mountains. And the best relationships I have ever formed have been formed on the mountains or in relation with the mountains.

Movement! I think about movement in many different ways. Movement means a lot in sport, in freeskiing, but it also means a lot in direction, and I think that if you get stuck in neutral, nothing good is going to come from it. Like when I broke my back, if I had given up and gone into neutral, my freedom would have been over.

Movement definitely offered me an experience of freedom from insecurities because I wasn't the popular kid in school, and so I was picked on a lot. Skiing gave me something to connect with, to identify with, and to create an identity from. All of a sudden I became the kid who would huck himself on skis, and then people wanted to hang out with me. I don't know if then I got respect or something, but it gave me confidence, and I met some really great friends and got involved in the freestyle program and with some people who were like minded, who liked to charge down the mountain. That's how I met Mark [Abma], and ten years later we are still great friends, in large part because of our love for the mountains.

We all got into skiing I'm sure for different reasons, but now I think we are all in it at some level for the same reasons for that freedom from....everything....and before I broke my back, the freedom was very psychological. It gave me an identity to connect with, and yeah, when I broke my back, it obviously altered my mobility, but then freeskiing gave me literal physical movement that I cannot experience in any other facet of my life. I mean I struggle to get around terrain in my chair, and its a lot more work to get up stairs and down stairs pretty much anything, but a shopping mall is really tough for me to get around. In the mall I dominate, I'm a built in shopping cart that can get around ten times faster then other shoppers, but it's too bad that I hate to shop [he says with a big smile on his face]. But then I get on my ski and I am an equal. Not that I don't feel an equal here, but it is different. I love the exploration side of things exploring the mountains, and now the freedom is tenfold.

I talk a lot about my passion and my love for movement,

my love for momentum,

my love for sliding,

my love for fresh air,

the experience of the social aspect,

the adrenaline,

the outlet for creativity,

there are a million reasons that I love to ski...

...but my driving force to get back on skis

was those kids!

When you fall off a horse you get back on again. I love skiing and that's why I continue to do it today. My love and getting back out there for the kids are definitely the driving forces. There was no question that I was going to ski again. People asked me if I was scared. No! I had a goal in mind I was going to ski with those kids again. I really didn't know about sit skiing. I had no clue about Paralympics or racing. I'm now in that world, and I embrace it, and I quite enjoy what I do. And I got back up there, and it gave me more freedom than I have ever had in my whole life.

John: In what way?

Josh: Well I'm confined to a wheelchair. I don't enjoy how challenging it is for me to get from point A to point B, and that has caused a shift in my thinking. Is it always important to get from A to B? Or is it the process that is involved? I really have enjoyed the people who have helped me out along the way, but one has to admit that there is some peace and serenity to wake up early in the morning and hike a mountain to watch the sun rise. There is certain peace to doing things on your own in your own way, and, for me, my playground is in the mountains. It is in the high alpine and that is not always attainable within a wheelchair.

So when I click into my sit-ski, there is nothing that is slowing me down. I am complete. I am equal with everyone else on the mountain. I get to enjoy that environment freely. I get to be the person I was meant to be, and the person that I want to be. I get to be a skier. I get to creatively release how I am feeling at that moment on the mountains.

There are so many reasons for me to ski again, and maybe my driving force to get back into the ski and on the mountain would not have been so strong if I had not seen the look in the eyes of those kids. If I wasn't so focused to get out there in the first place, I might have thrown my wheel chair out of the car to get to the ski hill and said 'forget this.' My first day back happened to be a pretty challenging day in the parking lot. There was lots of snow on the ground, and it took me fifteen minutes to get from my car to the chairlift, which was about fifty meters away, a very short distance, and it was a painful experience.

But that day I got on the mountain again, and I realize that the challenge contributed to me appreciating the experience of sliding that much more. I totally get if someone with a newly acquired disability is resistant to get out and play. I know a lot of people who say to me, "Dude I'd love to try skiing, but its too hard." I get it, I've tried getting around the beach in the summer time, and I try to get around the snow in the winter time, and I've learned a lot in the last few years to make that process a little easier. I am much more willing to ask people for help, and I am much more open to receiving help when I am up in those environments, but geez I'm just playing in the mountains, and there is nothing slowing me down except for myself.

If, after the accident, I went into neutral, then it could have been a place of mourning and sorrow, and disappointment and regret. But thankfully, because of the people I surround myself with in the last few years, I have been able to be that ambitious bullfighter and have that lust for life and move forward. Straight out of the hospital I was always looking for experiences to learn from.

John: What were you exploring?

Josh: My new life. I had to learn everything essentially from scratch, whether it was managing my daily routine in the bathroom, to simply getting out of bed and getting in the shower. I think one of my fondest memories was learning how to brush my teeth again, looking at myself in the mirror and being eye level with the faucet! Rather than bending over like getting down to brush my teeth, I'm reaching in to brush my teeth. It was a little bit awkward and a little bit humorous at the same time.

I am in Josh's bathroom looking in the mirror. I bend into a seated position, and the image of Josh brushing his teeth is there with me as some sort of a ghostly energy. I smile, thinking about how Josh feels fondness for this transition of seeing himself differently in the mirror.

Josh and I now sit in his kitchen. We continue to converse, and Josh talks about his experience just after he broke his back.

Limitations are a perception of your imagination. I don't want to focus too much on acquiring a disability. I always strap limitations on myself and build a certain lack of confidence in my abilities. But exploring the limitless possibility of love, when my community, my family, and the ski community at large was supporting me, that energy, that was overwhelming and very noticeable. I could have been physically, mentally, spiritually blind, and I would have felt it, seen it, heard it, known it. Just to experience that, and to see how well I could have adapted to that situation, is a reflection of the people I surrounded myself with.

The positive momentum, that movement forward, from my community carried on throughout my recovery and snowballed in a ridiculous fashion. People accuse me of being amazing. It's a great assumption based upon their perception of me through limited experience or through media, and don't get me wrong, I'm very flattered and appreciative of those comments, and I feel very fortunate to be called that. But at the end of the day, it is a compilation of all the positive energy that snowballed, and I learned that really quickly from my girlfriend at the time who is now my wife. She had me really acknowledge very early.

Within the first week or two of the fall, a lot of positive energy was coming in, and there was some confusion at the time like some people were overwhelmed thinking 'Oh my god, he is going to go crazy. He is a downhill skier, an avid mountain biker and a soccer player,' and if you see the common denominator for all three it is the use of my legs.

People came from far and wide in that community with mixed feelings of trying to be strong, but also feeling sad as well; so my dear and lovely wife came up with the idea of bringing in a beer fridge into my room to convert it from a hospital room to a room with a more positive focus. With the idea of 'What was life like before? Why does it have to change now?'

So like, John, you come in and say, 'Bro. Bro. I'm so sorry. I don't know what to say,' and there would be a really bummed feeling in the room, and so I would say, 'John hold your horses. Reel them in. I'm stoked you're here. Please go over to the fridge and get me a bottle of water, and while your there grab yourself a beverage.' And then you realize:

"Oh shit, you've got tall boys in here? Mind if I grab one?"

"Of course not. That's why they're there." I'd say, and you'd sit down with your beverage, and all of a sudden your shoulders would drop you would be a little more relaxed and more at home, and then I would turn to you and say 'Hey John what have you been up to? I heard you were doing some studies and working with the ski team. That's sounds awesome. Tell me about it!' And soon you would be sharing, and then when the time was right, I would tell you that, yeah, this is a shitty card that I've been dealt, but I'm the perfect player, and my hand is on the table. So be it.

I strongly believe that this would not have happened if I was not strong enough to handle it. It would not have happened to me, and it did, and it was meant to be. And then you're like 'That was kind of profound son!' And then you leave thinking oh man that guy is doing great. I'm stoked for him. And then you'd come back a week later and we'd talk about my new life. I'd show you my catheter and stuff like that. I took, and continue to take, everything as a challenge, and it was just how I embraced those challenges, and then they became opportunities. Again being blessed with good friends, they contributed to the experience with the positive energy.

A mobility transformation is the best way to describe what has happened. Nothing much has changed other than the way I get around. You know, maybe things have changed a little bit. My appreciation for freeskiing has increased; I've always had a love for it, but my appreciation for that freedom has expanded. And my confidence to explore and to be curious and to not try to force things on the mountain but to let things unfold has increased, by just trying to listen to it. Even though it is not physically speaking to me, I just have to be patient, have to be flexible, have to be enjoying it, having fun with it.

Josh's story in movement is a journey of embracing the restrictions he has faced, and those that he continues to face, to create profound experiences of freedom. An element of wonder is the tension of being roused out of complacency. Josh's attitude of wondering what is possible for him in movement has helped him continue to keep looking, surrendering, and creating new possibilities of self-movement.

* * * * *

Back on the Ridge.

"You decide yet John?" Dave yells from a few meters away. He's perched on top of what looks to be a great line, and his voice snaps me out of my layers of reflecting about previous ski runs, about fear, injury, death, of Mark, Leah, and Josh's experience in the air, of thinking and planning *this* run. Of course, I don't know what this line will bring, and that unknown is part of why I am here.

This is the magnitude that the freeskier must exceed, ‘this’ being fear, risk, vulnerability, joy, excitement, and preparation, the point where the ascent gives way to the descent. The phenomenological attitude is a way to listen to and describe the world of the freeskier engaged in self-movement. This attitude, steeped in wonder, opens the door to a transformation of the familiar to the unfamiliar. The pausing, gazing, and placing myself among evocative aspects of freeskiing and self-movement in general, make strange my familiar world of freeskiing, strange in the sense that self-movement becomes less dense, more malleable, and filled with more possibility. I slide into more subtle energies of movement. Being so close to energies beyond myself in towering mountains, something happens to me, to movement, or rather something happens to my consciousness of movement. In this experience I am no longer quite myself. And yet I am more myself.

With my skins off, boots in ski mode, a switch is flicked from ascent to descent, just as between every inhale and exhale there is a pause, a period of time where no inhale or exhale is taking place. It is the space between. In the space between ascent and descent here upon the ridge, the magnitude or intensity of the threshold depends upon the energy of the moment. Many variables contribute to this energy, none bigger than my perception, my conscious awareness of what is happening, and what could happen. Is the nearby descending slope evoking fear or longing? Nervousness or excitement? Hesitation or eagerness?

Is this pause, this threshold a test for me to make sure I’m ready to pass through? Am I ready? Carl Leggo’s words return, reminding me that the difference between prose and poetry is the turn, the decision by the writer to lean into the momentum of the writing, directing it into a

new tempo, a different rhythm, a different space. As I stand on the ridge of this mountain gazing into the playground of an open untouched snowfield, words of ‘the turn’ echo in my being and I smile at the synchronicity between writing with words and text, and writing with my skis and the mountain. Once again I ask, do I feel like writing poetry, or prose?

All of the preparation I’ve done individually, and that we have done as a group, flashes through my presence. We double and triple check our avalanche transceivers, buckles, zippers, and goggles. I put in my mouth guard, and my awareness embraces these physical elements. My consciousness shifts to my mental state as the vibrations of the physical are calmed. I close my eyes and breathe...

I’ve already thought enough. It’s time to go. “Yeah I’m going to hit it!” I say to Dave

“Click-Click!”

As I step into my bindings, I once again step into a different experience. This “click-click” is much different than the clicking to start the ascent up the mountain. This clicking signals that the magnitude of the threshold has been met, and its layers are growing thin. I am about to move through the threshold to breakthrough into...I don’t know what. This clicking is like closing the door of a powerful sports car, or maybe a plane, or a spaceship. I am clicked into possibility, and all I have to do now is push off.

The moment swells unbearably. I stomp my feet in the snow to move some of the energy. I breath deeply again to connect with the mountain, with movement, to listen what she is saying. I close my eyes, continuing to breath deeply. I “TICK-TICK” my poles together as I open my eyes, and with that, I exhale...

...and surpass the energy of the threshold, lean away from the pause of the ledge, and breakthrough into the landscape. My body expands, breaking through into the unknown. The understanding of self-movement, and movement gaining momentum within me and within this inquiry, is strongly related to human development, growth, and progress. Breaking through is sliding beyond the threshold of some accumulated energy. Its moment is ineffable, virtually impossible to capture as it is unfolding. Fortunately for the phenomenologist or any writer, the breakthrough moment is a living moment and occurs in the act and the art of writing. This breakthrough is where poetics serve as evocative description.

Breakthrough:

The Ineffable Descent



*The accumulation of energy
surpasses a threshold where it bursts out full,
breathing vibrantly.
-John Coleman personal journal*

In your light I learn how to love.
In your beauty, how to make poems.

You dance inside my chest,
where no one sees you,

but sometimes I do,
and that sight becomes this art.
(Rumi, p. 122)

On this ridge cocooned in the thickness of the threshold, wonder beats in my chest where no one can see it...but I do. I see, feel, taste, hear, and sense the fear and the longing that swirl in my chest. Within this moment, as the rush of movement surges through my being, the alchemy of wonder happens. These energies merge to create a unified energy strong enough to surpass the magnitude of the threshold, and I breakthrough, bursting out, breathing vibrantly. As the rush of movement explodes, I push off the snowy ridge and dive into the prisms of possibility that shine within the mid-day February sun.

Pushing Off

Coaxed from comfort
 Whispers of wonder
 become shouts of possibility.
 I am pushed off this ridge,
 pulled down this mountain

The line I am drawing upon the snow
 Extends off the backs of my skis
 There's no future in this
 This is presence
 is worth remembering
 Fires of happiness
 Flakes of fear
 Waves of gratitude
 I am a word
 A body
 A resonator for a center

Pausing and gazing
 With wonder
 and vulnerability
 Into the womb
 of creativity

I am a word
 A body
 A resonator for a center

Pausing and gazing
 With wonder and vulnerability
 Into the womb of creativity
 and rhythms of experience
 Accumulation

Threshold
 Breakthrough

Release

Accumulation

Threshold

Breakthrough

Release

Accumulation

With each turn I sink more deeply into the rhythms of this experience, and the barriers between body, mind, spirit and surroundings begin to blur. My consciousness begins to sprout from a to and fro stem of in and out, into a rhizomatic root system of interconnection where beginnings and endings, and starts and stops are more difficult to locate.

As I turn down this mountain, the dynamic qualities of my self-movement are shifting. The measurements, ability, efficiency, and vulnerability become apparent as my body itself is passed over in silence for the occupation of the landscape of the moment, of deep movement consciousness. This is not a forgetting of the body (Van Den Burg, 1952) or as if I am moving within a psychological 'flow' of a sub-conscious or less conscious state as Csikszentmihalyi (1990) writes. This self-movement is a heightened conscious awareness, a remembering of my body, a re-membling. I am in a state where the fluctuations of physical and mental sheaths are calmed, and consciousness flows less disturbed into the deep landscape of movement where movement becomes the moment, and a profound stillness is experienced.

As I pass within a field of weightless diamonds shimmering in the light of the February sun, it is as if the stars have fallen into the snowpack. My skis gliding upon this shimmering surface, strum across the snow crystals, and a frozen chime rings through the air. The awareness of travel fades. Travel implies a speed. Speed is distance over time. A conscious reference to distance disappears. Distance embodied. Time stands alone. No point of reference, a flowing presence.

In lush billowing, the force of possibility, accumulates, inflates the space, mounting inescapably, inevitably, accelerating my heart beat, abundance of duration and plenum of space, eros of the eternal moment (Milloy, 2007). Rush, bursts onto itself patiently. Future's faint flare meets the past's fading glow and writes itself one sentence at a time, each word the moment, luscious bestowing of presence.

Accumulated energy stored in the fibers of flesh,

the visceral sensibility beneath the sensorimotor surface of the body
key to worldly interactions is called to attention.

In this circulation, a fluid connectivity and reciprocity
as blood boils, pressing against skin
moist breath heaves as movement explodes

I feel the momentum of movement
carrying me away...
from something
theorizing and concepts cannot keep up
even words struggle with the pace
the threaded thoughts that connect concepts
theory
and words
are stretched clinging to the connection
until they surrender to the force
and let go
somehow the release is not a disconnect,
it is a sinking in
concepts, theories, words dissolve into the moment
into the momentum
into the movement
so intimately that there is no separation

this carriage carries me
I pass over...

The equipment, the physical training, my physical form
work synchronistically transporting me into the mountain.

I let them go...

Another threshold

Surrender

Sink

Snow begins to pile
against my knees and thighs as I gain speed.
My senses are reeling with the familiar sensation,

The snow piles higher against my body
as I sink into a pool of air decorated with trillions of snowflakes.
The carriage of movement shifts beyond the physical.

My minds fluctuations surface,
Thoughts, fears, images,

Breathe

Inhale

Exhale

Threshold

Surrender

Sink

Breathe

Inhale

Exhale

Thoughts dissolve, images fade
A moving meditation

Gravity, the forest, and time, have been embraced.
Fear and feelings have been directed to a focus in the moment.
I meet my fear on neutral grounds.
Now we can dance together

Experience falls into itself,
connected with rhythms of a living-experience
layers fall away and I stand naked with the world,
confident that I belong.

I approach the ledge of a cliff
Without hesitation my skis
pass over the ledge

and I am launched into the air

Dormant forces come alive
The motion of movement fades
And the moment arrives

Breathe

The moment is free from time it is stillness,
the eternally moving, non-mover

Within the depth of movement lies the seed of stillness,
and in stillness lies the seed of movement.
Profound is the stillness before action.

Stillness occupies space and time,
while containing the potential of movement.
stillness becomes movement,
while movement becomes stillness.

‘Still’ not moving or making a sound,

‘ness’ a state or conditions

The ness of being still.

Still what?

“I’m still skiing”

“I will still ski in the future”

“Skiing is risky, still I feel safe while skiing”

“Keep skiing, better still, ski more.”

Stillness, from which the first movement came
is more movement than movement
Stillness is the available movement of the moment.

in stillness while little is ‘uttered’, everything opens to possibility.

There is no momentum to anticipate, intercept,
 I can initiate movement anywhere mentally,
 physically, spiritually
 any time chronologically or kyrologically.

In the moment, stillness is more movement
 than movement is movement,
 because there is no separation.

The constant interplay of movement
 within stillness

and stillness within movement.

The moment presents an understanding more ancient than thought.
 Shifting away from presence,
 Conceals this current of understanding.
 In presence layers dissolve revealing nakedness, confidence, and belonging.

Like the pause between each inhale
 and each exhale,
 like Rumi acknowledging the source of his words,
 like the sound of travel in the Whiteroom,
 fluctuations are calmed
 movement

the moment

stillness

silence

silence leads through sheaths of
physical and mental fluctuations,
an experience of some spiritual presence
is shared with words
as words falter and bow down to the experience itself

this experience is the Whiteroom.

A room decorated by snowflakes,
A feeling stirred by wonder
A belief of something more
An experience of...who knows

Stillness has a weight that I do not find in any word

With a deep exhale

Skis return to snow
Snow flies in the air
The world goes white

and we enter this
room, this line

beyond

words

together

The skier skis, pressing his form
 in the field of possibility of
 movement spraying words

while simultaneously movement presses its form
 on the skier injecting words.

As I ski I press my form
 into movement and words are born
 shaped in the moment,
 dissolved into the ineffable
 As I
 sink and rise
 within the depths and shallows of movement
 movement presses her form
 on me.

The ebb
 and flow.
 Wordy and wordless
 experience

seeping into the stitching of my soul
 into the fabric of my flesh

another accumulation
 another threshold
 Sink, surrender, let go

Breakthrough

Release

Release:

Letting Go, Celebrating, and Longing to Return



Experiences like summer, interacting with new people, and putting yourself in positions of discomfort, you will connect more with the passion you have and the longing you have for something, and you will enjoy it a little more as well. –Leah Evans

I turn my head and see snow crystals flying from the tails of my skis. It is such an unusual sight that it catches me, seduces me to keep looking. I turn my head around before I run into something, but the energy of the sparkling crystals lingers. Experience is invited deeper. Body sheaths, being sheaths, and becoming sheaths continue to surrender to thresholds and breakthroughs. As movement unveils new nakedness, new understandings are conceived, and the distinction between particles and the space surrounding them is losing its original sharpness.

I continue to sink, surrender, and ski in movement as the slope of this mountain becomes less steep. My speed is reduced. Snow begins to recede from blasting over my head, around my face, and against my chest. I feel my shoulders drop as the line I ski leaves the Whiteroom and enters the flat snow covering the frozen water of Tryst Lake. Coming to a stop on the lake, I feel a blast of energy cresting, cascading, and rushing over me. The wave is the energy of the accumulation and the threshold. They could not keep up with the speed of the descent but were tethered to the tails of my skis, and I feel them now.

As the waves of accumulated, threshold, and breakthrough energy crash into me, words are released from the experience, words that surfaced spontaneously in the motion of the descent, as well as words that were concealed by the speed and my focus during the descent.

Still breathing hard from the descent, I quickly pull out my pad of paper and pen and frantically scribble lines on the page that would be illegible to anyone else. My hand is shaking; the written lines are frantic. I look at the paper, and the scribbled lines look like some sort of hybrid writing, a cross between ski lines zigzagging and alphabetic text. Although it is difficult to distinguish the alphabetic text that I've just written, I'll remember when I return to the words

later. The words will connect me with more than just the ink they show. The invisible message will be revealed when the energy has calmed, and I sit with it for a while. The sitting, the reflection, is the magic glasses that help decode the invisible message. This sitting is the space where the alchemy of releasing words from experience happens.

One by one our group gathers at the bottom of the run sharing high-fives, hugs, and huge smiles. I flop in the snow allowing it to catch and caress me, and to dwell within this feeling. After a few minutes of celebrating, we decide we have lots of time for another run before the sun sets; so we put our skins back on our skis and start our procession up a different section of the mountain.

* * * * *

Standing on the lake after another run, I look up the mountain to see the line created by my skis. I am reminded that I am constantly writing, not always with pens, or pencils, or computers. My physical body and mind are tools and palimpsests of the pre-reflective imprints I leave and that are left upon me stored in my flesh. Freeskiing offers a beautiful illustration of our constant writing: the calligraphy of the freeskiing line extending, twisting, sometimes barely readable, sometimes in bold. The freeskiing line follows the freeskier as turns are made in the snow. This line can be photographed, filmed, it can be shown to others and can be read like words on paper. The lines freeskiers write are signatures, which offer an opportunity to study, celebrate, and share their relationship with themselves, and their surroundings. The freeskiers snowy signature is visible and tangible. However, for most of our human experiences the lines we scribe and the ones scribed upon us remain concealed in experience, invisible to the eye. How

does one proceed to wander in-between the visible and the invisible to write about this experience, to come up with words to share it textually? The line I just wrote in the snow slides side to side from the tip of the ridge through the alpine, in the air off bumps and cliffs, through the trees, and then tucks up under my skis as I stand on the snow. I have a strange feeling of excitement and opening, as well as a sensation of loss and sadness. Expanded in the opening and becoming, the loss I feel is of my previous self-surpassed in the creation of a new self. I feel brand new with expanded experience and present possibilities in the landscape of movement.

I look down at my snow covered feet. Lifting my skis also lifts the snow on top of my skis. I imagine the line that is there under the snow, under my skis waiting, ready. The unwritten line is the unknown me. I glance back again to the visible line and then forward to the untouched snow, and the infinite lines that exist invisibly. I share a few more high-fives with my friends and push forward in the snow, extending the visible line behind me.

Some of Josh's words come back to memory: "An analogy I often use is that freeskiing is an art form for me. The mountain is the canvas, my skis the paintbrush and I am free to express myself however I want. Whatever tracks I leave in the snow are there for a moment, and then they will soon disappear, which is kind of neat because there's nothing to it; it is just to experience the experience." I look back again at my line and know it will be covered by snow. Perhaps this art of snow writing is similar to street art where artists paint walls knowing that someone else will come by and paint over their work. Like the street art, the line I've written on this mountain will be swallowed by new snow, like an etch-a-sketch toy shaken to remove the line. Covering the line creates the opportunity to write a new line. Even when the ski line is covered by snow, it still exists; it continues within me.

We reach the flat valley floor that we crossed earlier today, as we move away from the mountain, heading back towards the road. My eyes follow the line that now extends in front of me towards the road and our car. The line simultaneously extends behind me, back up the mountain; the line of our ascent remains...for now. Writing and being written by the line, I once again fall into the rhythm of sliding across snow with skis. The rhythm lulls me into a reflective space, and once again, my reflection goes to self-movement and movement.

Releasing Self-Movement and Movement: Mark's Experience

“I have been working up to this point in one way or another for the last few years. Putting everything aside and letting go of all of that preparation and just reaching forward for that one goal...” –Mark Abma

It has become clear to me that inquiring and theorizing into self-movement and into movement itself, is important and requires more questioning and challenging. One element that has surfaced with regards to theorizing and inquiring into self-movement is that there comes a time when we must release our theorizing and sink deeper into the self-movement experience, trusting that sinking *is* theorizing.

Six years have passed since Mark and I first shared our breakfast chat at the base of Whistler Mountain. We now sit atop a cliff overlooking Brome Lake situated between Squamish and Whistler. We have come together to continue our conversation about the diverse experiences of movement; from spirituality and love we have shifted to creativity, inventiveness, and progression. And from within the conversation an idea, a dream, a project, surfaces...

John: What kinds of movements do you dream about, or see in your mind, or wonder about?

Mark: I guess maybe I've been limiting myself. I guess I have visions of what I want to do, such as working with natural terrain and doing specific movements with that terrain. What I envision is, I guess I wouldn't say it's out of the box because it's within my box but it is a different lens on skiing. Yeah, I guess for a lot of what I am trying to do it's so hard to find conducive terrain, or what I think is conducive terrain.

Mark's wonder is now visible as his facial expression presents his thoughts that sweep over unknown possibilities, and his eyes scan the surface of the rock we are sitting on,

John: What are you looking for?

Mark: Well basically I'm looking for natural shapes for an idea. I'm getting lost in my thoughts here. But with jumping, you want a jump shaped a certain way to be able to do certain things, and with natural terrain you can be kind of limited because, for example, this rock right here [gets up and moves his hand along the rock we are sitting on] it is pretty flat with a little bit of a kick [an upturn right at the edge of the cliff], so it would be super conducive for throwing a trick, right? Whereas, let's say you are skiing down a run, and all of a sudden you come up to a cliff like this [shows another area of the same rock we are now both standing on and inspecting...this section of rock rolls downwards towards the lake below].

I guess allowing myself to adapt to those kinds of scenarios, to create and find tricks that will allow me to adapt; so for this kind of pitch I would not want to throw a back flip off of it. You would rather want to throw some sort of forward rotating trick. And for now I don't have too much confidence in throwing forward rotating tricks. So I have to go to the water ramps and practice so that the rolling terrain does not limit me, and I'll see it as an opportunity

With this approach I could see all these things that were negative challenges before, and see them now as opportunities, turning them into a positive thing. Rather than coming into saying everything is so hard, and I can't do this, I can say, well it might not work for that, but it might work for this. Again trying to peel away those layers.

A scream of joy pierces through the air as a kid runs right beside us on the cliff and throws a front flip off the cliff landing in the water below. "Holy shit man! That's why I started skiing right there; that's what I used to do!" Mark says with a laugh.

Mark and I look at the water below and decide to apply some of the forward rotating tricks he intends to practice and implement into his skiing, as well as ‘be kids again’ basking in the heat.

As the summer sun starts to approach the distant horizon, Mark and I continue to jump, spin, flip, fly, and fall into the waters of Brome Lake. A bodily attitude of wonder, a movement conversation in the face of something wonderful in which we are both immersed and are in the process of inquiring into with words and gestures. The potential opportunity of connecting with the terrain, conversing with what it is saying and using that conversation to create new movements would become Mark’s passion and focus throughout the season.

* * * * *

Months have passed and now the frigid February night sky descends upon the frozen earth, their surfaces meet like crystal glasses pressed together, and a shrill of pressure escapes the delicate tension of the moment teetering on the brink of shattering. The warmth of summer and the thrill of jumping into Brome Lake are veiled behind the chill and snow of winter. Mark has practiced his dream movement countless times; in his mind, in water jumps, and has practiced snow jumps since he created the movement in conversation at Brome Lake. He now finds himself in Alaska, continually searching for the opportunity to jump in the wild terrain of the backcountry.

I am also in Alaska with my friend Keith at the same time as Mark is here doing some filming. Keith and I decide to drive to where Mark and the other freeskiers are staying to see if we can catch up with him. Instead, we are met with the director and a camera man who came back to camp to work on his camera. I asked if Mark was around, and he told us that he was up in the mountains filming as we spoke, and briefly mentioned that Mark had an amazing run earlier that morning. Acknowledging that the light was great, he shook our hands and turned to head back to work...back to the mountains.

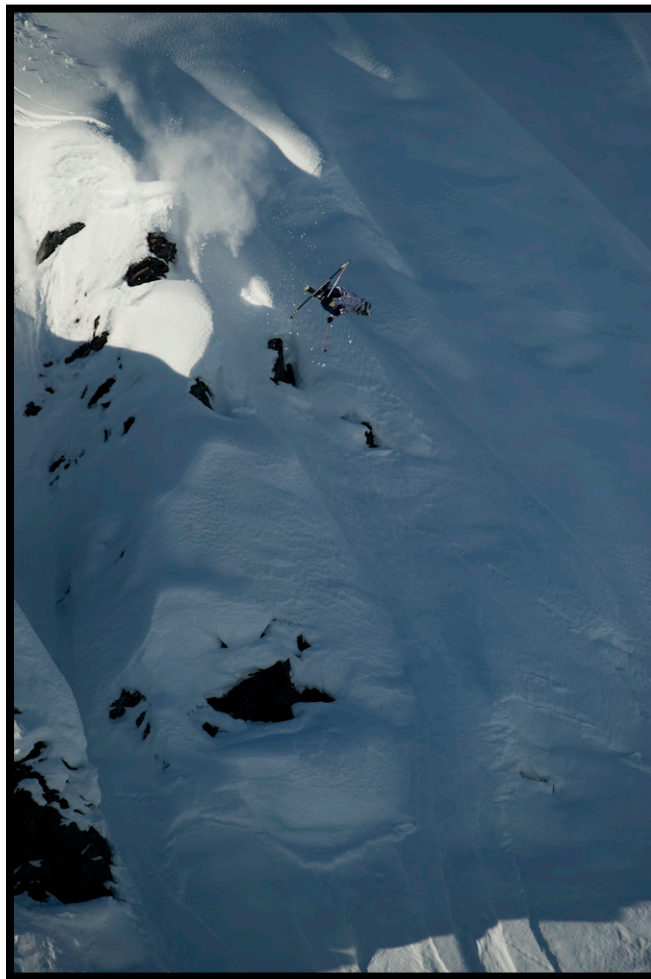
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Night has fallen in Alaska like a pitch-black blanket resting on the mountains and surrounding terrain; only the stars are free from its darkness. The dining room of the Fort Seward Lodge is empty except for our table where Keith, Mark, a few Haines locals and myself sit. The dim light is pierced by our excited conversation. Mark's eyes illuminate the room, energized by the day's experience.

Mark's arms and hands move through the air in harmony with his words. The experience he is sharing could have lived earlier that day bound by the of 10:45 and 10:50 a.m. but that experience was alive far before that chronological time. The experience was alive in the summer conversation on the cliff at Brome Lake, and the conception of the maneuver that Mark has just performed was probably alive before Mark can remember. It is unmistakable that the experience is alive now as Mark continues to share it with his eyes, his words, and his hands.

The story flashes around the room, his words like lightning shooting out of his reciprocating hand gestures. Our excited responses of “oooooh” and “yeeeeah” are like the thunder that is seduced to boom with the flash of the lightning. This light is of flesh, and is being fleshed out. “No?!” “Oh man!” “Yeah!”

Flash...Boom...Flash...Boom...Flash...Boom...An energy storm. I’ve seen Mark’s eyes shine like this before...but there was something special about it this time!



This photo was taken of Mark in Alaska. It is the physical manifestation of the jump that he dreamt up at Brome Lake, and practiced many times in his mind and on snow ramps.

The excited conversation continues, and questions are asked about what he was thinking standing on the ridge before he skied the line, and what the experience was like. But there was some power in the experience that was beyond words; it was too fresh for him to share descriptions, or words. His sharing of the experience was with his eyes and his gestures, and being present for that was more than enough communication to understand the impact of his experience. As the light of the room begins to fade, Mark and I embrace and part ways...for now.

* * * * *

The fresh smell of spring floats in the air as Mark and I find ourselves once again submerged in conversation. This time we have met at his house in Pemberton. Mark is boiling some water for tea as a video clip loads on my computer. The clip is of his experience in Alaska, skiing up to and over the edge of the cliff, rolling his shoulders forward, setting the trick into the unknown, into the abyss. The same trick that he shared with electric eyes in the hotel in Alaska a few months ago; the same trick he had been preparing for on the snowy jumps in the winter and the water ramps in the summer; and the same trick that was conceived on the cliff overlooking the lake in the summer at the infancy of this phenomenology in movement. The video is loaded, and we both sit back to watch:

John: That's it! What's it like seeing it?

Mark: Right away I start picking it apart.

John: Yeah? What do you see?

Mark: I see that I need more speed. I see that I need more commitment to set the trick. I landed a bit off because. I didn't rotate quite enough. I need more commitment, which makes the experience that much scarier because you're coming in so fast and are like Harrr [Marks arms are forward and his face and eyes are intense for setting the trick], that was the most exciting moment for me leading up to that part of the season. It was run one, day one; we flew up to the zone and there was a line here, and a line there, and I picked that one. I have been working up to this point, in one way or another, for the last few years. And putting everything aside and letting go of all of that preparation and just reaching forward for that one goal – it's just a really good feeling. I was not worried about the shot. I felt like I was diving into the unknown.

John: In terms of your ability?

Mark: Yeah for sure, in terms of my ability. Jumping off this cliff here I was able to see it from the bottom, but from the top I could see this little lip here, but really what am I jumping into? Basically, I'm going to huck myself into a black hole, and to ski away from it is really liberating.

John: Liberating! Why would you say that?

Mark: I don't know. When you have cameras all around you, and you're trying to create a film segment, for me I'm always trying to get that shot. But this time it was all for myself.

John: Being the first run of the first day of your trip what were you thinking when you got to the top?

Mark: I flew up and had a look at it but didn't know where the take off might be. There was a few spots that might work for a take-off, so there was like plan 'a,' 'b' and even 'c.' I got to the top, and I was like, "I think that's the one."

John: Did you use photos? [Often freeskiers use digital cameras to have an image of where they are going because the terrain looks quite different from above then it does from below.]

Mark: No. I didn't for this one. I usually use photos for longer lines. I kind of really enjoyed the non-calculation of the experience. [Mark pours tea...] I just got so excited about doing it that when I saw the opportunity, I just jumped off of it! It was something that I had been looking for all season. But you know, when I got to the feature, I thought "oh maybe I should do a straight air," or you know something that I know I can do. But actually in this moment, it was not so much of fear of bodily harm, it was more fear for not getting the shot. It was a good day for it; the snow was perfect, and the lighting was really good.

At the top I was just kind of doing these arm motions of the move, getting my body ready going through the motions of the trick. I had to kind of "yeah" just get myself rolling forward again because I hadn't done a misty [the name of the trick Mark was about to perform] since early January, and now it is February. It is a cool thing knowing I wasn't super experienced with this trick, not knowing what

was below me what potentially landing on, and all these unknown and to just jump into that unknown. The unknown elements of the experience were probably the coolest part for me. There is always some form of calculation with tabletops as you are just familiar with surroundings, but in this unfamiliar area I guess that's what brought me to that liberating experience.

Every time you are going into a cliff huck you are never going to be able to really know everything you are going to jump into. So I've got thoughts going through my head of if I land on a rock or something else less than ideal. So putting all that fear aside [makes arm motions to the side as if he's literally pushing the fear energy to the side], well rather accepting that fear [now gestures his hand extending up with his palm facing the sky]. Basically having this fear bubble right where you are standing [hands swirl above his head creating the shape of the fear bubble that consumes him], but as soon as you pull down, like here I had four or five turns before I was going to hit the cliff, so I had time to get in my groove, and my fear bubble was still chillin' up here [Mark points to the top of the line where his ski tracks lead to the ridge], and then by the time I got to this point, I just felt like I was going into the mechanical aspect of it. I've done misty's at Brome Lake, on the water ramp, then up at Silver Star on the winter jumps, so I had some of the mechanics... just the set the arm motions.

In the air I have no worries. That's the fun part. Being in this scenario and being calm. Doing a seven [seven hundred degrees. Its actually two spins, so a 720, but the slang is to just say a seven, like saying "I did a 3" for a single 360 degree spin]. You don't really have time to look at the drop and see how far you are going down because you're spinning so much. To land in this super soft snow, the um... [Mark raises his hands; his fingers swirl in the air like he is casting a spell] I don't know how you could describe this...how the snow is kind of a cushion for you, a cradle [laughs] it felt like quit the gift.

Mark and I go for a walk after watching and discussing the Alaska experience at length.

We walk among the tall cedar trees behind his house with the sound of rushing water as rain and snowmelt from the nearby mountains flow past. I am reminded about the connection to the snow of the mountains and how it all starts by shoveling snow at our doors in the winter, and extends to the tips of the mountains and the clouds that pass above their peaks. Here in the spring the same water is present, but this time in a different form, as liquid. It passes right to our door and links to the peaks and the clouds and the ocean just as in the winter. I dip my hands into the stream; I feel the flow of the water against my skin. I cup my hands and bring the river to my face to take a sip

of the glacier water and to splash it against my face. In these rhythms of spring I feel close to winter, and to breakthroughs that have occurred and those that wait concealed by unknowns.

Mark: Its not setting expectations for yourself for down the road; you are just doing what you can in the now. If you don't look too far down a road, then you can't really go down the wrong road you know? It's about being present in the now. I just kind of think about letting anything be possible and moving towards that until we are told it's not possible. We have the possibility to be super-human, you know. We are just putting all these restrictions on what we can accomplish and attain.

For me with the fear of the unknown and the vulnerability it takes to surrender to it, I am really giving myself to whatever that may be. I guess one of the greatest things we can do for ourselves is to be vulnerable in any way shape or form.

* * * * *

Back at Tryst, I get to the car and feel the energy that I have released in this process of accumulation, threshold, and breakthrough in this day of freeskiing, is being released back to me by the mountain and my movements. I am filled with appreciation and gratitude as I slip my cold and wet feet out of my tight boots. I wiggle my red and white toes to circulate blood into them. Sitting in the car staring down a snow-covered winding road, my body sinks deeply into the moment. Smiles are shared from each of us in the car as food and water are passed around, as are stories and recollections of the day of skiing. The sun hangs above the jagged mountain peaks waiting to sink into the night as we eat and drink joyfully, laughing about the experience. "Can you believe this day?" "I never want to leave!" "It's sooooo beautiful!" "Hey check out that glacier down the valley; look at the flow in the ice. Amazing!"

The friendly chatter continues until the sun starts to dip below the jagged ridgeline of the distant mountains, and then we are silent. The descending sun takes with it the light of day as well as our desire to speak. We sit silently celebrating. The sky has been exploding with warm colours as a golden yellow gives way to a deep amber, then to a dark red. The sun is now behind the mountains; the colours start to shift from warm to cool. A faint turquoise flows into a light blue, and as the sun's rays follow their, source the light blue becomes profoundly dark.

The sun has set,
the moon not yet risen,
it is the moment in-between

and it belongs to the stars.

Still silent, we breathe in the moment. Inhaling and exhaling I feel the snow on my legs, the wind on my face, and the energy in my body. The skiing certainly did not stop as I clicked out of my bindings, and is certainly not left behind now as we drive away...distance traversed.

Anderson (2001) writes that wilderness and risk heightens the senses of an attuned participant. This perception can take us past the surface of experience into a depth of the meaning in the experience. There is a cleansing in the sheer isolated suffering of performing a movement in the 'wild'; passing this threshold opens a clearing for a kind of existential learning. Of Thoreau's work Anderson (2001) proposed:

Thoreau makes a case for the aesthetic influence of the sourness and tartness of the wild apple—it is a taste that awakens and sustains us. Xtreme sports may again be exemplary. A wilderness ski may, as I suggested, include some postcard beauty, but the skier may see and feel more than this, feeling the weather and sensing differences of felt qualities in sun and shade. The kayaker is not only in the midst of a visual paradise but feels the power of the water in her or his hips and tastes the cold that makes the possibility of hypothermia a constant traveling companion. This even wilder aesthetic whisks us from our automatic existence into the possibilities of creativity and self-realization. (p. 147)

The importance of nature, wildness, and the risk they bear for our movement experiences is that they bring us home toward a borderland where our own wild dimension can again come to life. The sharpest experiences of this sort bring us face to face with meaning and importance, although these may remain completely inarticulate concealed in experience.

Ongoing Tension: Releasing Words from Experience

I pull into my driveway and walk towards the house carrying my ski gear. As my foot steps down upon the snow-covered walkway, images of the day race through me. The reflective meditation has started as words start to fall into my presence, and experience is becoming articulated. In the warmth of the house, snowflakes collected on my gear from the day of skiing melt and run down my skins that are now draped over the top of the door to my room. My jacket is thrown over the back of a chair, and my gloves are flopped on my window ledge. The water drips and collects in puddles beneath my gear and around my ski boots that are tipped over on the floor. Spreading my gear to dry, I feel like I am still engaged in animated storytelling with my friends as their images, words, and experiences still linger in me.

The experience of being invited deeper into movement continues in my room, physically distanced from the mountain and my friends. Shifts of awareness occur between sheaths of self-movement within a streaming presence and an expansive understanding of the possibilities of movement. The rush, the wonder, and the possibilities in movement continue to be present long after the snow has melted from our experiences touring amongst the mountains.

In my bedroom I am brought back to wildness by Milloy's (2007) text entitled '*The Wilds of Persuasion*', which rests on my bookshelf. The 'wild' mentioned by Anderson and Thoreau does not necessarily mean in the wilds of nature. Milloy's (2007) text is a phenomenological inquiry of writing about the phenomenon of writing, from before alphabetic thought, incarcerating what is the body's own, at the threshold of proprioception, where words gather from flesh, a flesh of the world, a textual other emerges, disclosing the possibilities of the self-reassembling to the rhythm of the writing moment. The swelling awareness of the relational trajectories, the reactions, the (inter/intra) relationships between movement expands the experience of in-between, enveloping the experience of separation, blurring the boundaries of borders, and dissolving dichotomies. Consciousness connects deeply with the physical, the mental, and spiritual dimensions of movement revealing experience that exists beyond my ability to articulate. Entering such an experience requires trust, and surrender and this experience opens to a different language, a difference without contradiction. In this space the pulse of possibility speaks differently and requires a different voice to share its meaning and message.

Refreshed from a shower and a change of clothes, I pull out my meditation pillow and yoga mat. The meditative practice that I engaged for this inquiry was basically used to calm the fluctuations of my physical body and my mind, it was taught to me with Yoga and Taoist

teachings. I move through a series of yoga postures connecting more deeply with my physical body. After a few minutes of the postures, I sit on my meditation pillow, more physically connected and relaxed. In this relaxed physical state I direct my focus to the thoughts, words, and images flowing in my mind. Using breathwork techniques, I calm the flow of my mind. At times this calming of mind and body occurs smoothly; at other times it doesn't occur at all; and at times I remain fluctuating for some reason. This time I am able to sink into a calm state. I call upon today's freeskiing experience and am present with the sensuousness of its qualities living here in my room, distanced by time and space, yet transcending time and space.

In this meditation, today's experience swirls with an excited energy. Thoughts images, and feelings dance with each other. In this moment, I feel a rush of awareness that, only a few hours ago, I was standing on a mountain ridge struggling with the tension of the force of possibility, that I had walked up a mountain with friends and skied back down her slope. I am overwhelmed with the energy to travel within that mountainous topography, to ascend a few thousand feet. The spatial and temporal elements of this experience amaze me. When I try to rationalize the experience, I can't comprehend it, I cannot believe it; but when I let the experience flow within me and in the moment, it makes perfect sense. I may not be able to verbalize the feeling completely, but I can feel the experience at a depth that inspires and invigorates me.

From within this meditation, words start to appear. With pen and paper at my side, the meditation continues, I listen for words, and then I write words. Milloy's (2007) writing is beside me and I glance at a specific excerpt:

Can a text conceived, generated, and gathered in the womb of living experience and modified upon reflection still yield to living experience in its textual form? Can it hold the sensuousness, and the freshness of the living moment at the threshold of duration? Can it describe the moment of no-longer and not-yet? Is there the possibility, in this momentary surrender, to write a text that extends the surrender to render a formative pedagogic pulse, an agogic accent of duration? (p. 67)

Can such a text show a living presence before it is bound to the inventions of strictly a human language? I don't know; I think so; I hope so; I trust that it's possible. Surrendering at the threshold of writing the living moment, I stare blankly at an unmarked page. The light of the candle I've lit floats around the room, as do words like the snow that scatters in all directions as a snow globe is shaken vigorously. Around and around, zipping and zagging, the swirling words fly. Some slow down and come to rest upon the page, but will they stay?

After some period of time I shift from my meditation mat and read over the words that have surfaced from both the meditation process here in my room and those words that I gathered while on the lake at Tryst, on the ridge, and during the ascent up the mountain. As words turn into sentences both in my mind and on my page, I turn to the computer to bring context to computer text.

This phenomenological approach, where not very much is predetermined, methodologically or even theoretically, teaches us that full or final descriptions are unattainable (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). But rather than giving up on the intention to evoke the living human experience of self-movement, I am forced to go forth carefully with extra rigour "in a strong moral and spirited sense" (van Manen, 1997, p. 18), extra vigour, and an unwavering belief in the power of language and the art of writing. At the same time I have to keep in mind that writing living experience is a challenge that often brings us to the fringes of impossibility (Merleau-

Ponty, 1962; Sheets-Johnstone, 1999; van Manen 1997). The challenge of phenomenological writing and writing in general is well documented by van Manen (2002) who says, “every word kills and becomes the death of the object it tries to represent. The word becomes the substitution of the object. Even the subtlest poem destroys what it names” (p. 244). The object of this inquiry is self-movement and with multiple personal journals, computer files, and countless mental files about reflections and ruminations of the self-movement experience, it is no wonder why at times my life became disconnected from my own self-movement possibilities while working on the text.

Standing on the ridge of writing, the edges of my skis touching the blank sheet of snow like a pen touching paper, or the silent blinking cursor on a blank computer page, I stare down into the snowfield of possibility and am paralyzed at the potential power that presses against me, paralyzed by fear of where my line may take me, where I may take my line.

Days filled with sitting in front of the computer, denying opportunities to meet with friends, or work possibilities, and freeski possibilities. This narrowing of focus is not unique and is perhaps common for any writer engaged in the art of writing. The writer then replaces the living, breathing and deep experience of what he is writing with words. Eventually the surface of the words can become the depth of the experience. I write about snow rolling up my legs, cascading off my chest, and blasting off my face, jolting my awareness with the rush of movement. However, unless I get onto the mountain and into the snow, the experience that could stir my energy will remain in the shallows of my wonder. With regard to the challenge of writing van Manen (2002) continues;

For sure, not all authors speak of their writing experience with unreserved enthusiasm. The fiction writer Mordecai Richler once told that he was relieved when a book was finally finished since writing literally would make him physically ill. The philosopher Sartre could write only when he was under a heavy use of anti-depressant drugs. The poet Rainer Maria Rilke sought inspiration in solitude, which often brought him loneliness and existential despair. It appears that the bliss of writing is frequently not without pain or difficulty, or better perhaps that writing involves both bliss and pain as payment for its practice (p. 240).

In a narrative inquiry course I took facilitated by poet and language educator Carl Leggo, professor Leggo talked about Primo Levi, an Auschwitz survivor who made it through many trying times by writing about hope; yet one day he threw himself down a stairwell committing suicide—perhaps the ultimate presentation of a lack of hope. Perhaps his writing of hope became his experience of hope but remained in the surface of the words he put on the page, rather than in the breaths he took, and the smiles he shared. The imbalance of my life started to present itself beyond bags under my eyes. “You look skinny,” was a frequent greeting from friends and family who had not seen me for a while. Perhaps I could/should have replied, “Ya, I’ve been writing about self-movement!” Interestingly, in a paper entitled “Living Poetry: Five Ruminations” Leggo (2004) presents writing as healing. His message is specific to the act of writing poetry, and that with poetry we can transform to world.

In my daily living, I am motivated by the conviction that in words I know, I am known, I am...As I seek to make sense out of the chaos of emotions and experiences and thoughts that swirl around my head without end, I am constantly reminded that my life is inextricably intertwined with language, rhetoric, and literary device whereby I disclose (and conceal) what I know about the world and my experience in it. I am caught up in language, in word-making, in meaning-making, constantly striving to create the world, or at least a sense of place in the world. (p. 5)

I find myself caught in another tension. The tension between writing as a way to injure, even kill, the very experience I intend to breathe life into, and also writing as a way to heal my connection to the experience. Perhaps it is a matter of intention, and attention to the writing

process. Perhaps it is a matter of balancing killing and resuscitating that which I am writing. Perhaps the writer cannot be removed from this reality of writing and must weather the pains of writing with more writing.

The intention, the preparation, and the presentation of this project in the form of this text is to evoke the connection with the depth of movement within the expansive realm of movement possibilities of the freeskier in relation to his or her world. Attempting to write and evoke this connection has heightened my awareness of the opposite experience with this phenomenology. All the intention, all the preparation, and the attempts to present the rush of movement reach the topography of their academic presentation arena, the computer. With the computer, for me the rush of movement starts to erode not only from the experience of typing, but also from the words that are being typed. The words replace the experiential depth of the rush and my life beyond the computer, and then the words themselves sometimes become a void. The words themselves take on a uniformity of Times New Roman. Sometimes italicized, sometimes in bold. However, these unified words lack the flow and alterity that the words of my journal have. The words I write ascending a mountain look different then the words I write after I ski a run. And the words I scribble on a bus are different then when I write at home. But here in the typed text the reader would not see in the letters the subtle variation of altering mood, rhythm, and flow.

An additional tension comes from the energetic grasp of light, heat, and sound vibrations of the computer that extend well beyond the edges of its physical form. When I extend towards the computer with the living experience of freeskiing, I feel my hands enter its electrical fog where the vibrations, and electrical firings start to invade my being, as if the wires contained in the computer break free, slithering and coiling around my finger tips and my wrists, locking me

to the keypad. The coiling continues, and I become mummified in wires and electrical firings. Wrapped in the web of the computer, the fog beginning to drift over my hands my arms, my legs, rolling up my face and over my eyes, enveloping my body. My eyes are blurred and I begin to drift. The mimetic correspondence between alphabetic language and the depth of movement begins to erode, and is eventually severed. I enter an amnesiac fog, forgetting the companionship of movement. Unlike the energy of fear, this is a disabling corrosion, an unconscious and insane cessation of both my pulses of mimesis and wonder. The living experience of skiing while writing, and writing while skiing becomes sedated and sick.

As these words fall onto the page, as the energy shifts
into this computer, into these words, onto this page,
I feel exhaustion,
listlessness,
restriction,
and a creative void.

I am drifting over the caverns of wonder,
Attempting to evoke them

Impossible

The only way to revive the pulse of possibility is by closing the computer, cutting off the electric fog, unplugging from the wires, and plugging back into a different experience of movement. In plugging into a different experience I write differently, and gain new awareness. During one experience of unplugging from the computer and plugging back into movement, I noticed an extreme indication that the writing was killing not only that into which I intended to breath life with my words, but I was being hurt by this process. My friend Cory and I reached the ridge looking over Tryst Lake. The hike up was enjoyable, and the weather was fairly mild for mid-January in the Canadian Rockies. As we ate and chatted, I noticed that my pointer finger on my right hand was numb. It seemed too warm for my finger to be numb from the cold; it felt like a different numbness, a sort of dullness. I soon realized that that was the finger I was using on my

mouse pad on my computer, and figured that the heat of the computer was actually affecting my finger.

Throughout the project, the rush of movement has been present in my personal experiences in the mountains, in the ongoing conversations with the co-creators, in meetings with my supervisors, and so on. However, the project itself, the ‘performance field’ of the computer where the preparation is performed, as was the mountain for freeskiing, is a reverse experience to the mountain. When I prepare for the mountain experience the rush of movement turns up hours, days, weeks, even months before I get to the mountain with the mental visualizations of living experiences of past and future, and with organizing and preparing equipment, and talking with friends. As the temporal and spatial distance is traversed, the excitement builds and continues to accumulate as I ascend the mountain slope, especially in the backcountry when the ascent is gained under my own power, using my own energy. Upon gaining the height of the ascent, I meet a threshold, and a shift occurs. The accumulating energy is directed to the descent. When I push off of the ridge, the energy is used to perform what was dreamt about, imagined, fantasized. It is a release of certain energy while simultaneously gaining some different energy. This different energy is difficult to describe. The rush of this other energy is...

excitingly powerful, and mysteriously magical...

...but its power extends far beyond excitement. It feels vital. In its presence I feel vitally connected to something bigger than myself. This vitality is present long after my feet have left the mountain. It is shared in the eyes and the smiles and the embraces I share with those with whom I freeski. The experience of bringing this vitality to text with the computer is the exact

opposite of the experience I just explained. With the vital connection lingering from living experiences in movement, I turn to the computer, charged and excited. And as the electrical wires and vibrations consume my being, the vitality begins to erode and present tensions and blocks.

In battling the tensions and blocks of the computer, and of writing in general, therein also lay the fruits of writing, the power of writing, the joys of writing. One of the attempts is to keep the familiar strange. We have seen movement taken for granted...the same can happen with words, with alphabetic text. "Turning something as common as language into a puzzle (a mystery) makes the familiar feel strange; it makes the language we take for granted feel fresh and exciting again, like an old friend who just revealed a long-held secret" (Jay-Z, 2010, p. 56). The words we use to describe something can themselves become old, stale, and stagnant and taken for granted. Even the word energy is susceptible to losing its potency (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). What effect might that stagnation have on the phenomenon about which I am now writing? What about movement? For me (and for this inquiry) the way to keep things fresh (to make the familiar strange) was to return to the mountains, to freeski. It also included reading authors who challenged me with their writing. It also meant a practice of writing in journals with no lines so that I could feel invited to write large or small, backwards or forwards on a page, to draw, and basically, to extend the possibilities I was playing with. And to trust that when I was becoming stagnant or sedentary with my body, or my words, I need to pause, gaze, and dive into movement at some level.

* * * * *

As the night continues, and the electric glow of my computer fills the room, I feel my energy being sucked into the machine. Time to get outside and go for a walk, move some energy around, re-fresh, and return revitalized. This pause from the computer, and from my writing and reflecting in general is common in the rhythms of this inquiry. It was in a pause from reading *The Primacy* and from writing in my journal where I invited the reader into the terrain of this text, entering the rhythm of accumulation. It seems fitting to me that a similar pause would release this text from the rhythms of accumulation, threshold, breakthrough, and release.

Exiting my house I am greeted at the door by the distinct smell of winter. My nostrils flare slightly with the passing of cool crisp air into my lungs, and I smile. Distant dark clouds again threaten the cloudless sky above. The chill of winter envelops and penetrates the environment, a penetration so profound, it occupies the depth of my lungs. As I open my mouth, the chill exits from within. The moisture of my breath is cooled and appears as a visible vapour. The white breath rises into the air, and I follow its path, directing my gaze up high.

Stillness:

Reflecting Upon the Journey



When something is open, I am more open to different ideas to put on that thing. A blank canvas is white, the snowfield is white, and both are waiting for me to write my signature on them. Being open-minded more ideas come in, and that gives space for a lot of creativity. –Leah Evans

Einstein had the knowledge but he also didn't limit himself to following the rules of previous theories. He was always curious, asking, "Why does it have to be like this? Why can't it be like that?" bringing that curiosity of a child into his adult life. –Mark Abma

The rhythm of stillness has a unique momentum. Like the pause between the
Lub

and

Dub

of my beating heart.

Or the pause between the
Inhale

and

Exhale

of my breathing,

Stillness for me is the eternally moving, non-mover, an experience of timelessness, and presence. The rhythm of stillness is pregnant with possibility.

Stillness, from which the first movement came
is more movement than movement
Stillness is the available movement of the moment.

in stillness while little is ‘uttered’, everything opens to possibility.

“...open to different ideas...” as Leah says in the opening quote of this chapter. I think about the self-mover open to the possibilities of movement, and trying to be open to different ideas of movement itself. This chapter is called *Stillness* because it is a moment I have created to slow the pace, to reflect on the journey of this inquiry. My reflection brings me to my Masters Degree project where I was introduced and opened to the intention of this inquiry. I was opened to this research through the word spiritual, being connected to self-movement from the freeskiers I interviewed. The research of self-movement that I have been seduced into continues to be a process of opening. This opening has been experienced in many ways. At times I have felt

nurtured and invited like the opening arms of a warm embrace. At other times I have felt seduced into the unknown, like the opening heart of a lover. At other times I have felt hurt as if this opening was that of a wound where I have been cut open. All these shades of opening have felt like an opportunity, like the opening of a door or a porthole into a new terrain of experiencing life.

From the opening that was stimulated from my Masters project an intention was created. This *A Day With The Mountain* text is but one experience in an inquiry that I feel I have been engaged with my whole life, an inquiry that I intend to continue forth with for the rest of my life. With this text I intended to evoke the mystery of movement and the magical wonder of self-movement through descriptive accounts of self-movement experience in the context of freeskiing. In acceding to the demands of turning towards movement in an effort to recognize, celebrate, and challenge its mystery I feel like I have been expanded into an extraordinary terrain of the mystery of movement, the magic of self-movement, the freedom to change, and the power of wonder.

The Mystery of Movement

Throughout my journey with *A Day With The Mountain* my understanding of and ability to articulate movement began to deepen. I found myself in tension between my live(d) pre-objective experience of movement and my understanding of movement developed through schooling. Performing this inquiry I slowly connected to words and concepts, creating a vocabulary and theoretical terrain that expanded my already live(d) experience in movement. One of the conceptual understandings that emerged is physical objective movement as a surface of an inexhaustible depth (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). At times I have felt this surface to be hiding the

depth of movement. Such times were mainly when the physical realm of movement distracted me from the depth. For instance when my hands were freezing, when some part of my equipment was not functioning well, or when I felt like my physical body was not fit enough to meet the demands of the experience. In other experiences the surface was an invitation and a pathway to the depth of movement. Such times were when the fluctuations of the physical realm of movement were calmed and I was able to expand beyond my gear, and where the surface of my body itself became more porous and I extended beyond myself. Within this depth of movement lies a primary experience of discovering one's capacity, possibility, and relationship with the world.

Movement is, "for children and adults, a primary consciousness. Movement is a fundamental animation of behaviour, feeling, and thought that discloses essential connectedness to one another and to the world in which we live" (Smith, 2007, p. 49). For me this view of movement connects directly with the live(d) experience of freeskiing. While engaging with the mountain I feel a deep connection with an expansive and mysterious realm of possibility. Every time I step to the base of a mountain, no matter how familiar it is, and no matter how much information I know of the place, the experience is always filled with more mystery than certainty. The weather, snowpack, group dynamics, and my own energies are always shifting, often in unpredictable ways. The unpredictability of engaging with a mountain is not per se a unique experience as weather, group dynamics, and peoples individual energies are always in a state of flux. It is just that I am attuned to my experience more deeply with the mountain. There is something about the visible and invisible environment of the mountain that as Mark said has so much power and gives so much love. In the mountains I feel closely attuned to and humbled by

the power of the environment while being aware that I know very little of its immense power, it remains a mystery to me.

During this inquiry I came across a poem entitled ‘The Meaning of Love’, written by the Sufi poet Rumi. After repeatedly reading the poem, the word “love” and the word “move” began to merge. As written words, both are separable by one letter ‘l’ and ‘m’, (which interestingly are positioned side by side in the alphabet). The following poem is Rumi’s “The Meaning of Love” (Chopra & Fereydoun, 1998) in which I have replaced the word love, with the word move(ment). I am very grateful for Rumi’s work and am not suggesting his poetry needs refinement. I offer his altered poem with reverence for his brilliant way of evoking experience. In a few words Rumi was able to evoke the mysteriousness, the magic, and the primacy of movement that I felt was and is present in the freeskiing experience.

The Meaning of Movement

Both light and shadow
are the dance of movement.
Movement has no cause;
it is the astrolabe of God’s secrets.
Mover and Moving are inseparable
and timeless.

Although I may try to describe movement
when I experience it I am speechless.
Although I may try to write about movement
I am rendered helpless;
my pen breaks and the paper slips away
at the ineffable place
where mover, moving and moved are one.

Every moment is made glorious
by the light of movement.

The Magic of Self-Movement

The mysterious forces of self-movement are for me present in the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of movement. When I first get to a mountain, my focus is initially on the fluctuations of my physical body and my mind as I begin to shift and sink into the physical realm of my body, my ski equipment, and the environment...mainly the snow. If my equipment feels good that day, and my mind is clear I quickly begin to expand deeper into the experience.

As I expand, I shift beyond my equipment, beyond myself, and more deeply into the terrain of the moment. In this connection I experience self-movement differently as the familiar. I extend into the snow and the swirl of memories, dreams, and unknown possibilities that it evokes. I connect with such an expanded pulse that, when I freeski with my friends, we collectively create our pulse as a group and when we are fortunate enough we connect with a pulse of the mountain.

Connecting within the living mimetic impulse the interplay of my human senses with a more-than-human communication becomes more obvious. Movement is now experienced as an intentional arc “where each instant of the movement embraces its whole span” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962. p. 140) in a melodic gathering and laying down of presence (Levin, 2004). Freeskiing is for me a means of evoking such a communication between my body and mind, between my body and the surrounding earth, and the reciprocal participation between my own flesh and the encompassing flesh of the world. With this expansion I can connect with a more sensorial, direct, and interconnected experience in movement, of becoming flesh of the world.

While freeskiing, especially while skinning up a mountain, I feel the shifting of sinking deeper into the physical, mental, and spiritual spaces of self-movement. The rhythm of step, step, stepping up the mountain often lures me into a moving meditation. Sheets-Johnstone (1999) talks about when a self-mover is in tune with her or his self-movement they can think more in movement than thinking in their mind. I feel this connection, and yet, often I feel that I even shift beyond thinking into a state of being where thinking is unfolding more distantly. It is in these experiences of freeskiing where words flow more easily from the distance of thinking from somewhere else. Words that most often for me remain concealed in experience rise from the snowpack, or is it that they tumble from the surrounding peaks? Now I understand a little more clearly that sinking and surrendering to the depths beyond the physical surface of self-movement can reveal the magic of self-movement experience by connecting me more fully into the mystery of movement itself. I realize that this surrendering and diving deeper is the magic of writing self-movement experience for me. Here are a few words evoking the self-movement experience that surfaced while ascending a mountain.

The Experience of Self-Movement

Longing to slide over the edge
Fearing that I might experience
possible physical, mental, and spiritual
freedom, and
impossible physical, mental, and spiritual
freedom

Created and brought to life with wonder
in the mysterious
realm of movement

The Freedom to Change

The ongoing conversations with Leah, Mark, and Josh, contributed significantly to the development of my understanding of the concept of self-movement. Josh introduced the notion of freedom into the conceptual work of this text in the first conversation I had with him. Sitting in Banff Alberta casually, chatting to get in the flow of conversation. I asked him “What is your understanding of movement?” Without batting an eye Josh instantly replied, “It’s freedom.” I almost fell over as his words hit me. At the time I had been deeply immersed in my struggles with conceptualizing movement. I had found Sheets-Johnstone’s (1999) work and had already begun to tease apart the notion of movement, and as Josh said, “movement is freedom” it hit me with such resonance to my experience in freeskiing.

Time went by. Josh and I continued conversing at length, and at one point the conversation turned back to the same question “What is your understanding of movement?” Josh returned to the notion of freedom. He had been thinking about what I had asked him. Josh said “The more I thought about it in terms of what does movement actually mean, and what does it feel like, the more complicated I tried to make it”. Wandering a bit with his thoughts trying to



complicate his understanding of his experience of self-movement, Josh returned to freedom saying, “In reflecting on movement I realized that years ago I got the gist of it; it’s that right there!” [Josh lifts up his shirt and slaps at a tattooed word that spans the width of his belly.] “It’s freedom!” This notion of freedom was also present in the words Mark and Leah shared with me.

Mark said the experience was liberating with regards to performing the jump that he created in Alaska. Leah talks about the difference between real life and fantasy life where freeskiing is a sort of fantasy. She says:

There are parts of my life that I don't think are real. Skiing is like that; it is an experience that feels more like a fantasy world. I feel like life is more real when I have to make decisions about money or what to do in the future and. It's kinda strange.

I think my understanding of real and fantasy derives from things being socially constructed, but in the same sense I think it is the feelings I get. Like when I am skiing all this energy and awareness surfaces. And when I am faced with making decisions about school and jobs I feel locked into time and my energy gets so focused in those issues that I am unaware of other things. When I am skiing I am able to be more open-minded and to see things differently. I get this feeling sometimes when I am in the city or during the school year where I feel I haven't had that connection with nature. I feel like I'm missing something.

When she is freeskiing Leah says she feels differently than she normally does. "Freeskiing takes me away from my daily life. I am not thinking of anything else...life stops, yet starts up more vibrantly. I am in the moment and then that's reality." Leah sees the experience of freeskiing as being extra-normal where she is freed from the restrictions and expectations of what she perceives to be normal life.

I feel that it is very important for me to clearly share that freedom does not mean that the self-mover experiences movement without limits and restrictions. The freedom of self-movement includes the awareness of the limits and restrictions present to the self-mover at any moment when in movement. Part of the freedom of self-movement is the freedom to experience restriction. Carse (1986) calls this "A free suspension of our freedom" (p. 17). For all the possibilities into which we are born, and in which we live, we are also born into and live facing challenges of ongoing *impossibilities* and limits as we experience self-movement.

When I think about freedom, self-movement, and freeskiing I think about creativity, choice, and changing the way I experience the world. Mainly I think about the freedom to choose to ski wherever I want and to create whatever experience I want. When I am standing on top of a ridge looking down upon a mountain slope covered by a thick fluffy blanket of snow I see a visual example of the realm of possibility of movement and an invitation to experience that realm. Now the mountain invites in certain areas and denies me access to others. I have to treat the moment of creating a line with connection and respect for the mountain. If I try and tell the mountain where I am going to ski, I will instantly know if she disagrees with me. Line selection is for me a process of listening more than telling. When choosing a line to ski I listen to the mountain, to the snow, to the trees, to the rocks, to my friends, and of course to myself. And with variables beyond measure contributing to the decision a line is eventually decided upon. Of course I then have the freedom to change my intention mid line creation if the mountain was concealing something that is revealed while I ski, or if I mess up a turn and a new line needs to be created. The whole freeskiing experience is for me a process of creating within freedom and restriction of the realm of possibility of movement. What has surfaced in this inquiry is that wonder is a state that can help keep freedom, choice, and creativity present in self-movement experience.

The Power of Wonder

Throughout this inquiry, as I sank deeper into my self-movement experience of freeskiing, I realized that much of my experience was laced with a certain feeling. However, I did not connect a specific word to this feeling until I read Sheets-Johnstone's (1999) understanding of wonder: a spontaneous state variably weighed with fear and longing. Sheets-Johnstone's words

on wonder resonated so closely with my experience in freeskiing. In her words she successfully described a feeling that I know so well as a corporeal felt experience. With wonder described by Sheets-Johnstone, I instantly had a word and a concept that described the feeling of aliveness and vigour I felt and feel so often in freeskiing.

Wonder as a spontaneous state of being variably weighed with fear and longing characterizes the experience of self-movement of this inquiry. I feel my deep wonder of self-movement active and alive in freeskiing especially when I am about to create a line of which uncertainty is very present. When I am about to jump off a cliff that I am not fully confident of the landing, or when I am going to ski a steep slope and feel like I cannot fully trust the snowpack, that the slope will not avalanche, I feel my deep wonder of my potential, the unknown, and the mystery and magic of self-movement pumping through my pounding heart and choppy breath. In one of my journal entries dated February 11th, 2008 I wrote:

Wonder lures me towards the borderline, the margin of danger and magic, of comfort and progression where internal wildness develops and inspires me to embrace the fears I have and surrender to the longing to move. As I am tuned deeper into this relationship I find that with each step, and each breath, I am confronted by inherent tensions of movement, the very thing that lures me, that I fear, and that I long for. Movement stands as an opportunity that I can embrace. If I am alive to the presence of movement possibility my animate awareness is heightened, and I am inspired to move.

The feeling of wonder in self-movement is important to nurture and to stimulate a strong connection with the mystery and magic of self-movement and movement itself. Although I have discovered and continue to discover mystery and magic of self-movement and movement through freeskiing I now feel that it is the experience of deep wonder that is of importance and not necessarily the self-movement context. It is obvious to me now that with my deep wonder of self-

movement opened, it is wonder that encompasses the self-movement contexts I am drawn to, and not the specific contexts that evoke my wonder of self-movement. My wonder of and in self-movement continues to seduce me into unknown self-movement experiences; wonder is a dimension that I continue to tumble and turn within, and wonder itself fuels the very exploration it initiated.

Living in a state of wonder is possible anywhere, but as van Manen (2002) says, wonder is not a state that can be willed or simply produced in others. Wonder has to be evoked. I have learned that if we cannot will ourselves into wonder, perhaps we can at least place ourselves in, and create spaces that might stir our wonder. An important evocative source for wonder comes from my contact with the physical dimension of movement, and keeping in mind that this corporeal dimension opens to a depth of possibility. Throughout this inquiry, objects such as snow, visible breath, my gear, photographs, and ski movies evoked wonder of the freeskiing experience. Leah talks about wonder being evoked with regards to specific line she referred to as the ‘open corridor’.

John: What did it feel like when you first saw the open corridor?

Leah: It’s just this thrill in me; it’s like seeing an amusement ride that you have not seen before or for a while. It’s amazing how a sheet of snow can make me excited like that. But just seeing that [open corridor of snow] automatically surfaced this internal stoke.

John: Why do you think you get excited about the corridor?

Leah: I know because I’ve felt those turns before, and I know what it feels like to be in that state. When I see that much snow, I see a line instead of just a turn, and I just want to go for it all. As if it were like a drug that helps me go into another state of experience. There is not really a specific word I guess.

Mark has mentioned to me that there are times when he flies into an area in the mountains, sees a line and instantly knows that he not only wants to ski it, but that he will ski it. It is as if Mark was being seduced to that environment. In an e-mail, Mark sent this photo of an area in Alaska, and the e-mail simply read:

“Whether you're a snow slider or not, I think most everyone can appreciate this. This is truly a thing of beauty.

You could stare at this all day... so many lines. I'm pretty sure there are enough lines here for everyone I sent this to.

Enjoy”



Throughout my engagement with the experience of self-movement, including the tensions of self-movement experience, what persisted is that wonder is a means to cultivate and stimulate a life-long engagement with self-movement.

Sheets-Johnstone (1999) writes that we all discover ourselves through our self-movement. We become more aware of our capacity to move within the possibilities of movement –by moving ourselves. With wonder as a means of motivating me to move more and in new ways I expose myself to the possibility of creating new understandings of my capacities, my shifting limits, and the dreams I have of self-movement ability. Such elements of self-movement emerging from this inquiry are connected directly to what could be called the pedagogy of self-movement, of teaching and learning about self-movement experience. What is surfacing now

from within the stillness chapter of reflecting upon this journey is the possibility of recognizing and creating a pedagogy of self-movement that focuses on a pedagogy of wonder.

* * * * *

“What Now?”

I am riding my bike up the hill towards my house while thinking of winter, freeskiing, and my inquiry. I am enjoying the peacefulness of the ride when, from a nearby home, a door flies open, and three young kids come bursting out into the backyard screaming, “Outside! Outside! Outside!” The three scatter and spontaneously perform individual expressions of their self-movement while continuing their simultaneous chorus of “Outside! Outside! Outside!”

Within a few steps of being outside a young girl, gracefully performs a cartwheel, and a young boy jumps enthusiastically into the air throwing himself into a sort of front flip, somersault, roll thing. He lands, and I hear him quietly say, “Ouch!”...he is up and running before the words reach my ears. The third child sprints directly to the swings. As I continue pedaling up the hill the chorus of “Outside! Outside! Outside!” is still present in my thoughts. I’m struck at the synchronicity; one girl and two boys in the backyard, Leah, Mark, and Josh in my inquiry. Now seated in front of my computer a few minutes later, I reflect on this synchronicity of children moving spontaneously in the mystery of movement with the wonder of self-movement

Asking “What now?” the questions that have followed me throughout this journey return. How can we celebrate, share, nurture, and challenge the primacy of movement? How does one continue to discover oneself in movement? How does one continue to learn and live one’s animation in movement? How then is this learning shared with others? What approach acknowledges, respects, and nurtures such a challenge? What can be done with what has emerged in this study about and from self-movement?” My focus is now directed towards reflecting on a self-movement pedagogy of wonder.

Through my own experience of school physical education, the weight and focus on objective movement pushed my living experiences *in* movement to the margins. In the stillness of this chapter and the distilling of my reflections I now realize that the struggle I have with the tension of pre-objective movement experience and my understanding of objective movement lies in the imbalance between championing the objective as an a priori aspect of movement experience and my formal physical education experiences. I acknowledge that the objective aspect of self-movement is beautiful and powerful; but as stated by Merleau-Ponty (1962), objective understandings, experiences, and applications of movement and self-movement are the surface of a vast and largely unexplored depth of human movement possibility. My journey during this inquiry has brought me closer to my living experience of self-movement as it has enriched my understanding of movement.

I think an expansive pedagogical approach would have to include both objective and pre-objective understandings of movement within its conceptual terrain to accommodate multiple views of movement and self-movement. Arnold (1979), a human movement pedagogue and philosopher for both education and movement itself, writes that self-movement should be viewed

from different angles. He writes that three lenses can help develop understandings of self-movement experience. Firstly, we can learn *about* movement. This lens is predominantly concerned with the transmission of rational factual movement knowledge in a discursive way, providing theoretical understanding of the analytical, and evaluative aspect of movement where movement abilities can be measured, manipulated, and evaluated. Second, a person can learn *through* movement. Here, self-movement can be considered as a means, an “accessory”, *through* which we can reach goals, and acquire benefits, such as health, fitness, and physical skill. In the third perspective, a person learns by engaging *in* movement. Here the focus is on “the perspective of the performing agent and not with what interpretation may be put upon it by others” (Arnold, 1979, p. 15). The intention behind engaging *in* movement is simply to engage in self-movement for its own sake acknowledging that self-movement activities are valuable by themselves.

In the concluding chapter of *The Meaning of Movement*, Arnold (1979) extrapolates on the links between each of these perspectives, and school physical education curricula. I will cite here at length parts of this chapter.

If movement were conceived of in intellectualistic terms of what can be propositionally stated about it, it would be a hived-off and disembodied academic pursuit. Similarly, if movement was seen only as a means of serving ends other than its own it would remain purely instrumental in character and not worthy of being educative in its own right. For the curriculum implications of the concept of movement to be grasped in an adequate way it must be seen not only as a field of study, and as an instrumental value, but as a worthwhile group of physical activities engaged in for their own sake. (p.177-178)

In conclusion...movement...must be entered into for its own sake. Only then can its intrinsic worth be experienced; its inherent values made manifest. The world of movement for the agent or the moving being, is a world of promise towards self-actualization. It can expand its conscious horizons. It is a world in which the mover can come to understand an aspect of his socio-cultural world and in doing so discover more perfectly his self and his existential circumstances. To deny this world of bodily action and meaning because of prejudice or neglect is to deny the possibility of becoming more fully human. (p.179)

It is important or even essential, as Arnold (1979) writes in the second quoted paragraph, that the first step towards an understanding of movement as a rich concept in education would be an engagement *in* movement (self-movement) for its own sake. It is from this engagement that the most meaningful knowledge *about* movement can be acquired, as well as a valuing of the possible benefits *through* movement. I adhere to Arnold's view: hearing a discourse *about* movement as well as a discourse of the possible benefits offered *through* movement is, at the least incomplete, probably meaningless, without, first and foremost an engagement *in* movement.

A few years ago, I felt a shift in my own self-movement experiences from moving to gain something *through* movement, or to learn *about* movement, back to simply being *in* movement. I had been competing in freeskiing for a few years and was quite focused on continually developing my skills. I found that even when I was out with friends skiing for skiing, I was connecting the experience to my competitions and to what I wanted to learn. I wasn't *in* the movement for its own sake. This realization of distance from movement itself came to me as I stood on top of a steep mountain slope with a friend. Both of us were peering over the edge looking for a line. We exchanged our thoughts and intentions and then we both looked at each other and acknowledged how much we enjoyed the experience. We were both quite afraid and both very excited. And we were doing it simply because we wanted to. Mark talked about this experience of being in movement for its own sake with regards to a day he spent skiing in the trees by himself:

I guess more often than not I am skiing for a purpose whether it is to learn a trick or to get a shot or a photo. And for that day I just put my headphones in and skied around to music. It was a soul feeder to be able to appreciate the little things rather than to be focused on the biggest gnarliest line. It allowed me to find playfulness and flow in the simplest of runs.

Mark also talked about the importance of doing something just to do it with regards to the jump in Alaska:

When I have cameras all around me trying to create a film segment, I'm always trying to get that shot. But this time it was all about and for me.

Most days when I am filming I am trying to perform and push the sport and to impress to a certain extent. And then there are those days where I am skiing with my heart rather than anything else. I am doing it for the love of it, and I am creating more love...[a scream of joy as a kid runs and throws a front flip off the cliff we are standing on, landing in the water below]...Holy shit man! That's why I started skiing right there, that's what I used to do! [We both laugh].

My focus is also to not ski for the camera. I really try to carry the approach that if I wouldn't do it for myself, by myself, then I won't do it for the camera. I think I do a pretty good job of it. That in turn will allow me to keep skiing for the love of it, for the enjoyment, and for the challenge. I feel that if I can ski for that right reason it will come through in the film and people will feel that rather than always jumping off the biggest cliff or doing the craziest thing because I can pigeon hole myself that way in a ski career.

This perspective of moving to move, because you love it and want to be *in* movement is connected to what Carse (1986) talks when he writes: "A finite game is played for the purpose of winning, an infinite game for the purpose of continuing the play" (p. 3). When they are freeskiing, Mark, Josh and Leah are playing an infinite game e.g., engaging *in* freeskiing for its own sake, deeply immersed in their surroundings, like a child spontaneously does, a game full of possibilities in which they engage *in* wonder and in which they create freedom and generate more wonder. In this infinite game experience, movement itself becomes understood as an infinite playfield.

It seems that school physical education in general is using methodologies that are "moving students *away* from meaning and mystery" (Kretchmar, 2000, p. 268) and I would add, away from wonder, as the wonder experienced by Josh, Mark, Leah, and myself. Kretchmar describes methodologies that can be also seen as pedagogical approaches, used regularly to foster

the long-term goal of an active lifestyle. In a prudential approach, using lectures, and handouts for example, the message is utilitarian and movement is construed as a useful tool: “The point driven home is clear. If students do not adopt an active lifestyle, they are very likely to shorten their life unnecessarily and decrease its quality significantly” (p. 269). This approach clearly resonates with Arnold’s second perspective of benefits *through* movement. In an intellectual approach Kretchmar suggests, “If students for instance, were to digest the physiological, biomechanical and motor development principles that affect movement successes and failures, actual movement experiences should be more interesting” (p. 269). Again in parallel with Arnold’s perspective, this approach models well learning *about* movement. A third approach described by Kretchmar is the ‘affective strategy’: “The assumption here is that an experience that includes a positive affect is likely to be meaningful” (p. 269), and contribute to persistence towards an active lifestyle. Kretchmar concludes, “The prudential, intellectual and affective approaches leave children unable to explore, unable to act creatively...uncommitted and unmoved” (p. 270). None of these approaches touch directly the third perspective put forward by Arnold (1979), engaging *in* movement for its own sake, movement from the moving being’s perspective.

This is where a pedagogical orientation integrating phenomenology could be interesting as a way to get *into* self-movement. To write *A Day With The Mountain* for instance I had to attend deeply to my self-movement experience with freeskiing. In so doing I feel I’ve discovered more about *my* relationship to movement than I did in the previous years of physical education in grade school, high-school, undergraduate, and masters schooling. It seems most of my self-movement experience in school was focused on someone else’s experience and understanding of movement my own experience *in* movement was secondary if at all present.

Smith (2005) suggests that phenomenological descriptions, used as teaching-learning heuristic, are not a format for teaching self-movement but rather descriptions from within the self-movers own experiences and can be pedagogically potent; the self-mover gains deeper understandings of their own self-movement experience. I think a pedagogy oriented by the assumptions of phenomenology (attending closely to the experience of being *in* movement, describing this experience) could be helpful to nurture the primary experience of movement as a mysterious realm of possibility to be discovered that seems to be naturally present for children and adolescents, and fundamentally important for discovering their potential.

La Délicieuse Incertitude: Self-Movement Pedagogy of Wonder

For me with the fear of the unknown and the vulnerability it takes to surrender to it, I am really giving myself to whatever that experience may be. I guess one of the greatest things we can do for ourselves is to be vulnerable in any way shape or form. –Mark Abma

Within my reflections about “What now?” the connection between what I have experienced in this research *in* movement and self-movement pedagogy grows. I return to the words of Sheets-Johnstone and her theorizing about the power of being *in* movement as an important learning experience. “In the beginning, after all, we do not *try* to move, *think* about movement possibilities, or put ourselves to *the task* of moving. We come straightaway moving into the world [*italics in original*]” (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p. 136). Not only are we born into the realm of movement possibilities we also have a certain relationship with that realm that could be called a child-like connection.

We all start out the same way: as infants. And we all learn to move ourselves: without words, at our own pace, directly from our own bodies in an environment of possibility, on the basis of primal animation. (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p. 270)

As we grow older, it seems this environment of possibilities becomes taken for granted and atrophied. Contributions of this inquiry in freeskiing to self-movement pedagogy may come from acknowledging, and not taking for granted, that movement and self-movement are mysterious and magical human phenomena that need ongoing challenge, questioning, and celebrating. Without knowing at the onset of this inquiry, I realized that this challenging, questioning and celebration could breathe new life into the reified, formalized, and ossified aspects of my understanding of movement and of my experience in self-movement. Phenomenologically revisiting, reimagining, and returning to the experience of self-movement contributed more balance within the tensions I felt between the objective understanding and pre-objective experience of movement.

Specific characteristics of a self-movement pedagogy have surfaced in my phenomenological revisiting, reimagining, and returning to self-movement in the context of freeskiing, by conversing with the co-participants, through reading key authors, and by engaging in the art of writing and re-writing my self-movement experience. This self-movement pedagogy has close ties to what Brunelle (1996) calls *la délicateuse incertitude*, the delicious uncertainty. This idea calls for the pedagogue to propose learning activities which represent a challenge, a challenge that will be seen also as such by the self-mover (whether child, adolescent, or adult) and that will entice the self-mover enough to engage, in this case, in the movement activity. Such a state of *délicateuse incertitude* would create a “what if...” experience of the learner, some kind of “I wonder if ... I can succeed at this activity ...”. Thus an experience of challenge, risk, and unknown is present as well as “what if...I wonder”. The concept of *délicateuse incertitude* and the

wonder of the experience of self-movement described in *A Day with the Mountain* look like they turn closely together.

Uncertainty and the unknown is present throughout *A Day With The Mountain*, from my personal experiences on the mountain, to the experiences of Josh, Mark, and Leah, as well as within the authors who offer the theoretical terrain of this text. In talking about the emerging pedagogy this notion of the unknown is very important. What has surfaced in this inquiry is that the unknown is a terrain of pedagogical potential, replete with opportunity for growth and development by being in new experiences. And with an attitude of wonder, accepting to step in a zone of *délicieuse incertitude*, the self-mover may live a more mysterious and magical experience of self-movement. There are three themes that have remained strongly present as this research developed which all contribute to moving towards *la délicieuse incertitude* they are possibility where the self-mover risks entering the unknown, freedom to choose to enter the unknown, and wonder where the self-mover lives the unknown.

This concept of *délicieuse incertitude* resonates with what Haskell (2000) has called freefall pedagogy. Freefall pedagogy is the action or enacting within the context that she refers to as *the space of possibility*. Central to enacting pedagogy within the space of possibility is the notion of freefall, where teaching and learning “arises in unfamiliar, uncontrollable, and unpredictable contexts” (Haskell, 2000, p. 24), contexts that perhaps could be characterized as a context of *délicieuse incertitude*. Almost every freeskiing experience in the backcountry is to a certain extent unpredictable, uncontrollable, and unfamiliar. Even if the freeskiier travels to a zone where she or he has been before so much changes simply with the shifting snowpack that the space is difficult. Haskell (2000) describes this moment as “freshness to perception through

experiencing a shifting awareness” (p. 19). Haskell (2004) writes “such education moves beyond predicting learning outcomes and asks us to engage in the risks inherent with possibility. These are the unexpected spaces of possibility which freefall pedagogy seeks” (para 3). The risks inherent with possibility are more than physical risks. The pedagogue must be aware of and attend to the risks of physical injury that children or adolescents are exposed to in their movement activities. However the notion of risk in freefall pedagogy may be the line that connects the fear and longing of wonder, and is close to the challenge of *la délicieuse incertitude*. When engaging in the challenge of experience there is the risk to fail and the risk to succeed, and the risk itself of even surrendering to the possibilities of experience. And there lies an opportunity for learning.

I offer the following story as a vignette that illustrates this emerging pedagogy of wonder as explored with adolescent students I met in Canmore during this inquiry. These students have helped me understand the importance of a pedagogy of wonder, and have also co-created a program focused on unveiling human potential called the “What Now?”

I find myself walking towards a community event in Canmore. *La délicieuse incertitude*, freefall pedagogy, risk, surrender, and possibilities are on my mind. All of which are twirling within the pedagogy of wonder that is emerging from my inquiry into experience of self-movement.

The hall is filled with many people, most of which are between the ages of twenty-five and fifty. Within the crowd there is a group of 14-16 year old adolescents. I observe this small group as the night unfolds, noticing that at times they drift throughout the venue like a small school of fish, always staying close together. Brunelle, Haskell, risk, surrender, possibilities, and of course wonder are still on my mind...I decide to go meet the group.

After some introductions and small talk I ask if I can ask a question, they say “Sure”. I ask “What do you love about school” but before they can answer I say “No wait, *if* there is anything you love about school, what is it?” I get “spare” “sleeping in class” “lunch” and “art” as answers. I then ask if I can share with them a project I am working on and some thoughts that are emerging from it. They politely agree and a spirited two-hour

conversation about wonder, creativity, risk, fear, surrender ensues. At various moments in the conversation I ask if I am boring them, if they are at all interested in what we are talking about. They say I am not boring them, and that they are very interested in the conversation. A few even mention that they think about similar things but don't know where or how to express what they are experiencing. At some point in the conversation I share the idea of a program I have been thinking about. I share that at the heart of the program would be a curriculum of wonder. We continue to chat and a bond is made.

A month later I find myself in a room with my girlfriend and six young adults between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. Four of the six in the group are the young adults I met at the community event. These four strongly inspired the creation of this program as they each asked for my contact information and each messaged me a few times asking when the program will start. "Welcome to the 'What Now?' program" I say with excitement and nervousness carried upon my breath.

In this first night I engage the group in a conversation about wonder. I share some of the conceptual understandings that have emerged from my inquiry into human movement. Within the conversation the group is invited to write about wonder, what it means to them, what they long for in their life as well as what they are afraid of. Initially the conversation remains somewhat 'superficial'. Collectively we wade around in the shallows of our wonder, seemingly testing the waters. We are getting to know each other a little more, and creating the space of comfort to dive in deeper. I observe the conversation and the group feels somewhat tight, hesitating to open to each other. Slowly the group starts to open up with the stories we are sharing. Eventually at some point within the first evening together, almost every participant says "Nobody knows this about me but..." ...The participants then share dreams, fears, quirks, and ideas that they had their whole life and never shared with anyone.

The night continues and the openness and willingness of the group to go deep and then to share what they experienced in that depth surprises me. What also surprises me are the stories that my girlfriend and I are also sharing with the group. I too find myself invited into places of myself that I have never been. I then find myself surrendering to vulnerability and sharing stories from my newly experienced terrain. Perhaps the vulnerability to the unknown and sharing that experience is part of this emerging pedagogy of wonder for both the 'student' and the 'teacher'.

The interest of the 'What Now?' program continues to grow as we get more requests from young adults, and now parents, to create more programs. What has emerged from the experience with the 'What Now?' program is that there is a demand for wonder, that people are interested in the experience of wonder, they want it more. The pedagogy of *la délicieuse incertitude* as well as freefall pedagogy promotes moving towards the unknown, which will inevitably have some form

of risk present in the experience. It is important for me to mention that I am not promoting moving towards danger or recklessness, I am acknowledging the power of surrendering to the unknown and the unexplored possibilities that lay dormant in such spaces. Within the ‘What Now?’ program a pedagogy of wonder is explored in many areas. We have wondered about human movement as a field of possibility, and within that field our conversations, experiences, and projects have danced between visual art, music, math, language, writing, history, health, communication, relationships, emotions, life, death and much more. It has been a beautiful and challenging experience to contribute to create a space where wonder is directly acknowledged and promoted rather using methodologies that as Kretchmar (2000) says are “moving students *away* from meaning and mystery” (p. 268). One of the major challenges is also one of the major beauties of a pedagogy of wonder that we have used. That is the unknown, unpredictable flow of the experience. To allow the experience to be open, and fluid with space to grow, while having some form or structure to support the flow.

The experience with the ‘What Now?’ program continues to emphasize the power of the phenomenological approach, in the sense of creating space and connection to the experience of each individual as well as the group as a whole. It is clear that creating opportunity for each participant to experience the concepts, and the exercises that are presented in their own way is so important. As Sheets-Johnstone (1999) said, a phenomenologist inquiring into self-movement would be remiss if she or he did not attend to her or his own self-movement experience. I believe a learning experience focusing on a pedagogy of wonder would be remiss if opportunity for each participant to attend to her or his own experience of wonder is not created.

* * * * *

I have theorized in this inquiry that possibility itself is a force that affects the self-movement experience. Part of seeking and entering spaces of possibility, as Mark mentions, requires that the self-mover lets go and freefalls into the unknown, “this is the space—the time in the air, where learners let movements unfold, or educators let learning unfold” (Haskell, 2004, para 9). Within the rhythms of a day freeskiing as presented in *A Day With The Mountain* the freeskier inevitably reaches a moment where plans, intentions, dreams, and fears are put aside and the freeskier surrenders to the moment of the unknown. This moment is the moment where the freeskier generates enough energy to surpass the threshold that separates ascending the mountain (accumulation) and descending the mountain (breakthrough). Every time I push off the ledge of the known to descend a mountain I am surrendering to what Haskell calls the freefall moment; “The moment of groundless engagement that we cannot foresee but the actions which arise in the moment of doing” (p.18). Surely there is ‘doing’ throughout all experience for we are always doing something. However, there is something different about this freefall moment. The difference is the distance from the known that is created, and the closeness to the unknown, sometimes feeling completely wrapped in the unknown. Some of the stories in *A Day With The Mountain* were stories where the self-mover, as both the learner and the teacher, literally was in the air surrendering to that freefall moment by letting go, by letting movements unfold, and letting learning unfold. Of pedagogical significance and importance is that the freeskier in this moment *chose* to enter that unknown space.

The intertwining web of relations between the risks of freefalling into possibility, and the choices of freedom to enter *la délicieuse incertitude*, creates a powerful pedagogical terrain. A terrain that I believe is recognized, entered, and characterized within the attitude, state, and feeling of wonder. Haskell (2000) asks “How do we teach students to challenge themselves and

adventure into new territory, to breathe in unfamiliar air” (p. xx)? Emerging from *A Day With The Mountain* is the understanding that students may not need to be taught how to challenge themselves and to adventure into new territory. As illustrated by the self-movement experiences presented in this inquiry our primary way of experiencing the world is one of an apprentice where we discover our potential. Perhaps we are taught out of this primary way of experiencing the world. Perhaps certain teaching and certain curricula distances the self-mover from her or his primary understanding of being in the world. A pedagogical approach of nurturing and evoking wonder may play a key role in contributing to a self-mover’s ongoing connection with discovering oneself in the mysterious and magical (un)known experiences of self-movement.

Sheets-Johnstone (1999) writes that wonder fuels the opening it initiates. Wonder then, fuels the very self-movement experience through and through. “Acceding to feelings of deep wonder, we are consistently and concurrently driven “into the creative poverty of not yet knowing,” and into “the great longing” (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p. 333). Through the ongoing conversations and experiences with Leah, Josh, and Mark, as well as more recently with my experience with the ‘What Now?’ participants I see a need for more work and inquiry into creating spaces and opportunity for wonder to be present in pedagogy. I see a need to freefall into la délicate incertitude with a sense of confidence, vulnerability, and curiosity of the possibilities of self-movement experience. With the emerging self-movement pedagogy I imagine surrendering to the creative poverty of not yet knowing and the great longing to be vulnerable to possibility, freedom, wonder and the thread that weaves my self-movement experience together.

The Thread That Weaves

*The thread that weaves my tapestry of self-movement experience
is the unknown space of mystery and magic*

Pushing off the known and the visible, to enter
The unknown and the invisible
Pushing off the top of a mountain
sliding into the unknown of its snowy slope
Pushing off the top of my driveway
sliding into the unknown of my youth
Pushing off the top of my mothers womb
sliding into the unknown of this life in general

*The thread that weaves my tapestry of self-movement experience
is the movement of stillness, and the stillness of movement*

My intention in this life-long inquiry
Is to continue to evoke wonder and
to create and enter new spaces of experience.
Therein lies a pedagogy of potential,
a pedagogy to freefall into the unknown,
a pedagogy to enter la délicieuse incertitude
a pedagogy of wonder
Wherein I exercise and create my freedom

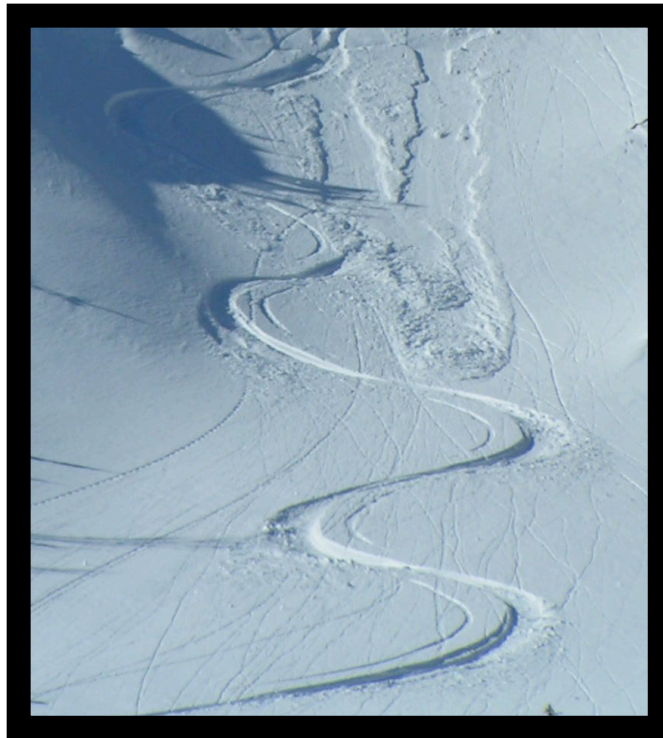
*The thread that weaves my tapestry of self-movement experience
is a line*

At times visible, vocal, effable, and moving
More often invisible, silent, ineffable, and still
My line is difficult to understand,
My line is difficult to describe
My line is unknown
My line is the mysterious thread
that weaves my tapestry together

* * * * *

The Line:

A Point of Returning and Departure



We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
(Eliot, 1943, p. 59)

The joyfulness of infinite play, its laughter,
lies in learning to start something we cannot finish.
(Carse, 1986, p. 32)

Where am I taking my line? Where is my line taking me? What turns have been made, are being made, and are about to be made? These questions are present with me nearly every time I stand on a mountain above a blank field of snow about to drop in, and when my pen hovers above a blank page about to drop in. These questions have been present with me throughout the creation of this text as a freeskiing phenomenologist inquiring into self-movement. The line of this inquiry has been turned upon snow-covered mountains and blank writing pages. The line has been written by myself, Leah, Josh, and Mark, and has been celebrated, challenged, and affected by other freeskiers, authors, and the phenomenological tradition, which all contributed to this experience of self-movement.

Right now the line of this inquiry is being written within familiar terrain. Once again I find myself heading north on a bus traveling on the *Sea to Sky* highway, towards Whistler Mountain. Once again my face is pressed against the window of the bus as I did when I first traveled to Whistler. Once again, I find myself marveling at the thick green vegetation that lines the east side of the road, and that is pierced now and again by breathtaking waterfalls. And to the West the deep blue of the ocean and glistening light that bounces upon its surface which curves along the shore of the land. Once again I find myself in a familiar place, a place that holds immense importance for this inquiry. This time, woven within the familiarity of this drive is a thread of strangeness. As T. S. Elliot (1943) wrote “the end of our exploring will be to arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time” (p. 59). As the bus turns off the highway, and with Whistler Mountain now towering above me I am physically returning to the place where the impulse of this inquiry got a significant charge.

“I don’t know any other word to describe an experience that has so much power and gives so much love.” That description from Mark with regards to why he used the word spiritual to describe his experience in freeskiing propelled me to this study. I was propelled because I knew there was something more to movement. The unknown mysterious more of movement enchanted and seduced me to attend to its presence. In attending to the more of movement the question “What is the experience of self-movement?” surfaced.

Within the turns of this inquiry, movement has emerged as a vast realm of possibility in which we are born into, and in which we discover ourselves through our self-movement experience. Self-movement has emerged as the possible physical, mental, and spiritual possibility of freedom present to the self-mover in movement. And the experience of self-movement has emerged as bringing to life the magical forces of self-movement possibility. Also emerging is that the possibilities of self-movement do not reach the horizons of the landscape of movement. Beyond the horizons of our self-movement experience there seems to lie a great cavern of unknown possibilities, a mysterious void, the space between the visible and the invisible. For the understandings, the concepts, the experience of self-movement that have surfaced in this inquiry there continue to exist (or at least I believe there exist) potential fields, forces, possibilities, and experiences in movement that are beyond measure, that are incalculable, and that remain mysterious. Moving towards unknown, mysterious possibilities is a magical part of development, and growth, and learning; it is a part of being alive, a part of being animated.

As self-movement and movement began to conceptually develop from asking “What is the experience of self-movement?” I realized that an additional question needed to be asked, that question is: “What is *this* experience of self-movement?” *this* being the experience of self-

movement within the specific context of this study, which is freeskiing. The main characteristic that accented the freeskiing experience was wonder. Wonder emerged as a spontaneous state of experience variably weighed between fear and longing.

Freeskiing is but one means to engage with the story of self-movement and I am honoured and so grateful to Josh, Mark, and Leah for sharing parts of their stories of self-movement with me, and you the reader. Freeskiing as a context helped with the expansion of movement and self-movement because of the possible freedom inherent in its experience. The range of possibility of the context within the mountain; the glaring presence of constant change, the balance of flying and falling, speed and stillness, love and fear, possibility and impossibility, and the presence of wonder. One possibility that freeskiing offers, which is unique to many movement contexts, is the visible ski line itself.

The line created by the self-mover while traveling through snow-covered mountains creates a beautiful opportunity to observe, reflect, and contemplate one's self-movement experience. Simply turning and looking at the line already written, and then looking ahead to the vast field of possibility in which decisions of where we want to write our line exists is a powerful practice. When I look at the image of the line at the beginning of this chapter there is so much information stirred by those six turns. I remember that day vividly. I remember being very cautious because the snowpack was somewhat unstable, and the extensive conversations with my friends of where we should ski that took place because of the lower stability. I remember the view from the top of the ridge, and the sound of someone chopping wood that echoed through the stillness of the valley. I remember the snow feeling so soft with just slight warmth on the surface from the sun. I remember the snow releasing and sliding in a few areas. You can see some of the

small sluffing in the photo. Within those six turns I remember much much more because those six turns are connected to the countless visible and invisible turns I have made throughout my life.

I can also engage in conversation with others about our lines, and their written lines, and the invisible lines of possibility such as the conversations with Mark, Leah, and Josh. With each of them we at one point looked at lines written whether it was watching the footage of the line that Mark created in Alaska, or the jump that changed Josh's life, or looking at photographs with Leah about jumps she performed or turns she made in the deep snow at Island Lake Lodge. Seeing the lines stirred memories, visions, and words about their freeskiing experience. Sometimes the energy of the experience lay dormant and other times it remained very close to their presence. In looking at the visible lines we also shifted to the unwritten snowfield and talked about possible lines. This is where Mark created his jump, Josh created the idea to land a back flip in his sit-ski, Leah created a way to breath more effectively while skiing so she could ski longer and on more challenging terrain. The line also offers a beautiful illustration of the flow and seamlessness of experience that we have engaged with in this inquiry. Whether visually written in mediums such as snow, or written invisibly, it seems self-movers are constantly writing a twisting and turning line of self-movement.

The pedagogy of self-movement has been and continues to be a contested domain. I would like to add my voice to the intention of physical education to contribute to the development of self-movement programs that may help inspire and teach self-movers the skills and ability to engage life-long in self-movement experiences. I would like to acknowledge that self-movement must remain a mystery in need of evocative description and not a problem that needs to be solved

(Marcel, 1950), I suggest that self-movement inquiry needs to keep movement alive, mysterious, and magical by continuing to challenge, celebrate, and nurture wonder about the experience of self-movement. I suggest self-movement inquirers write evocative descriptions of self-movement experience of various contexts, contexts that the inquirer is deeply interested in to bring forth an intimate text from within the context instead of being distanced from the context. I also suggest that it would be of great value to continue asking; “What is movement?” and “What is the experience of self-movement?” within various movement contexts. I suggest such effort is made through wonder to splash around in the shallows and dive into the depth of self-movement and movement.

Over 50 years ago Van Den Berg (1952) suggested that “We are now confronted with the ‘gigantic’ task, rich in promise in my opinion, of describing the variety of human landscapes” (p. 179). Is attending to this task an outdated intention? I think not, on the basis that the landscape of movement as a realm of possibility exists beyond the horizons of self-movement experience, and the infiniteness of interpretation that exists in describing human experience. These two understandings suggest that describing self-movement may be an ongoing pursuit of which the fruits come from the effort of evocatively describing the experience of self-movement in its midst rather than offering fixed answers or solutions.

I believe that the intention and effort to return to the terrain of the primacy of movement can be a pool of pedagogical potential. Perhaps more theoretical understanding can come from such inquiries and from that self-movement pedagogy could continue to develop. Perhaps self-movement programs and courses could be created that have at their foundation the wonder of movement. Where movement is regarded as a mysterious, magical, and primary element of life

worthwhile in itself of questioning, celebrating, and challenging. Where wonder of the landscape of movement drew the self-mover into its fibers and in which self-movement freedom is brought to life. Where the observer knew how to, and at least have the intention of contributing to the self-mover passing-beyond-themselves to freefall into *la délicieuse incertitude*. And where the self-mover was taught skills and tools to pass beyond himself or herself and move with wonder into the changing landscape of movement.

* * * * *

Just as the skier sliding down snow only leaves her or his trace in a very small section of the snowpack, just as the self-mover with any self-movement is only displaying a very small section of the possibilities present in movement, this text also displays a very small section of the possibilities present in self-movement inquiry. I wonder what is to be done with the reflections, ruminations, and the experiences presented with this text? What do I want to do with these words before they give way to the whiteness of the page that takes over after the last word is written, before the page is turned, the cover folded over exposing the exposure of space that exists beyond the physical form of this text?

This is the conclusion of this text, but not of this inquiry into self-movement, movement, and wonder. That inquiry is life-long, because perhaps true wonder does not ask questions, not yet, not immediately (van Manen, 2002). Perhaps my deep wonder questions are silent right now. The gaze of wonder only looks on, takes in, and remains open to the things (Verhoeven, 1992). The gaze of wonder “sweeps us up in a state of passivity, or perhaps it is passivity that makes it possible to be swept up in wonder” (van Manen, 2002, p. 251). Posing questions about the

experience of self-movement in a state of wonder is to ask questions for which no final answers are reached, and in which the experience of self-movement itself is evoked, and in which the experience of self-movement itself is evoked and lived. I want the line of self-movement inquiry to turn into new territory, to seek out unknown spaces and potential.

From within the movement and stillness of this text I know there is more to movement. I know that the mystery of movement is more expansive than the horizons of what I have experienced, remember, have written, and even what I have dreamed. The more at this point is vaguely sensed. I feel the presence of the unknown mysterious more of movement like the twinkling of a distant star barely seen in a vast nights sky. That twinkling star, that more of movement, excites me. The excitement is the impulse of inspiration I have for this inquiry receiving a jolt of fresh energy. The fresh energy stimulates me to continue forth as a “perpetual beginner, like a child who has learned nothing, can take nothing for granted, and so confronts the world of experience directly and naively, in wonder” (Mathews, 2002, p. 34) with the intention of challenging, questioning, and celebrating the mystery of movement, and the magic of self-movement.

As these thoughts reach the page the words of the line of this text are reaching an end. Here in the end turn of the text I feel as though I have arrived where I started. I have arrived back into self-movement, back into movement with a feeling of freshness, and mystery, as if knowing this place for the first time. Returning to the trail map of this text and the terrain in which the map represents I am reminded that understanding the terrain and the map can bring us into new landscapes of possibility (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Understanding the terrain of self-movement, the

landscape of movement, and the potency of wonder a little differently an ongoing desire to begin again from this ending rushes through me. The first rush of movement...again.

I step off the bus and as my feet touch down on the ground of Whistler village the words stop

the words at least pause...

Looking up at the mountain I cannot help but notice that because of what I have experienced with this inquiry I am seeing it anew for the first time. Just like the words of this text that are nearing the moment that they will stop...or at least pause. I turned to the line that invited the reader into this text, and find it only fitting that the line that introduced this text would also take me away from the text towards more unknown, undetermined, and unlived experience. In acknowledging the end a return to the beginning occurs, a return to the first snowflake and the possibilities presented with her presence.

* * * * *

Thick clouds roll through the Bow Valley between the Rocky Mountains that line Banff and Canmore Alberta carrying water that swirls and rises as the valley ascends into foothills, and into the steep slopes of the high-alpine. The water in the billowing clouds crests the mountain tops and connects with dust particles in the air. Silent music orchestrates the marriage of the two and a dance begins. Twisting, and turning, tumbling and twirling the water-dust couple grows and morphs into crystals. Snowflakes. With gravity as the maestro the couple descends in their crystal form to the earth below as...

*In the storm, clouds press down upon the earth
while snow silently falls.*

*In this accumulation of possibility light is scarce.
I curl into myself; movement seems limited to my
anatomy,
a claustrophobic darkness sets in as the physical
fluctuates and mental frustrates trying to birth the
pregnant possibilities of the moment*

*Corporeal thinking deepens my contact with the
choreography of the movement field,
openings into the depths of movement are presented*

*Through the clearing I move.
Following the curling of my fingers, the flexing of my legs,
and turning towards the unknown.
I plunge into movements' atmosphere
giving rise to a whole cascade of events.*

*Kinetic energy is transformed into a shower of possibilities,
absorbed and penetrating deeper undergoing multiple collisions
a continual flow of energy going through a great variety of
possibilities in a rhythmic dance of creation and destruction.*

*Thinking loses itself, going very deeply into the body
Sinking deeper into body thinking releases a wonderful intelligence inwrought in
being flesh and bone of the world*

*A body of ontological understanding emerges with the clearing of space meeting in
the enchantment of presence.*

Time and space are to the moment, as mind and body are to the spirit.

*Self-movement is encountered, as an intentional arc
 a melodic gathering and laying down,
 a momentum of movement extends anatomical, physiological, and mental,
 experience stimulated by the birth of possibility, an invitation,
 a potent acceleration*

*Wonder pierces through the clouds
 And as the clouds begin to part,*

*I extend,
 brought beyond the edges of myself,
 brought into the expanse of my gaze
 Each instant of the movement embraces its whole span
 movement continues to call for fulfillment
 through the ongoing cultivation,
 and deepening of an
 individual appreciation of being and becoming
 within
 the field of movement.*

*The pulse of possibility sets an anthmic rhythm,
 A voice familiarly alien swoops into the atmosphere
 Twirling and twisting through the medium of movement
 dancing and defying gravity.*

*Light refracts off the surface of the single flake,
 Turning in suspended mystery,
 the suns rays penetrate its crystallized contours
 entering as the spectrum of colour,
 of reds,
 oranges,
 yellows,
 greens,
 blue,
 indigo,
 violet.*

*Exiting as the spectrum of wonder,
 as the ray passes through this prism of possibility
 transcending the surface and is altered.*

*Now magic,
 mystery,
 fear,
 love,
 pain,
 tension
 balance.*

*The light refracts filling the atmosphere
with colours beyond words spoken, written,
or imagined,
they are felt and the feeling is ineffable.*

*The voice fades, as does the pounding pulse
of possibility,
The turn shifts, the snowflake comes to rest on the
earth,
light on its surface,
darkness smothered under its weight.*

*I seek not to solve a mystery of such magnitude
But rather I seek to experience it...*

...what is the experience of self-movement?

I wonder...

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