

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: CHANNELING THE CURRENT: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF MOVING MEDITATION FOR FINDING A FLOW IN THINKING AND WRITING

Sarah Lynn Morris, Doctor of Philosophy, 2013

Dissertation directed by: Professor Francine H. Hultgren
Department of Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership

This phenomenological study explores lived experience of moving meditation for finding flow in thinking and writing. Moving meditation is intentional practice of mindfulness that brings us deeply into our selves and the world. Connecting to pedagogical implications for teaching composition, this study suggests embodied practices may open a flow of words and ideas for those practicing movement meditation. Grounded in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, and van Manen, this work explores embodiment and lived experience, using human science phenomenology as method. Further grounded in writing process and moving meditation texts, this work connects body movement and writing practices through lived experience.

I first turn toward my own experience to examine moving meditation as method of finding flow in my thinking and writing. Next, I explore the phenomenon in a range of traditions to further uncover the lived experience of moving writers. The metaphor of the circuit as descriptive of writing process and body process further illuminates the phenomenon. Initial emergent themes include process, practice, flow, solitude, and nature.

Recognizing the intersubjective in the particular, this study focuses on lived experience of four high school English teachers as they make meaning through focused

movement. In four sessions of meditative contemplation, these teachers walked in the woods, wrote reflections, and considered personal and pedagogical experiences.

Renderings of these teachers' journals and conversations suggest themes including fear, care, wholeness, and transcendence.

Drawing from these conversants' insights, I explore ways in which meditative movement opens a flow in thinking and writing for these teachers, writers themselves in the current of life. Orienting toward pedagogical implications, I engage with lived experience in order to suggest ways in which teachers of writing may create wholeness of experience for classroom communities: taking students outside, seeing students in wholeness, positioning themselves as more experienced writers, focusing on process rather than product, and being bodies themselves. In doing so, they may generate a culture of care that fosters growth of writing and writers—body, mind, and spirit wholeness—with the world as classroom and lived life as text.

**CHANNELING THE CURRENT:
THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF MOVING MEDITATION FOR FINDING A
FLOW IN THINKING AND WRITING**

by

Sarah Lynn Morris

**Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of the
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of the requirements for the degree of
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Advisory Committee:

Dr. Francine H. Hultgren, Chair and Advisor

Dr. Joseph McCaleb, Academic Advisor

Dr. Gloria Carpeneto

Dr. Jennifer Turner

Dr. Jing Lin, Dean's Representative

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the memory of the first teacher I remember, my grandmother, Mercia, four foot seven inches tall and larger than life, who first brought learning, lunches, and literacy to students in a one room schoolhouse in West Virginia coal country in 1929. Almost 50 years later, she brought to me a hunger for learning and a thirst for words, gave me books and wrote me letters, taught me to cook, and stirred my creativity through laughter, love, song, and story. She was a testament to teaching every day of her life and an inspiration in mine. In honor of the legacy she left me, may I, someday, be the kind of teacher Grandma was.

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CHAPTER 1

TURNING TOWARD THE PHENOMENON AND RETURNING TO THE SELF:

A WRITER IN THE CIRCUIT OF MOVEMENT MEDITATION

Receiving the Charge

The call to write is a call that's received in the body first. For hundreds of years poets and writers have described the creative process as a physical urgency, a sense that things will fly apart if they don't get the pencil to the page in time. Creativity is not tidy or polite, it's insistent. It calls us to feel, not dimly, not safely, but wildly, passionately, in every cell and fiber. If we are to answer that call, we have to be able to feel every part of our lives. (Lee, 1994, p. 1)

Most writers have known in their skins the pressing impulse of an idea about to surface; a physical manifestation, this electric urgency is felt bodily, perhaps as an itch, perhaps as a filling up and pouring out. When words come in a flow, there is an imperative feeling that they must be captured, contained, harnessed; when words do not come easily, writers feel blocked, stuck, immobilized, disempowered. We feel creative language in our bodies; as sure as the breaths we take, language fills us up, holds our tongues, flows through us and out of us, can propel us onward or can stop us in our tracks.

Lee asserts that “the call to write is a call that's received in the body first” (1994, p. 1). I have experienced this call firsthand, and through continued practice I have learned to sense and harness it. If I can not write, if I can not think, if I can not solve, if I can not breathe, I must tie on my shoes and go. My feet carry me, out the door, down the street, over the bridge, into the park, through the city. I may sprint, kicking my way onto a bike path, along a river, between trees, through fields and woods, circling a well-worn route that carries me out and back home. Alternatively, I may unroll my yoga mat, steady my breathing, center my self, and begin to move through a vinyasa series, bending,

stretching, breathing, being. On a beautiful day on campus, I may pace the circuit of the chapel labyrinth, taking in birdsong, bubbling water, the rustling of leaves in the breeze. Fifteen minutes into whatever movement I choose, sometimes sooner, as my breath evens, the world begins to soften, the nameless blocking factor—is it tension, stress, fear?—softens, my gaze softens. The block ebbs, and the words come like breath, pouring in, filling and flowing through me. It works, works nearly every time. When I need words to emerge, I know exactly what to do: move.

Through meditative practice grounded in movement, I have learned to look inside and listen. I have learned to let words surge as I engage in body motion: a walk, a run, a hike in the forest centers me in the world and the world in me. The phenomenon of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing is part of the practice of my lived experience, and it calls to me as a phenomenon worth exploring in my own life, in the world at large, and in the lives of others.

I wonder: Why do words so easily come when I immerse myself in motion? Does movement facilitate the flow of thought and language? How does it do so, and under what conditions? How is it that movement meditation has become a reliable method for me to find a flow for my words? Could this practice also work for other writers, other teachers of writing? In this chapter, I turn to my own experience as a practitioner of movement meditation and as a writer and teacher of writing to answer the question: *What is the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing?*

The Body Electric: The Experience in Myself

I sing the Body electric;
 The armies of those I love engirth me, and I engirth them;
 They will not let me off till I go with them, respond to them,
 And discorrupt them, and charge them full with the charge of the Soul.

Was it doubted that those who corrupt their own bodies conceal themselves;
And if those who defile the living are as bad as they who defile the dead?
And if the body does not do as much as the Soul?
And if the body were not the Soul, what is the Soul? (Whitman, 1891/2011, p.
209)

It is 2009, and I am a former teacher in a small town in West Virginia; I have recently left my classroom to return to graduate school. It is mid-morning in mid-autumn, I am working on a paper, and I am frozen by writer's block. Stuck, I stare at the screen, blinking cursor taunting me. At a loss, I tie on my shoes. Five minutes later, I kick my way up a steep storm gutter on the side of a twisted country road to avoid the trucks that go careening by in two blind turns. The drivers think I am crazy. The gutter is full of sticks, branches, and leaves. The green husks of hickory nuts fall from trees. My thoughts come alive as my legs move. I begin writing in my head.

A territorial squirrel barks at me from a roadside tree. A hound bays. I surprise a blue jay in a bush and it flings itself, squawking, into the air. Thirty minutes in and three miles from the county courthouse, I am surrounded by rolling farmland on a road so narrow it has no lines. I pass a dead deer in a ditch, and I feel grateful some person has thought to cover it with lime. I lope along, and thoughts enter my mind. I consider them without judgment, without effort, hold an idea for a moment, examine it, let it go. I am breathing in and out, filling my lungs with oxygen, following the circular pattern of my breath. I am whole, feel powerful, empowered. The words spark to life and surge through me. I am charged with energy. I am drafting now, working through an outline. Thoughts flow.

I enter a twisty, wooded area onto an even narrower single-track road, Myers Lane, which winds past a water tower and turns sharply down hill, ending on a main

highway. I sprint through a break in traffic, turn toward a residential area, and glide past the high school where I used to teach English a few months before. I know teachers and students are inside, working, talking, filling out worksheets, taking tests, memorizing terms, calculating. Some of them are learning. Maybe some of them are writing, but I bet it does not look like this: they sit in silence, some of them stumped, slumped in desks under bright florescent buzz, as I was half an hour before. In contrast, my body-mind is in motion. If someone sees me, asking: “What are you doing, Ms. Morris?” I will answer: “I am writing!” Just because it does not look like writing does not mean it is not writing. As I am pounding out five miles in an early morning chill, I do not appear to be writing, but I am chasing ideas, composing words, composing my body, composing a life. If Whitman's (1891/2011) words are true, “that those who corrupt their own bodies conceal themselves,” then in this movement, as I refine my body, I am uncovering my true self, also, in this movement, unfurling my truth (p. 209).

What is writing, in this sense? This is not grammar, editing, not penmanship or sentence diagramming; this is composition, the search for new insight, refinement of existing thought, connection, meaning making. Like flying a key-laden kite in a thunderstorm, I am seeking inspiration, the moment of insight, the bulb of light bursting above my skull. In my electric body, grounded in motion, I am “engirthed” by words, and embodied by words, chasing or refining my ideas, to “respond” to my self, to the words of others, clarifying meaning, “discorrupting” ideas and “charging them full with the full charge of the soul” (Whitman, 1891/2011, p. 209). Physical health tied to intellectual pursuit, I am moving to make sense, moving as I was meant to move, closer to understanding, closer to my truth. In this process, my body flow is inseparable from my

thought flow, thinking mind in thinking body; in the practice of motion, I reveal my thinking, reveal myself. Whitman asks, “And if the body were not the Soul, what is the Soul?” and in response, I move, making meaning, soul and body charged as one (Whitman, p. 209).

I am finding words, almost as if they fly in from above or rise up from within, tiny sparks of inspiration that will surge into writing when I finally face the page. Murray (1998) calls these particles of thought “instigating lines,” which are “fragments of language, a sentence or less, that I hear in my mind or find myself scribbling in my notebook. It's the line that contains a tension, contradiction, question, feeling, or thought that surprises me and would be productive to think more about in writing” (p. 4). These lines, like live wires, cause tensions or questions to spark up, generate a flow of words and build, so a piece of writing might start this way, born in the movement. I may also move to revise, rethinking something I am writing, revision-ing my ideas. I may make new connections, re-conceive ideas, reorganize my thinking, hear my own inner voice as words echo in my head. I move to listen to myself, and my thoughts resonate, like mantras, sense-making, word-smithing, ideas articulate.

When this happens while I am moving, I feel compelled, as if I have no choice but to follow these words home, allowing them to progress as I go, and fill pages with them when I put fingertips to keys or pen to paper. I wonder: does this happen to other writers as they move? Does this happen to other runners, even those who do not write? Is this a phenomenon that can manifest as intersubjective, shared experience? Can insight born of body motion happen by design, and what practices can spark it? If so, can this practice be taught, and what are the implications for novice writers? What are the implications for

teachers of writing? These questions bring me to a place of departure, a charge to know more.

For me, running is not a sport but a practice. I am not competing, I am merely refining my self, finding my self, noticing the small details of my self and the world, and finding my words while I do it. Writing is this same kind of practice; the more I immerse myself in the world, the more I see and notice, and the more deeply engaged I get. There is no winning or losing, only the joy and the movement and the moment of the practice. I finish off the final mile, sprinting down the street in front of my house. I come in the door, up the steps, and sit down at the computer. I forget, even, to untie my shoes. This time, the words are just there.

This meditative movement brings me to a place of articulation, accessing an outpouring of words and ideas. By virtue of being engaged in my electric body, I move more deeply into my mind. This embodied awareness is a kind of awakening, an attempt to engage in understanding a process I practice but struggle to explain. In order to engage and explore this phenomenon, then, I must turn toward it with the fullest awareness, as a whole person, practitioner and researcher. I must use the same meditative attention with which I practice the phenomenon to study the phenomenon of moving meditation, which means that “Instead of intellectual reasoning, concentration, or mindfulness, meditative attention means the living attentiveness of an awakened heart” (Willis, 1979, p. 99). An awakened heart, an awakened body, I immerse myself in the practice.

This practice brings me to a place of wholeness: mind, body, spirit present in the moment and the movement. There is an argument to be made that ideas naturally emerge from the body, and that the body is necessary for processing the world around us. We are

immersed in the world bodily, and our ideas are a product of that bodily immersion. Ideas “would not be better known to us if we had no body and no sensibility; it is then that they would be inaccessible to us” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 140). Everything we know, we know bodily, and “Merleau-Ponty reminds us that when we take in the world by means of our senses and the particular structure of our perceptual organs—eyes, ears, nose, hands—we shape and mold the objects of the world which we apprehend” (O’Loughlin, 2006, p. 72). The body makes thought possible, bodiless, senseless objectivity impossible.

From Blown Fuse to Power Conductor

I was not a high school track star. I came to running in my overweight and unhealthy mid-twenties. I started by walking, then jogging, then going faster and farther. I run marathons, but I am not a sprinter. I am slow, but I can go forever. I am not the traditional runner, and I will likely never come in first in a race, but I know myself and my body, and I am grateful for the process of running and the way it carries me. I was not always an athlete, but I have practiced a process of movement over time.

Although I am not always confident of my athleticism, there are indicators that show me to be an athlete: I am trim, have a low resting heart rate, will willingly slog out miles in the snow or pouring rain, will get up at 5:00 am to attend an early morning yoga class. I am committed to the practices that sustain my body and mind, the two inexorably intertwined, but I was not always this way.

During November of my first year as a classroom teacher, I got married. When the wedding pictures were ready a few weeks later, I picked them up at the photographer's office, and, walking to my car, opened the white box containing the white album of

photography proofs, mostly of me, mostly smiling, in a white dress that was six sizes larger than anything I had ever worn. I did not recognize myself. I climbed into my car and cried.

My student teaching year had been difficult, as had my first few months in the classroom. I was assigned two courses of senior composition, working with students who had not completed the junior research paper, which was a graduation requirement. They were stuck, frustrated. I was working hard to be a good teacher, trying to reach students who did not want to write, and I was having little success. I was spending all my time planning, responding to student work, and trying to coax research papers out of students who hated school.

I was stuck, stopped, my fuse blown. I slept too little, and, too tired to cook, I ate a lot of pizza. I knew I had gained weight because I needed new clothes, but it was not until I saw myself through the photographer's lens that I understood what the rest of the world was seeing. I did not look like me. A few weeks later, I bought a treadmill and joined a gym. I began teaching myself to run, practicing yoga, and doing strength training. At the same time, I began regularly keeping a personal journal; I was trying to find my body, find my mind. I came to writing regularly and exercising regularly at the same time.

For the beginner, especially the beginner I was, physical movement like running is not easy. Although I had given up smoking and was beginning to eat healthfully, my cardiovascular and muscular systems were unaccustomed to the kind of motion running provided. Yoga was a challenge, too—I was inflexible and uncomfortable, sweating in a room full of others who seemed to be exerting much less energy. I was sore afterward, but I kept trying. After some time, day by day, I became immersed in the practice, and

eventually, the practice became my process; at some point, the effort shifted, and the work became, if not easy, less like work and more like play, a kind of flow experience. Over time, I have found that this kind of bodily play, can lead me to clearer writing. This kind of play in writing, asserts Murray (2002) is “essential in finding focus” (p. 80). Play leads to focused thinking in writing and in movement meditation.

For the beginning writer, as for the beginning runner, writing is not easy. We struggle against the words, against our own ideas, work to articulate our thinking. At some point, though, a shift occurs, and one moves from novice to practitioner as regular pattern creates “a knowing body. The body has innate intelligence and knows what to do. The mind must simply cooperate with what the body already knows” as mind “becomes the willing partner in this harmonious dance of body, mind, and spirit” (Lynch & Scott, 1999, p. 187). Regular practice becomes process, balances effort and ease. Murakami describes this vividly in his work on writing and running: “The ones panting are beginners; the ones with quiet, measured breathing are veterans. Their hearts, lost in thought, slowly tick away time. When we pass each other on the road, we listen to the rhythm of each others' breathing, and sense the way the other person is ticking away the moments. Much like two writers perceive each other's diction and style” (Murakami, 2009, p. 85).

My first runs outdoors were miserable: panting and sweating, a painful stitch in my side, aching lungs. It was not fun, and the only thinking I did was counting the minutes until I knew I could stop for a walk break. But it got easier, day by day. My body transformed, my practice transformed, and my life transformed when I began to explore my own physicality. I remember myself feeling the shift from effort to ease. Writing and

running converged for me in a very memorable way in early spring more than a year after I had begun learning to run. I had learned to venture outside and off the treadmill. I had just embarked upon training for my first distance race, working up to seven miles on a warm spring morning, enjoying the cool air, the greenness of the season shining around me. I crossed a bridge and moved through a green tunnel of forest, pacing my footfalls gently, about half a mile from my turning point.

Suddenly, with a honk and a hiss, a huge, gray projectile moved through the air toward my face. I stopped; she cut to the left and landed in the canal with a splash, then began to calmly paddle away. Thinking we had merely crossed paths, I began to move forward. She rose from the water, wings spread, and circled back toward me. I howled; she honked. Thinking I could deter her, I raised my arms and wailed again: “Shoo!” She kept coming, her feet pushed forward, beak open. We made eye contact, and, with an electric jolt, I was able to read her mind. Her eggs, I saw, were more precious than my half mile, and she was willing to sacrifice herself to save the potential lives they held inside. I was in the wrong; I was the predator, the aggressor. I turned around, and she allowed me peacefully to go.

As I ran away from the goose, gaining speed in case she came at me again, I felt words forming. “Mother Goose,” I thought, and “wings wide, webbed feet,” “territorial terror,” “six eggs,” and “seven miles.” In the time it took me to reach my car, parked along the path, words swirled in my skull, ideas churned to get out. I followed them to my destination, wrenched open the car door, grabbed my journal, and scribbled the entire work, a poem, whole, in need of little revision. This was flow experience for me. The words came in a rush, with electric urgency. I ached to get them out, and when I did, it

felt like a release.

As I continued my running practice, movement became more intertwined with my writing and thinking. Moments of clarity and word emergence happened in other physical experiences, too: during yoga, on hikes, on bike rides; after an exercise session, charged with words, I scribbled in my journal. When my marriage began to crumble, I remained grounded through my writing, my running, and my yoga practice. About one month before my husband moved out, and about three years after I first began running, I completed my first marathon, by myself; those 26.2 miles in the crisp, colorful autumn air represented much more than a single race. Rather, they were representative of a complete transformation, one that defies sense and explanation. The person who finished that race was not the same person who had struggled to complete a treadmill mile, and yet she was that person, too. This new me could conduct and express herself in ways that were intentional, decisive, and powerful. I had re-made myself, re-animated my life.

As a writer, I make the work of writing, but the work of writing also makes me; as a runner, I make my movements in the act of running, and yet running makes me: “Art is the origin of the art work and of the artist. Origin is the source of the nature in which the being of an entity is present” (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 56). From the practice of running, of finding myself inside a body I did not know as mine, I also found my writer's voice, one I had not known was mine. I make and am made by my moving body; I make my works through composition, and as composer, the writing makes me. This recursive circuit of body in the work, body made by work, work made by body, writing making and made by writer, becomes less about task, more about practice, the building of a world, a life. Now, this is not something I merely do; writer and runner is something I am. As part

of my identity—and as part of my writing process—I wonder what implications exist for the other parts of my identity: learner and teacher.

In the Classroom: Looping Outward

Composition is a practice-based act that parallels meditative motion practice. As practices, activities like yoga, hiking, walking, and running bear resemblance to writing in the way they play out in writers' lives. Exercise and writing are similar practices, and exercise can aid in the writing process. As a mode for clearing the mind, developing confidence, or providing inspiration, physical activity assists writers in the act of writing. To write well, one must cultivate mindfulness, which Sher describes as “a capacity. Breath, posture, movement, feeling, thought, and the phenomena around us all comprise its web of interrelationship” (2006, p. 31). Mindfulness cultivated by body movement practice allows us to see, be in, and create the world.

A sense of mindfulness and body-being when it comes to development of writing seems particularly important in schools. Lee describes the educational system as he knew it being,

at pains to deliver us from our own 'primitive' impulses, the natural rhythms and needs of our bodies... Only the brain and spirit were to be worshipped, elevated, and educated, while the body's wild energies were left to wither. From the beginning it was a hopeless task. Where did our brain and spirit exist, if not in the body? (1994, p. 4)

Things are not much different in current educational practice. In education, we treat people as minds, sometimes almost bodiless, but “Human beings are embodied minds, not bodies controlled and directed by minds” (O'Loughlin, 2006, p. 61). Schools are temporally and spatially organized to separate the mind from the body. Schools are material constructs that not only function to train student minds, but also to train their

bodies to stand in line, sit in desks, eat, drink, and move in specified ways that are repeated throughout their years of schooling.

Just as we try to tame writers in schools, placing them in neat rows, crammed in hard desks, asking them to raise hands to speak, file in and out in orderly lines, so do we also try to tame writing. We box words into diagrammed sentences, formulaic essays, structured short responses.

As a classroom English teacher, I watched high school students as I asked them to write. Large boys crammed into small desks contorted their faces in frustration and said, “I can’t.” I knew they could, but I did not know how to help them; I knew that, for me, the best way to write was to set myself in motion: body movement would open a thinking flow. However, the classroom environment in which we (my students and I) were caged and confined would not permit the kind of meditative motion I, an experienced writer, needed to write; my less experienced students were equally body bound to wordless anxiety. From this dilemma arose questions: What is moving meditation, and how does moving meditation stimulate the flow of thoughts and words for myself and other writers? What happens and what insights are gained when teachers of writing move as embodied writers? What can teachers do to help students move and, in doing so, write more freely? *What is the lived experience of moving meditation for finding flow in thinking and writing?*

Sparking Wild Words

Teaching high school English, I told my students, many times, in response to their tendency (a tendency predicated by what they had so long been taught) to rely on the formulaic five paragraph essay structure: “Writing like that does not exist *in the wild*.”

What I meant was that, in the real world of writing, in writing outside the school, structures like the formulaic five paragraph essay, in which the writer tells what he is about to tell, tells about it, and then tells the reader what he told about, cannot be found. The writing that is done in classrooms differs drastically from the process used by real writers, in the wild. In the classroom, for student writers, writing is blocked by the nature of how we teach it. Murray (2002) characterizes much of what professional writers learn to do as “unlearning to write” as they were taught in schools: school conventions like “form comes before content,” “always outline first,” and “there is one right way” dominate and stifle students (pp. 18-23). We tell students to write five paragraphs with four to six sentences each, have a clear thesis, make three main points, and end with a concluding statement. We give them short deadlines without distance or time away from their drafts. Editing and revision are taught in one stage, and if revision is taught at all, it is technical, related to grammar and sentence structure rather than “re-visioning,” re-seeing, one's work. No wonder they have writers' block.

His vision, from the constantly passing bars,
has grown so weary that it cannot hold
anything else. It seems to him there are
a thousand bars; and behind the bars, no world.

As he paces in cramped circles, over and over,
the movement of his powerful soft strides
is like a ritual dance around a center
in which a mighty will stands paralyzed.

Only at times, the curtain of the pupils
lifts, quietly—. An image enters in,
rushes down through the tensed, arrested muscles,
plunges into the heart and is gone. (Rilke, 2012)

When we teach composition as a product of form rather than one of rhetorical thought, we reduce the possibilities for student voice to a matter of formula and “force

students to continue as copiers of memorized form, denying them the freedom to think for themselves” (Wesley, 2000, p. 60). Like Rilke's panther, students, when posed with the bars of one way to write and one way to write only, the formula becomes all they see; there is no world beyond the bars. When formulaic school writing defines what composition is, “most students never experience the power of their ideas or the structuring of them within a larger conversation, never get the chance to use writing to think, feel, and wonder” (Brannon, Courtney, Urbanski, Woodward, Reynolds, Iannone, Haag, Mach, Manship, & Kendrick, 2008, p. 18). Based on a deficit model, formulaic writing “does not allow students to participate as writers and language users—as readers and writers in the world” (Brannon et al., p. 18). The rigid formula provokes paralysis, the movement of words cramped and mechanical, pacing rather than productive or meditative. For some students, on occasion, “the curtain of the pupils lifts, quietly—. An image enters in,” insight is experienced, but it is fleeting, an impulse that does not last beyond the draft (Rilke, 2012). Wesley, in a critique of formulaic school writing, describes these impulses as “seeds of critical thought that are never allowed to grow” (p. 58). Writing like that is meant for school purposes only.

I wanted my students to create words that were valid and carry meaning in the real world: *in the wild*, to borrow a phrase from nature programs. The writing I find in the wild is different from this concept, and it is the same. Terry Tempest Williams finds words in nature: “I was in Maine, I went down to the ocean, call it a plea or a prayer, I faced the ocean and said, 'Give me one wild word and I promise I will follow it” (Williams, cited in Medaris, 2008). This is close to what happens to me: a word, a phrase, a story, reveals itself; I follow a spark, each step leads to another spark, and

writing explodes into being.

I wanted my students to find the words in their bodies, to clear-mindedly move and flow, to find joy and patience in the practice, to lose sense of time without losing time, be alone without loneliness, to value themselves and the words they had to give, and to give those words in a natural, animal, electric way. I did not know—I still do not know—how to get them there.

Real words, wild words, wander and reflect. They run away with us. When we walk or move for inspiration, we may find “a living, rambling poetry composed out of the quotidian” (Miller, 2011). The words may call to us, energize us, as if particles gathered from the very air, shining, electrifying. But we teach writing in schools as if the words are dull, pieces that fit in a formula, meant for a singular audience, never meant to move beyond the confines of the classroom. We teach students this way, too, as if they are bodiless at best, and confined, tamed. Schools are for thinking minds, not moving bodies.

The contrasting dichotomy between body and mind as it exists in schooling places learners at an inherent disadvantage, since learning is a bodily activity and the world is a corporeal construct. We live and breathe, relate with our bodies, and yet, in schools, the body is relegated to a secondary position, something that must be ignored, controlled, or overcome with disembodied, logical, cerebral rationality. O'Loughlin states that, in education, “What is forgotten is that people are bodies and all human experience is incarnated: much of what we take in enters directly through our bodies and even when it is more indirect it still has powerful corporeal ramifications,” because we can not help but feel, know, and express ourselves as products of our own embodiment (2006, p. 72) Furthermore, we learn not only curricular content and skills bodily, but also we learn

what it means to be human, to experience and be with other people, since “our responses to the world are always embodied as we inhabit places in which we enact our lives, motivated by feelings, desires, and needs arising directly out of our corporeality. The intersubjective realm, too, is corporeal—it is always an exchange of visual and tactile activity, of speech, emotion, and ways of seeing and understanding” (O’Loughlin, p. 72). Our bodies are the means by which we relate to ideas, information, and other people.

O’Loughlin also argues that rational thought begins in the body:

...Reason, [...] is shaped in crucial ways by the specificities of our bodies, that is, by the complex and amazing neural structures of our brains and by the particulars of our everyday engagement with the world, the peculiarities of our implacement in time and space. Rationality is precisely that which builds upon and utilises our basic animal natures, not something transcending the body and demanding its relegation as a lowly vehicle or instrument. (2006, pp. 169-170)

To truly educate, schools must recognize the body as the source of understanding, thought, insight, and communication.

If education aims to create people in the world, students must be recognized as embodied beings, for whom the body serves as an origin of understanding and a point of creation of meaning. Education must recognize and incorporate into practice “opportunities in all curriculum areas for giving greater weight to the body’s capacity for creating its world” (O’Loughlin, 2006, p. 69).

Education is about more than learning concepts or ideas. Yet, from a cognitivist perspective, according to O’Loughlin, schools today “sustain a sometimes dangerous fiction that learners only develop as such when they overcome the body, subduing the senses and relegating passion to the dimension of animal existence” (p. 69). Passion, however, can propel learners to make change in the world, to engage in their communities, to live full lives. O’Loughlin reminds us that “Bodies themselves are lived

experience” (p. 81). As such, distilling lives into bodiless minds does much to inhibit what learners can achieve. I wonder what would happen if we asked our student writers to go outside and walk, or stretch, or run. “Write whatever passes through your mind,” we might say, “Consider your thoughts as clouds in the sky of your mind. Put pencil to page, let words emerge.”

In classrooms, bodies are restrained, and writing is restrained in an unproductive, closed circle of repetitious pattern. Could freeing writing restraints be compared to freeing the restraints we place on our bodies by lack of motion? Could it be that our students can write more freely if we just ask them to move? Pedagogically, then, the questions begin. What does it mean to find words in the world, to filter them through the self, and to create from them, writing? How does this fluency (so like magic) happen? If I can train myself to do it, to believe in it and rely upon it, can other teachers of writing do the same? And, if they can, what implications exist for student writers in their classrooms, who struggle not only to conceive of what to write, but also of how?

Circling and Cycling: What is Moving Meditation?

Moving meditation encompasses a range of activities from a range of cultures across human experience. Buddhist walking meditation has been practiced for centuries; yogic practice has ancient roots in India; Native American tradition evokes dance and journey walking as centering tools. Evidence exists of tribal groups in Mexico and South America using running for pleasure, thought, and joy (McDougall, 2010). Native peoples, Tibetan thinkers, Jewish mystics, and pre-Christian and Christian traditions have used labyrinths, with the earliest discovered evidence of labyrinths as tools for movement and thought dating back at least 4000 years (Artress, 2006).

Moving meditation is different from movement for basic physical exercise or for transportation purposes in the sense that it is an intentional practice of mindfulness that brings us more fully into our selves and into the world: “Walking can become meditative only when we are intentionally bringing awareness to each step we take... Through practicing walking mindfully, you are teaching yourself to walk through life more wakefully” (Hooria & Shapiro, 2010, pp. 24-25). Moving meditation is done with intentionality and choice. Choice allows freedom of thinking (which is particularly important for writing), and, for one author, transcendence beyond the typical: “When we run 'just because' we can stop at any time, and for this reason are aware of the action of running as something we control: it takes over our bodies and our selves, but it does so at our express invitation. Running is a way of simultaneously acknowledging the transcendent as something beyond the everyday and integrating it into the world—through action” (Fleming, 2010, pp. 5-6).

Moving meditation allows one to presence oneself bodily in the moment; it offers awareness of impermanence, and it makes one wholly real: “To be truly here, we have to bring the body back to the mind and the mind back to the body. We have to bring about what is called the unity of body and mind. This is very important in Buddhist meditation. Often, the body and mind go in different directions, and so we are not fully here. Therefore, we have to do what is necessary for them to come back together again” (Nhat Hanh, 2009, p. 32). Moving meditation places us both in and out of the self at once. It is grounding and transcendent. Murakami discusses finding a flow, the right place in running pace, at the end of a marathon, stating: “I'm me, and at the same time not me. That's what it felt like. A very still, quiet feeling. The mind wasn't so important” (2009, p.

114). Moving meditation takes the practitioner deeper into the world and deeper into the self.

Moving meditation can also be seen as pilgrimage, which Artress (2006) discusses as being a governing metaphor for walking the circuit of a labyrinth. Gardenio and Stortz (2010) discuss pilgrimage as an immersion experience, which includes both metaphorical travel and physical effort. In this journey, the body ushers forward the soul into a deeper understanding and transformation. It requires pilgrims to “lean into” a journey—perhaps up a mountain, into the holy land, to a source of understanding. Gardenio and Stortz describe mountain climbing and distance running as pilgrimage, immersion, of being more human based on the experience, “of practic[ing] incarnation” through bodily movement (p. 242).

Movement toward wholeness can do much to counter the split in modern life that separates the mind from the body. Contemporary society divides the body and the mind into factions: the body in education can be viewed as a distraction. We seek in schooling to control and conform the body—to deny its use. When we do incorporate the body in schooling—in PE classes, or technical crafts— it is as a tool, not as a source of understanding. It is “reduced to the function of calculative thinking” (Levin, 1985, p. 229). The body is viewed mechanically, not organically. The practice of moving meditation, however, aids in holistic thinking and ways of knowing.

Components: Essential Themes

As an evolving definition of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing begins to open, several themes or essential elements also begin to emerge and come to the forefront of understanding. These essential elements are components without

which the phenomenon cannot exist unchanged; they define and shape the phenomenon as indispensable parts, integral for understanding moving meditation in its wholeness.

Among these essentials are process, practice, flow, and solitude.

Process: Cycling.

I went back
but I returned again
like a compass making constant turns
around one point. (Rumi, in Johnson, 2010, p. 102)

In a constant pattern of turning and returning, we sense the world through our bodies, and, yet, at the same time, our bodies create the sensations through which we perceive the world and convey our response to those sensations to other beings. Both subject and object to sense with and be sensed, the body is a point of location and vehicle of motion. We always return again to the body in the constant, cyclical, circuitous process of understanding. The body is the center of all our interactions and perceptions and also communicates those perceptions in a process of understanding, as “My body is a thing that has a particular relation with things, and which furnishes us here with its mode, the zero point of orientation. My body is the absolute 'here'” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 75). This circular, recursive cycle of perception and interaction parallels the writing process, insofar as we make meaning through writing, perceive meaning from reading and writing, and convey meaning through writing and language. O’Loughlin (2006) elaborates: “Since sensory experience is always unstable it is through the body in its totality and all at once, that the world is made accessible to us. But it is always the body itself that furnishes those sensations which constitute our experience of the world” (p. 46). This unending feedback loop mirrors the recursive process of writing.

Journaling, drawing, and writing are processes. Running is a process, as is yoga,

martial arts, and other body based practices. Andrews (1978) suggests that the process of a run can parallel the process of body healing, enhancing and engaging the natural course of recovery. Additionally, Andrews suggests a connection between the process of mental healing and grief recovery and the process of running and body movement. Dreyer and Dreyer (2009), in their book connecting running practice with Eastern meditation practice, repeatedly remind us that process is the goal for running and meditation. According to another running source, the lifetime “warrior” runner “focuses on the process as opposed to the outcome (product)” (Lynch & Scott, 1999, p. 52).

The processes of body practice are recursive, not linear, and never ending; one may train for a race as a tangible goal, and yet being a moving body requires a commitment to constant change, process: an “imperfect, consistent, deliberate, steady, passionate journey of body, mind, and spirit” (Lynch & Scott, 1999, p. 184). As I run farther and faster, the running shapes me; as I move more deeply into yoga practice, I become more flexible, more fluid, and my practice deepens, but it never reaches a place of perfection; instead, it remains always an ever-deeper process. The meditative walk, states Artress, “takes us into a process world where we can see between the lines of linear thought through to our imagination and intuition” (2006, p. 132). Growth and learning are processes, and so is writing: “Most processes engaged in by live organisms are cyclic, developmental processes that run through time and end up different from how they began” (Elbow, 1988, p. 33). The process of body movement leads us to a place where thinking and ideas are able to flow freely; this process can happen during a walk, a drive, a bike ride, a run, a yoga session. Process is growth; and through the writing process, we grow as writers, and our writing grows.

This pattern process of releasing, receiving, and returning parallels the writing process of invention, revision, and publication, which Elbow (1988) characterizes as “an organic, developmental process in which you start writing at the very beginning—before you know your meaning at all—and encourage your words to gradually change and evolve” (p. 15). This gradual evolution is related to practice: just as the body evolves and skills evolve when one continues a body practice, so to does practice aid in the writing process. This recursive endlessness is exemplified in one writer's description of his own process:

As I write, I arrange my thoughts. And rewriting and revising takes my thinking down even deeper paths. No matter how much I write, though, I never reach a conclusion. And no matter how much I rewrite, I never reach the destination... I have the distinct feeling that time has come full circle, that a cycle has been completed. The act of running has returned as a happy, necessary part of my daily life. (Murakami, 2009, p. 120)

For me, the process of physical growth and development clearly parallels the process of my growth as a writer. My journal entries are often the result of insights gained in motion, and insights recorded in journals often contribute to writing I produce for audiences outside myself. Many running theorists encourage the keeping of a running journal for training and insight (Andrews, 1978; Dreyer & Dreyer, 2009; Kay, 2007; Lynch & Scott, 1999). Inasmuch as journals are writing products, they also chart the course of the flow of our lives. They are recursive, nonlinear, cyclical, as is most writing done outside of schools.

School writing, however, tends to be a one-shot deal, often for a singular audience (the teacher) for a single reading (and a grade). As a result of this, my student writers tended to treat writing as a linear product. They might have pre-written, drafted, edited, polished, and turned in their work, but once a piece was complete, they did not return to

it. I wanted to show them ways to grow that brought them to a place of turning and returning, a cycle of growth. I do not know how to do this. If process is an essential component in both movement meditation and in writing, how do the two connect? Are there parallels between body processes such as movement meditation and the writing process? What is the writing process like for those writers engaged also in body processes? How do we teach writing process in schools, and is it different from the natural organic process of growth? Is there a way to merge the outside school process with the products of schooling?

Practice: Wiring by design.

After days of labor, mute in my consternations,
I hear my song at last, and I sing it. (Berry, 2012)

Those running writers who practice moving meditation seek to build skill in both running and writing; the pursuit of the physical goal is also the purposeful pursuit of clearer thinking and writing. Running writers chase words. Lee (1994) asserts that writing begins in the body (as does writer's block), and Sher (2006) harnesses the mindful attention of yoga for writing.

This kind of enduring practice takes time and is an act of becoming, not simply something one does: “The real depths that the practice can take you to, however, only start revealing themselves after long hours” (Johnson, 2010, p. 98). Not only must practice develop over time, but also it must be regular, because “being active every day makes it easier to hear that inner voice” (Murakami, 2009, p. 49). Writing and running did not form a connection together for me until I became skilled enough in both for effort and ease to balance. When I first started running, it was not easy; I was so focused on the effort that my mind could not wander beyond the task at hand. Regular practice

normalizes an activity for us, and it is regular practice that translates an act from task to skill, from doing to being. Regular practice integrates an activity into one's identity, one's neurological wiring: writing is not just something I do—through practice, writer is something I am. Running writer Haruki Murakami connects writing and running as practices that require persistent regularity: “Certain types of processes don't allow for any variation. If you have to be a part of that process, all you can do is transform—or perhaps distort—yourself through that persistent repetition, and make that process a part of your own personality” (p. 68). Thoreau conceived of a regular walking practice as a “noble art” (2008, p. 7). Thoreau states that he could not “preserve [his] health and spirits” without a regular walking practice of “four hours a day at least—and it is commonly more than that—sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields” (p. 9). Practice becomes transformation; we become what we regularly and openheartedly do.

Emig (1983) discusses the practices of writers, of making writing a practice, as have other writing researchers and theorists. What empowers the daemon of inspiration, Emig argues, is ritual, which she describes as “evocative,” “regulatory,” and stirred by “rhythms” of music and language (p. 52). For me, especially during a run, my feet beat out a rhythm that matches the rhythm of poetry, the cadence in which I hope words will flow. Often, this leads me to series of words. Sometimes these words are worth recording in my journal, and sometimes those recorded words make their way into other pieces of writing.

Other writers who are athletes (or athletes who write) see the connections between composing and body practice. A writer published in a college literary magazine describes the connections between a story and running:

Like stories, every run and race has a beginning, middle and end. There is usually a peak in a run where the sky pounds and my feet begin to thank me. There is also usually a fairly recognizable peak in every story, poem, and train of thought. The end of a good long run or a good, honest poem is usually met with feelings of finality and regret. I don't believe practice can make any person better at any thing, but it does help. (Schmidt, 2005)

While practice may not make one a better runner or writer, it makes the act of doing both easier. Exercise and writing are the same struggle, embedded in practice—when we walk a well-worn path, flow becomes automatic. Daily practice creates a coursing system of ritual that derives from physical movement and stimulates thought; movement meditation, as the balance of effort and ease, lubricates both the body and the mind: “One must circulate vital energy in the body by engaging in labor lest it become stagnant” (Anh, 2008, p. 177).

It is necessary to distinguish daily practice that becomes ritual from habit. Habit is done in absence of thought. Practice, in this sense, is a product of intentionality. Walking that is most conducive to thought, for example, is an intentional and aware practice “chosen freely by a healthy person amid pleasant and safe circumstances... an expression of well-being, harmony with nature, freedom, and virtue” (Solnit, 2001, p. 55).

When I make time to write every day, I write more clearly and more easily. When I make time to move every day, my body stays strong and limber; going far or going hard is not so much effort as it is after I have taken a few days off. Likewise, writing is easier if I make time to do it every day. As such, movement meditation has become a part of my regular writing ritual. I choose to work this way, and, given time and labor, “I hear my song and I sing it” (Berry, 2012).

What does regular writing practice mean for writers? What does regular movement do for us? As parallel practices, how do movement meditation and writing connect? Can

one practice draw from the other? Can these practices be taught together? What is the lived experience of practice for teachers of writing?

Facilitating flow: Continuous energy.

Do I slowly empty
Or fill myself?
The same flow of sand,
Whichever way
You turn it. (Sorescu, 2011)

When I practice moving meditation to find writing, I seek a simultaneous mind-body flow; the sensation is one of both emptying and filling, in a circuitous fashion, continuous energy. First, the motion of my body causes my thinking to still, creating a feeling of clearing, emptying out. Once this happens, I can be filled, or fill myself, with words, thoughts, and images. When the movement session—the run, walk, yoga session—is finished, I can again empty myself in thoughts upon the page, clearing the way for new thinking. Sometimes the act of writing produces more writing, or I may return to movement for revision. When I achieve a flow experience, this process feels seamless, fluid, a current running in and out of the self. I feel both lost and found in the activity. I feel connected to the world and also deeply engaged in myself. This is wholeness in motion, creation: “the same flow of sand, whichever way you turn it” (Sorescu, 2011).

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1996) flow involves deep immersion in an activity, producing feelings of success and competence, sometimes joy. In his work on creativity and flow, Csikszentmihalyi discusses flow of creativity as being characterized by engaged awareness, lack of distraction, a distorted sense of time, loss of self-consciousness, and the activity becoming an end unto itself. Specifically in terms of

writing, Csikszentmihalyi expresses that writers' immersion in flow is characterized by “the feeling of merging action and awareness through the image of the flowing ink and the flowing of ideas” and to be “lost in the process of writing” (p. 119).

Writing researchers and teachers have discussed the ways that writing can be connected to the flow of ideas (Gendlin, 1996), the flow of inspiration (Emig, 1983), and the flow of breath (Sher, 2006). As with moving meditation, flow seems an essential component of the writing process. With the “body as a touchstone,” writers can find a movement toward meaning in the flow of their thoughts (Perl, 2004, p. 4). Virginia Woolf is reported to have written at least one of her works in a gushing flow of words while taking a walk; she describes it as such: “Then one day walking round Tavistock Square I made up, as I sometimes make up my books, *To the Lighthouse*, in a great, apparently involuntary rush” (Woolf, as cited in Solnit, 2001, p. 10).

The flow of inspiration is characterized by Heidegger as an outpouring, a gift, a “gush,” a “consecrated libation” that is both “gift and sacrifice,” that requires an offering, “in sacrifice. To pour a gush, when it is achieved in its essence, thought through with sufficient generosity, and genuinely uttered, is to donate, to offer in sacrifice, and hence to give” (1971/2001, pp. 170-171). When we open ourselves to the flow of language, we receive and we give to ourselves, to words, and to the world. The notion of flow created in the depth of one's own interaction with the world is special, sacred. It immerses us in ourselves and in the world and charges us with energy.

Murakami discusses the sustained flow and feeling of wholeness that happens during a long run, in which runners “can detect each notch in the seasonal shift in the feel of the wind against our skin, its smell and direction. In the midst of this flow, I'm aware

of myself as one tiny piece in the gigantic mosaic of nature. I'm just a replaceable natural phenomenon, like the water in the river that flows under the bridge toward the sea” (2008, p. 91). This sense of flow speaks not only toward the flow of thoughts, but also to the flow of the body, of existence, of finding a place in the world and in the self.

I know when I have achieved flow experience because whole thoughts, complete insights will emerge from the practice in a continuous, energetic rush, sometimes in need of little revision. When I finish a run in which I have experienced flow thinking, I will scramble for my journal notebook, sit on the side of the path, and pour out my words, filling pages in an effortless surge. Again, this is not something I witnessed happening in the classroom. This depth of immersion was not something I saw as a teacher, and it is not something I ever experienced when writing in a classroom setting. More often, writing for students in schools as I knew it was like pulling teeth; words come slowly and with difficulty, with lots of effort and little ease. What is it like for other writers when flow happens? Is there a way to evoke flow experience for novice writers, or is it something that takes time and practice to develop? Is flow experience possible in the school setting? Does body movement in a flow necessarily connect with mind in a flow, or is one possible without the other?

Solitude: A source unto one's self.

There is a solitude of space,
 A solitude of sea,
 A solitude of death, but these
 Society shall be,
 Compared with that profounder site,
 That polar privacy,
 A Soul admitted to Itself;
 Finite Infinity. (Dickinson, 1924/2000)

Time spent alone, in engaged meditative practice, can open up the senses to

encounters with the universal inside the self, the soul. We can feel stillness, timelessness, expanse, and wholeness with the world in which we move. These moments manifest differently when we are alone in the world. As Dickinson (1924/2000) declares, there are varying degrees of solitude provoked by different places and events, but moments in which we are intentionally alone are charged with a different meaning and reflectivity. For a moment, we feel infinite.

Bachelard (1994) approaches this topic in his discussion of immensity, saying that when we consider the space around us, the paradox of our small selves in the vast world, “we should soon enter into a region of the purest sort of phenomenology... One that, in order to know the productive flow of images, need not wait for the phenomena of the imagination to take form and become stabilized in completed images” (p. 184). In silent contemplation, the words surge.

It is important to distinguish that solitude is productive aloneness, distinctly different from loneliness, which can be destructive to creativity. Productive solitude sets a person apart from the world in the midst of the world: “A solitary walker is in the world, but apart from it, with the detachment of the traveler rather than the ties of the worker, the dweller, or the member of a group” (Solnit, 2001, p. 58). Alone in the world, I can adopt a stance of detachment, distance, from my writing and from myself. This distance allows me to engage with more depth when I return to the writing or to the world.

Murray states that “one of the best things about writing is that it is something you can do by yourself and for yourself” (2002, p. 83). This kind of writing by one's-self for one's-self has transformative power for the self, and generative power, setting sparks for

future writings. In another writer's words, solitude and loneliness exist on opposite ends of the continuum of being alone:

Solitude is the positive end, signifying the affirmative state of being alone by choice and for purpose. In this sense solitude is a deliberately selected state of seclusion or isolation. It is in solitude that most great, creative work is born. Writers must understand that they will, of necessity, be spending a lot of their time in solitude – and must be able to weather extreme solitude. (Stepp, 2008, p. 1)

Running, yoga, meditation walking, and writing are solitary activities. While they can all be done with a group, they primarily involve the challenge of the self against the self, freeing inner thoughts and inner strength. They balance physical and mental challenge with breath, being, and awareness. They balance effort and ease, ebb and flow. The writer, the runner, and the yogi are all capable of being alone in a crowd.

I have been a member of running groups, and I have practiced yoga in a group setting with some very skilled teachers. I have had hiking partners and biking partners. Annually, several of my girlfriends and I take a backpacking trip, camping and carrying our own food for several days, coursing up and over mountains in the Appalachian forests. These group activities are physically based, sometimes tough work, and yet, they have another thing in common. When the terrain gets rough, or a hill gets steep, or a pose grows difficult, there is a lapse of silence. Even when I am among my friends, women I know and love, and whom I love talking to, I find solitude and distance in the narrow tunnel of the rocky trail, canopy of leaves spreading overhead. As I am climbing up the mountainside, surging with my own energy, only I carry my backpack. The conversation wanes, and each of us is alone with her thoughts. In these moments, solitude (and sometimes insightful words) will emerge. Later, around the campfire, one of us may say “When we were climbing CaCapon Mountain, the thought struck me....” Moments spent

together in solitude fuel our conversation; silence generates words reserved for later. We use these words to connect, together.

Again, I return to the classroom. In a 20 by 20 foot room, heads bent over writing pages, a certain different kind of solitude can be found. Each student writer is alone with his or her thoughts, paper, and pen. A hand may raise. A student may ask for help or whisper to another person with a question, but, for the most part, even student writers work alone. But is this a creative solitude? Do students choose this? Is it productive, or is it blocked by strain and frustration? Is productive solitude, the choice to be alone to harness creative energy, possible in the classroom? Can meaningful aloneness be evoked to produce writing in schools?

The Circuit

When I think of the interaction between my embodied awareness and my writing process, I see it as cyclical, recursive, and circuitous. I have become, over the years, confident that when I move my body through certain meditative motions, I can produce a flow of thinking that readily manifests in writing. When I go for a run, for example, I feel a deep meaningful connection with my self and with the world around me; if I run with intentionality, I have a sense of releasing stress, clearing my mind, taking in breath, processing meaning, and outpouring words. If I move with an intention, I can find a flow in thinking and writing. This flow feels like a kind of spiraling intake and release: of emotion, ideas, and language.

The word circuit, derives from the Latin *circuitus*, meaning “going round” (Circuit, 2011). In exercise, circuit describes a series of movements done in succession. The winding course of a labyrinth is named circuit. A circuit is a path by which a body of

energy travels: electrical current, traveling teachers or ministers, a course or flow of ideas, a transmission. A circuit conducts energy or ideas from one site to another; a human circuit can certainly conduct and transmit words. Circuit riders were “public lecturers in nineteenth century America, who went from place to place, delivering talks to audiences hungry for information and ideas” (Solnit, 2001, p. 46). My own informal, preliminary conversations with other practicing writers have revealed to me that many of us, when we need words to come, find that being more in our bodies also places us more in our minds; being in our bodies creates a perceptual circuit for observation and processing. Willis (1979) discusses meditation as a conductor-like state in which one “In humble expectancy and open vulnerability [...] generates a maintaining passive energy” (p. 101). This energy moves in and out of us. This circuit of energy sustains and cycles throughout the person and the practice, engaging both inner and outer attentiveness, active reception of feedback from within and without.

Many writers with whom I have spoken profess prewriting in the shower; the steady flow of water, the depth of bodily sensation brings words to the surface. In discussion of movement for facilitating a flow of words, I hear echoes of this phenomenon: “I write while I am biking” says one writer. “I write when I swim,” says another, or while hiking, or during yoga practice. Centering inside one's self, mind sinking into body, awareness apparent, inner thoughts can manifest, come clear. Through cultivating a repeated pattern of actions in writing or in movement, one creates a circuit through which thinking and writing can travel; process becomes practice, becomes ritual engagement.

The University of Maryland campus installed a labyrinth in a garden next to a

gentle sloping hillside beside the chapel. Sponsored by the TKF Foundation, the labyrinth encourages a meditative walk through a pre-set, spiraling circuit into a central space and back out again. As a tool, the labyrinth can bring a centered sense of presence and the present to those who walk within it; sometimes ideas and words come forth, and sometimes writing happens. At the University of Maryland, as at each of TKF's labyrinth sites, a waterproof journal is made available. Recognizing the sacred space labyrinth walk as a potential catalyst for inspiration, TKF places writing tools within access, asserting that an accessible journal

invites visitors to an Open Space Sacred Place to articulate their experience. Visitors share words or images of the experience of being in a sacred place. More than a simple diary, record, or log of daily events, a Journal is a collection of inspiring thoughts and reflections that attest to our need for opportunities to connect with each other and be in nature. (TKF, 2011)

That this connection happens through the written word speaks to the circular flow one may find in the circuitous movement of the walk, and outer journey that corresponds with “...an inner journey marked by the springing up of a life force, by the sublime mystery of that moment, and by creative growth changes” (Willis, 1979, p. 113).

It is important to note that the labyrinth and garden in which this motion occurs is considered by TKF to be sacred space. It is my experience that motion contributes to a sense of ritual, of intentionality, and that it is the intentional, ritual act of movement meditation that makes it sacred. My first meditation walk in a labyrinth happened at a writer's retreat at a convent in the northern panhandle of West Virginia. We, the writers gathered at the retreat, had taken a two-hour break for quiet writing time; we were to regroup later that afternoon to share the writing we had produced. I decided to take my journal and wander the grounds, seeking words, which is how I discovered the labyrinth.

The nuns had fashioned a single-circuit path out of different colored stones in a clearing in the woods near an old springhouse. There was a stream nearby, and the April air was filled with blooms and birdsong. I was alone in the clearing. I had never seen a labyrinth before, but I knew instinctively what to do, and the path invited me in. I took a step, stones crunching beneath my feet, and, moment by moment, moved deeper toward the center. The sunlight dappled the clearing, and the water gurgled in the creek. A groundhog watched me atop a nearby log, and he flattened himself against the bark when he saw me watching him back. As I continued to walk, I kept my eye on the groundhog, and he kept watching me. Words began to form. I kept circling the labyrinth's twisting path in, stopped at the center to look around, and then I circled back out. After finishing my walk, I sat in the dirt, eyes still on the groundhog, me watching him, him watching me. My journal received the words as they flowed onto the page:

Groundhog
 Woodchuck
 Whistle pig
 hops up on a fallen tree
 to get a better look at me.
 I exhale, stop breathing, freeze,
 trying to be still.
 The brown of his fur,
 the tree trunk brown,
 the brown ground—background--
 is camouflage.
 I close and open one eye,
 then the other, trying
 to see what I don't see
 but know is there.
 The sun catches the white fur of his cheeks
 and he appears, disappears.
 He turns his head
 back and forth,
 trying to see unmoving me.
 Finally, when we, peering intently,
 convince ourselves of our own

invisibility, we move
 freely.
 He drops from the log, fat tail flopping,
 and munches grass,
 while I scribble—quick—this poem
 about him.
 It's like divinity.
 We catch a glimpse when the light is right,
 and the rest of the time
 we're just squinting into the distance.

The way this poem shaped itself spontaneously, a product of motion, interaction, the right light, and connection between two creatures, felt charged with illuminating energy. It was a kind of transactional circuit, a two-way relationship between an animal I watched, as the animal watched me. Time seemed to stop, and words surfaced. As I took in the scene around me, integrating the experience, words and thoughts emerged, effortlessly. The poem felt like a gift. Produced in a ritual space, it felt sacred.

Palmer defines the sacred as “that which is worthy of respect,” and elaborates that “the sacred is everywhere” because “there is nothing—in its undistorted form, rightly conceived and understood—that is not worthy of respect” (1999, p. 20). The sacred moment I experienced involved multiple levels of respect, acceptance, and honor of everyday things: the structure of the basic stone labyrinth constructed by the nuns at the convent, the groundhog on the log, the rustling of the leaves in the trees, my own moving body, my capacity to be open, to articulate and to write in whatever way words emerged for me. As I slowed down in the meditative walk, the simple moment of being became profound, powerful, and sacred, through quiet motion, quiet mind.

Artress (2006) conceptualizes the circuit of the labyrinth as a kind of ritual pilgrimage. Solnit discusses intentional movement as pilgrimages, which “make it possible to move physically, through the exertions of one's body, step by step, toward

those intangible spiritual goals that are otherwise so hard to grasp. We are externally perplexed by how to move toward forgiveness or healing or truth, but we know how to walk from here to there, however arduous the journey” (2001, p. 124). Sacred space—the movement and intention make it so. The energy gained in sacred space is charged with power, the body a conductive circuit in the circuit of the labyrinth, transacting, transposing, and transmitting insight and information in and out of experience. The being-in and being-of the world, the intentional search for meaning in a meditative act make this ritual sacred.

Through the meditative walk, a transaction is made between mind and body, a taking in of one's environment, an integration into the self, and an outpouring of thought, into a journal, perhaps. This is what Artress (2006) refers to as the three fold path of moving meditation: purgation (clearing the mind), illumination (allowing ones self to receive), and union (carrying or communicating the experience into the world). A similar process manifests in reading theory, according to Rosenblatt; readers “lean into” a text, and interpretation

comes into being in the live circuit set up between the reader and the text. As with the elements of an electric circuit, each component of the reading process functions by virtue of the presence of the others. A specific reader and a specific text at a specific time and place: change in any of these, and there occurs a different circuit, a different event... (1978, p. 14)

And a similar process manifests in writing: “The writer is carrying on a two- way, circular, transactional relationship with the very text being written” (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 14). The circuit of the moving meditation mirrors the circuit of the literacy process.

The circuit is both physical and mental action, transaction. It is a journey made by the body, as in athletic exercise or the labyrinth walk. It is the course of an electric charge

as it moves between two poles. It is a path of thought. It is manifest in the power of insight, the lightbulb that illuminates when an idea strikes. Throughout this writing, I use the metaphor of the circuit to explore the phenomenon of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing.

Finding the Flow: Why Phenomenology for Me and for This Study?

My sense of understanding of the writing process is directly related to my sense of myself as an embodied being. The ability of my mind to do the work of composition is eased when I use my body fully; through exercise and motion, I can free my thinking and my writing. I return again to the image of students in the classroom, bodies confined, words blocked. “Start with one word,” I would tell them, “just write it on the page, write it small or large, again and again, until something else comes.” I hoped that the motion of their hands, scribbling the word, the sentence, would be enough. For some of them, it may have been. For many others, not so.

I found, after eight years facing the teaching of writing in an environment that stifled writing, that something else was needed. The neat rows of straight-backed chairs, hard desks, and number two leads did not recognize the bodies of young writers; they were separated mind from body, body from mind. The body, said the structure of schools, was for the football field, the baseball diamond, the playing court. The brain was for the classroom where there was no room to move.

Research, as in the classroom, often separates the mind from the body, creating a false dichotomy. Phenomenology firmly recognizes the role of the body in understanding the world. Van Manen says of hermeneutic phenomenology that it “exercises us in the sense that it empowers us with embodied knowledge which can now be brought to play

or realized into action in the performance of the drama of everyday life” (1997, p. 130). I want my research to be an exercise in being bodily, something that takes me into wholeness of body and mind. I want to draw the writer's body (mine and others') into the writing process; I want to bring the body into the writing classroom.

As a researcher, a writer, a teacher, and a practitioner of the phenomenon I wish to illuminate, I feel the need to describe moving meditation for flow in thinking and writing as it is lived by myself and by others. I want to understand, describe, and offer for my readers a vivid picture of the phenomenon as it exists in specific ways for specific persons. Rosenblatt discusses the need for qualitative approaches as we seek to understand the teaching and process of writing:

Although the experimental model may still have its uses, extrapolation of results to practical situations should be very cautious. Moreover, no matter how much we may generalize quantitatively about groups, reading and writing are always carried on by individuals. If research is to serve education, the linguistic transaction should be studied above all as a dynamic phenomenon happening in a particular context, as part of the ongoing life of the individual in a particular educational, social, and cultural environment. We need to learn how the student's attitudes and self-understandings are formed and enter into the reading/writing event. (1988, p. 20)

It is important to me that I gather and communicate the essence of moving meditation as it is lived by particular people in particular moments and spaces. We are our bodies: when we take a test, give a speech, get an A, we are full of physical reaction, sweating palms, flushed faces; when we find a research insight, complete a successful interview, publish our findings, our hearts pound, our chests swell. This shared reaction, this way of residing in our bodies, is rich ground for phenomenology. Gadamer (1960/2006) discusses the notion of a common sense of understanding that can only be reached through human science phenomenology. This common sense, what van Manen

(1997) calls intersubjectivity, also manifests in the phenomenon I wish to explore: of moving/embodied meditation as a means for accessing writing flow. This is evident when others say to me, as I introduce the topic, “I write in the shower,” or “I write while swimming.” The communal “Aha!” that comes from so many other voices in discussing this topic is intersubjective—the phenomenal sense that many of us experience this on a pre-conscious, pre-spoken level. It emerges in discussion; it is this “Aha!,” like an electrical charge, that I must listen for, hear, follow.

Transforming: Conducting Phenomenological Research

The phenomenon of moving meditation as a tool for writing calls to me, and I answer the call by practicing, thinking, inquiring, reading, and writing, and rewriting. At the heart of this is the lived experience of the phenomenon I seek to understand, and “to understand is to participate immediately in life, without any mediation through concepts” (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 208).

Van Manen states that, as a research methodology, “Phenomenology appeals to our immediate common experience in order to construct a structural analysis of what is most common, most familiar, most self-evident to us. The aim is to construct an animating, evocative description (text) of human actions, behaviors, intentions, and experiences as we meet them in the life world” (1997, p. 19).

In his guide to practicing phenomenological research, van Manen outlines six research activities essential to hermeneutic interpretation. Research is comprised of the following elements:

1. Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
3. Reflecting on essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;

4. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
6. Balancing the research context by balancing parts and whole. (1997, p. 31)

These components of phenomenological inquiry must guide my exploration of the lived experience of flow thinking in moving meditation.

Grounding: Turning to the phenomenon. I am a runner. I am a writer. When I run, words come to me. Running, as well as other forms of moving meditation, is my cure for writer's block. As I began to turn toward this phenomenon, as I discussed it with others who shared that they experience the same phenomenon, that their bodies unlock thinking and writing flow, I began to see the hermeneutic significance; I have begun to elaborate on that significance in this first chapter.

I can engage this phenomenon most deeply only when I begin from the phenomenon as it manifests in me: “We can, and can only, turn to face what Being gives while standing in the midst of our lifeworld. What the turning point makes clear is the ontological difference between facing only ourselves, in order to understand Being, and facing ourselves by way of questioning our capacity to understand and receive the presencing of Being” (Levin, 1985, p. 54). Through writing, and also through moving meditation, I transform, become more myself, drawing closer to understanding and also becoming more objective; in phenomenology, writing is the method through which one seeks to understand. As van Manen states: “The writer produces himself or herself...To write is to measure the depth of things, as well as to come to a sense of one's own depth” (1997, pp. 126-127). In this research journey, as in moving meditation, I hope to move deep into the center—of myself, of the words of my participants, and of the phenomenon.

Moving meditation as lived experience. Phenomenological social science

research orients itself with and attempts to explore the lifeworld as people live it. Investigating lived experience means to observe and to describe life as it is lived rather than life as it is conceptualized. In chapter 2, I continue to open up the phenomenon of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing. To do so, I engage with poetry, etymology, history, spiritual tradition, research and theory on the teaching of writing, investigations addressing the effects of exercise on mind and body, works on moving meditation, and informal conversations with other writers who practice moving meditation as a source of writing. In chapter 4, I offer interpretive renderings of the lived experience of movement meditation with my study conversants, including their responses and the flow of conversation, which springs from the practice.

Van Manen (1997) identifies four essential lifeworld existentials: “lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality or communality) [...] belonging to the fundamental structure of the lifeworld” (p. 102). Moving meditation allows us to more deeply feel all four existentials, and yet, at the same time, it allows us distance from all four existentials. In this writing, in chapter 2 and throughout, I must engage with the phenomenon and the texts of my conversants as deeply as I can to reveal these lifeworld fundamentals.

Lived space and lived time. Moving meditation often occurs in a specific, designated space. This may be the winding course of a labyrinth, the wooded path of a hiking trail, the soft rectangle of a yoga mat, the cool quiet of the swimming pool, or the paved surface of a running track. The space in which moving meditation occurs can be seen as sacred space, whether it is pre-designated as such (as in the case of a labyrinth) or whether it is made sacred by the silent act one practices within it. Moving meditation, as

an intentional act, sets upon the space in which it occurs an element of intentionality, making the space special, sacred.

This intentional practice and tone contribute to a feeling of fluidity and changeability relates to the space in which moving meditation is practiced. When I am running, for example, I am in space that is both small and vast: the space encompasses my body, and yet moving meditation allows me to transcend space. I may forget my environment, covering a mile or two with no recollection of landmarks or scenery, or I may become hyper aware of my environment when a hawk calls above me or a deer crosses my path.

Time changes in a similar way during moving meditation. One moves to seek stillness, time stoppage. Time may be measured in breaths rather than minutes, and the social construct of clock time falls away. When I am running, time becomes a factor, and yet time stops. I may be trying for my best mile, to beat the clock, and still I move toward a sense of timelessness. In the moments or hours of my run, I have nothing else to do. Again, the sense of intentional practice sets a tone for the moments in which the practice is conducted, moving the lived time from routine to ceremonial.

Lived human relation. In moving meditation one may withdraw from the world to more fully engage in the world; to retreat or turn away for a time leads to a richer return, as movement meditation allows one to be “both present and detached from the world around, more than an audience but less than a participant” and in this stage, movement “assuages or legitimizes this alienation: one is mildly disconnected because one is walking, not because one is incapable of connecting” (Solnit, 2001, p. 65). From the stance of moving observer, one can deepen the ability to and understanding of human

relation. When engaging in moving meditation for finding flow, one might hope to gather words or thoughts from inside oneself that allow a clearer, deeper, more meaningful engagement with the world outside the self. When I am running, I may deeply analyze my relationships with others, or I may be wholly with myself; words can emerge that link my thoughts to language through which I engage in relationships with others.

In addition, my thinking about others during the time I spend alone in moving meditation allows me to see myself more clearly, creating an illuminated sense of my own experience and a connection to the intersubjective. Van Manen expresses that, in our human relationships, “As we meet the other, we are able to develop a conversational relation which allows us to transcend our *selves*. In a larger existential sense, human beings have searched in this experience of the other...” (1997, p. 105). Although movement meditation, practiced alone, is not a literal search for the other, it is a exploration of understanding that enables that search. Seeing myself more clearly is seeing others more clearly, and deepening the relationship with myself deepens my relationship with the world.

Lived body. Levin (1985) expresses that understanding and questioning can come only through full awareness, body awareness, and that we understand Being bodily: “Bodily forth this gift of understanding kept within the body (making it manifest, explicit, and articulate), we are opening into the clearing field of Being” (p. 55).

Lived body seems the most pressing existential in my exploration of moving meditation for finding flow. Lived body is both the individual (my) body and the collective, archetypal body, which provides a common basis by which we intersubjectively understand the world. The archetypal, the ancestral body is ground for

shared, common experience. Levin states that the

ancestral body is two-fold: in the first instance, to be sure, it is claimed by and belongs to the ancestral chain, and undecoded code of organismic and environmental attunements; but in the second instance, it is claimed by us, and belongs to our ancestral origins only by virtue of the gift of thought, an act of dedication. The ancestral body is both the body we have inherited biologically from our ancestors, and also the body we have received from them through the processes of cultural transmission. (1985, p. 172)

My understanding of the archetypal body, the lived body, is the intersubjective relevance of moving meditation, an experience that has a shared effect. It may be inarticulate, unspoken, but we generally know it when we see it. I describe the phenomenon I seek to open, and you say “I’ve felt that!” This bespeaks the resonance of the phenomenon as it occurs within our common understanding; this is not to say that everyone does or will experience it, or that those who do experience it do so in the same way. Rather, I seek to explore the commonality among experiences, the essence of moving meditation as it occurs not just in my lived body, but also in the lived bodies of others, as well.

To better explore the essence of this phenomenon, I engage with it as it manifests in me, but I also must move beyond myself. To do so, I explore its presencing in a variety of other texts, including etymological sources, idiomatic phrases, descriptive texts, art, literature, journals, phenomenological literature, and the first-hand accounts of others gathered through conversation and observation.

Essential themes. To engage in thematic reflection is to identify and illuminate the elements that cannot be removed from an experience without changing the meaning of that experience. Van Manen (1997) discusses thematizing as a means for bringing a lived experience into meaningful focus, to openness, of concretizing into presence the phenomenon one wishes to engage. To engage in thematic reflection and grasp the

significance of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing, I have to set aside my common sense understandings of this phenomenon in order to reveal its essence.

In chapter 1, I have begun to uncover themes through self reflection, which grounds me as a researcher in the midst of a life, in the engagement of living the experience I seek to understand; this may lead me, according to van Manen (1997), to a deeper sense of both self and other in this lived experience of moving meditation for thinking and writing. I have also briefly introduced themes that emerge as I begin to define moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing: these include process, practice, flow, solitude, and the metaphor of the circuit. In chapter 2, as I begin to uncover themes from textual accounts that open up my phenomenon, I incorporate and draw upon a variety of texts. In chapter 4, my conversants offer the text for themes that thread throughout their lived experience of moving meditation. Thematic engagement will bring to my awareness the nature and the pedagogic implications of their lived experience as writers who practice moving meditation. The act of thematizing opens new insights, common threads, and connections within and among different experiences of the phenomenon of moving meditation. Themes, as parts of a greater whole, reveal and deepen the essence of this phenomenon. As I seek these common parts, the whole becomes clearer, the individual experiences of the phenomenon more defined.

To seek themes, I engage in rich discussions with others, co-conversants who also are moved by this phenomenon and its potential for other writers: teachers of writing. I listen to their voices, review transcripts of their words, fill the margins with notes. I make links to other sources, to literature, poetry, to philosophy, to history. Identifying themes

as parts of a whole, I seek to make connections, circling the essence of the phenomenon, practicing the phenomenon, returning to the words of others, making meaning. By thematizing, I hope to create a structure that becomes a story of the phenomenon of moving meditation for finding flow in thinking and writing.

Circumnavigation: Writing and rewriting. The possibility of common understanding—the essence of moving meditation for finding flow—begs for interpretation that leads to understanding of a living phenomenon. Gadamer (1960/2006) discusses the concept of *Erleben* as represented in interpretive analysis. According to Gadamer, *Erleben* means “to be still alive when something happens,” speaking to the concept of phenomenon as evolving (p. 53). To understand a phenomenon, then, is to address and interpret both the experience and the effect of the experience. Experience, then, is lasting, recurring, ever important; the impact lasts beyond the act, and the act continues to resonate long after it is completed.

This is moving meditation for me—the act of it is temporary, and yet its effect is lasting personally and communally. It manifests in an archetypal awareness prior to one's experience of it, and moving meditation is both larger and more profound than the individual in the momentary experience. In order to seek a complete understanding for myself, and in order to present a complete understanding for my readers, I must move in and out of these aspects of the phenomenon, gathering up and laying down in writing all its modalities—the pre-conceptual, the active, the conscious, the unconscious, the archetypal, the practical—within the textual spiral of hermeneutic phenomenology.

The phenomenon itself, and the way I and others experience it, provides rich ground for writing and meaning-making: Gadamer (1960/2006) discusses this as the

content of what is experienced. This content is like a yield or result that achieves permanence, weight, and significance from out of the transience of experiencing. Both meanings obviously lie behind the coinage *Erlebnis*: both the immediacy, which precedes all interpretation, reworking, and communication, and merely offers a starting point for interpretation—material to be shaped—and its discovered yield, its lasting result. (p. 53)

The voices of my conversants provide material for me to interpret and reinterpret, spiraling out, making meaning, finding the essence of moving meditation and its pedagogical implications.

It is important that these words, those of this study and the phenomenon it seeks to explore, and all words, are rooted in body being. Abram states:

Although we may be oblivious to the gestural, somatic dimension of language, having repressed it in favor of strict dictionary definitions and the abstract precision of specialized terminologies, this dimension remains subtly operative in all our speaking and writing—if, that is, our words have any significance whatsoever. For meaning, as we have said, remains rooted in the sensory life of the body—it can not be completely cut off from the soul of direct, perceptual experience without withering and dying. (1996, p. 80)

It is my intention to illuminate the living language I find, as it resides in and emerges from my body, and the bodies of others, as it bubbles up through the motion of moving meditation.

Directing energy: Maintaining a pedagogical relation to the phenomenon. I

am a writer. I am a runner. I am a teacher. I am a teacher of writing. I am also a teacher of teachers. I am a researcher. One of the most frustrating experiences of my career in the high school English classroom was trying to help my students become writers. Although I believe that all students can write, a struggle was fought in my efforts to get them there. I find ease in writing through the effort of running and other forms of moving meditation. If I can offer the possibility of easing the struggle to write for my students, for myself as a teacher, and for other teachers of writing, this seems a profound endeavor. My concerns

as a researcher, then, are similar to my concerns as a teacher. I seek to open the phenomenon of moving meditation as a tool for finding writing flow so that it may be of use to myself and to others, particularly writing teachers and their students. I seek to understand, to interpret, and to share with other teachers of writing.

To keep a clear focus, I must live my questions, embody my questions, be grounded by my questions. Merleau-Ponty asserts that “We ourselves are one sole continued question, a perpetual enterprise of taking our bearings on the constellations of the world, and of taking the bearings of the things on our dimensions” (1964/1968, p. 103). My questions guide me, spiraling constellations, as I take my bearings. To maintain a clear orientation to this phenomenon and my research goals, I must always keep in mind my question as a guide: *What is the lived experience of moving meditation for finding flow in thinking and writing?* I expect this question, in my seeking answers, to yield other questions, and yet I must maintain my orientation to the original question, even as I wander other paths where it may lead me, although I expect that “the essence of the question is to open up possibilities and keep them open” (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 299).

Additionally, I must clearly understand and communicate my own positionality as a writer who practices moving meditation, as a teacher of writing, and as a phenomenological researcher. In chapter 3, I examine my methodology and the phenomenological underpinnings of my study. As a researcher in the human sciences, I must be willing to set aside my own experience and allow the experience of my conversants to reveal the phenomenon as it is lived for them. In doing so, I maintain a clear orientation to my questions as well as to my philosophy.

Parts to Whole, Whole to Parts

Phenomenology is defined by the interpretive relationship of whole to parts, parts to whole. My understanding of moving meditation as a tool for finding writing and thinking is ever only partial. Although it surfaces in my writing life, my awareness of it is limited by my own experiences and sense of the world. This method for research and writing provides me with a way to create a more complete sense of the essence of this phenomenon; by connecting my partial understanding with the partial understandings of others, I may be able to engage other parts (themes, pedagogical implications) that can weave into something larger than my singular awareness. My final chapter addresses what I have learned through the study, as well as the pedagogical implications for moving meditation for finding flow in thinking and writing. The back and forth, spiraling motion of phenomenology allows me to move among my own and others' pre-understandings, literary and written sources, and philosophical traditions, remaining open to the wholeness these parts create.

Pedagogical Contributions of the Study

It is my intention to make vivid the phenomenon of flow thinking emergent in moving meditation through the texts of literature, history, spirituality, composition theory, research, and conversations I have with those who engage in this phenomenon. Because much of my understanding of the teaching of writing is deeply connected to who I am as a writer and teacher, I hold to some deep beliefs about the writing process and the teaching of writing. As a National Writing Project fellow and long-time teacher consultant, I hold to the notion that everyone can write, and that teachers of writing should be writers themselves. Additionally, I hold to the belief that the best teachers of

teachers are teachers, that “Teachers who are well informed and effective in their practice can be successful teachers of other teachers as well as partners in educational research, development, and implementation” (National Writing Project, 2012). As such, teachers of writing themselves seem to be in the best position to teach me; I have selected as conversants classroom English teachers.

I found a small group of English teachers who will chose to walk and talk with me, moving to seek stillness, attempting to find, in motion, the words they seek as writers and ways to connect to their practice as teachers. Together, we engage in both moving meditation and written composition, using one to stimulate the other as a practice. I engage with my conversants in moving meditation, in writing, and in the processing of their experience of this phenomenon as they live it and envision it for classroom applications. Throughout the course of many informal conversations, I attempt to get at the essence of this phenomenon as lived by writing teachers, mediated by the lifeworld, and engaged in the philosophy of phenomenology. Teachers of writing must be writers themselves, and, as embodied beings, may gain power from acknowledging their embodiment. We walk, write, talk, and process the classroom implications for the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing.

For my readers, then, I construct a narrative that reveals both parts and whole, offering a vision of the essence of the lived experience of moving meditation for finding flow in thinking and writing. That, then, is the purpose of human science phenomenology: to find pedagogical insights in order that such understandings will help others. That vision as a whole is comprised of parts that resonate for practitioners of moving meditation, for teachers of writing, and for writers. It is with this hope that I

approach my participants and the question: *What is the lived experience of moving meditation for finding flow in thinking and writing?*

CHAPTER 2

TRANSFORMING THE CURRENT: EXPLORING THE PHENOMENON

Harnessing the Phenomenon: Process in Practice

If you want to become full
let yourself be empty.
(Lao-tzu, 1995)

On the second day of the new year, I ran five quiet miles in my hometown during the winter's first snowstorm. As I went, the light snowfall changed to big, fat flakes, filling up the woods and coating downed trees with a soft blanket of white. The only sounds were the muted hush of the falling snow settling on brown, dry leaves, the rhythmic falls of my feet, and the swishing of my ponytail against the back of my wind jacket, simultaneous with the swishing of my breaths. As I wound my way on the path along the banks of the Monongahela River, a great blue heron swooped over the water and landed on the opposite bank, and a kingfisher fluffed its feathers to keep out the chill. A cardinal whistled in a tree, bright red against the accumulating white, his voice echoing in the hush. Snowflakes melted on my eyelashes, and a pileated woodpecker cackled at me, a lone figure pushing against the winter wind.

I had read hundreds of pages for a winter course I was taking; I had gathered in the words and thoughts of others. As the snow swirled around me, thoughts spiraled within me. As I ran, I was synthesizing what I had read. I was clearing the way for connection, insight, waiting for the moment when the thoughts of the authors I had read would line up, unravel, and re-weave themselves into a sensible pattern in my mind, transformed into something meaningful. Immersion in the motion, constant activity, allowed a slowing down, a filling up, an opening to something inexpressible, ineffable,

without words. And yet words were being generated; once my head had cleared, I moved more deeply into the concepts and principles about which I had read, and coherent circuits of thought began to form. Piqued in the cycle of my own process, aware of the world and aware of myself, I was synthesizing, transacting, transforming, translating, sense-making, immersed in a relational cycle of self, world, and whirling ideas.

On that snowy day, I embodied much of what I had read about the benefits of running as moving meditation. This is meditative experience, movement meditation, and, as such, involves both “heightened awareness” and “whole-hearted examination” of what we think we know (Rubin, 2001, p. 127). I was engaged in the composing process during a movement practice. I was sensitive to the world around me, yet submerged deeply in my moving body, and all the while thinking sometimes about nothing, sometimes about everything, sometimes about the pages I had read, trying to make sense of how they fit together and how my understanding could make sense of them. But this experience also represents something else. For me, the practice of movement meditation, specifically running—in all kinds of weather—is movement toward wholeness, a way of connecting with my deepest self that can open worlds of words, spark electric insight; it is transactional and transformative. I have come to believe I am not alone in this experience; the phenomenon of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing surfaces in works I have read and conversations I have with others. But I wonder: What does this it feel like for writers to find themselves and their thoughts in the midst of motion? And what does the research say about the existence of such a phenomenon?

The Coursing Current: Moving and Thinking

For me, as well as for others, running is a moving meditation tool to find focus

and to make sense. Voices of writers and researchers elaborate on the existence of this phenomenon, and I find that their experiences are not so different from my own. One runner and writer describes clearly and closely what I experience when I move to process and understand, stating that “When I run those miles over the roads there is all the while a stream of consciousness, a torrent of ideas, coursing through my brain. One idea after another goes hurtling past like so much white water. Giving me here and there a new insight, a new intuition, a new understanding” (Sheehan, 1998, p. 222). This coursing current of insight, almost electric, is something I, too, have felt. In some moments, the prospect of tapping into that current is my motivation for moving meditation. The meaning-making circuit is reason enough for running, and evidence of its existence appears in research, written anecdote, and in conversation with others.

Running produces, according to Solomon and Bumpus (1981), physiologic and psychologic benefits, “helps the individual get his head together, or [...] clears 'gummed up thinking'” (p. 45). Each running experience is different, “but, generally speaking, the individual experiences a beneficial catharsis of anger, tension, stress, and frustration. He feels well, is relaxed and refreshed, and possesses a new sense of vitality. His mind feels clearer and is free of restraint. Barriers to the subconscious and unconscious loosen, permitting the free emergence of data...” (Solomon & Bumpus, p. 45). The clearing effect of movement practice allows new insight to emerge, helping thinkers to turn inward, to reflect in patient practice, to tap into the current of their own understanding.

Following this calming clearing, movement practice can produce a clearer understanding of self and problem-solving. Berger and Mackenzie (1981) conducted a case study in which a runner journaled and participated in interviews to reveal her inner

experiences while running. The authors propose that “Sports such as jogging are conducive to introspection as well as to thinking in general” (p. 104). This case study found that running helped a person to review life and past experiences, reflect upon conversations, generate solutions to problems, and sometimes created a meditative, auto-hypnotic state without clear, conscious thought present. The authors also found, as a result of their case study, that “Awareness of private phenomenological experiences associated with sport can be useful for gaining self understanding” (Berger & Mackenzie, p. 109). Research has found that running leads to increased reflective thinking, self-awareness, and introspective analysis: running as a meditative tool facilitates self-knowledge, deep thinking, and problem-solving. This problem solving is sometimes accompanied by a feeling of freedom and clarity: “Many runners tell us that they hear solutions to problems, answers to questions, and input on decisions to be made while on long, peaceful runs. During these moments, they feel as though they are floating or gliding over the terrain, surrounded by the trees that envelop them, enjoying a feeling of being totally free, as if they could go on forever” (Lynch & Scott, 1999, p. 176).

One author on running and meditation who has catalogued experiences of those who run to find focus and wholeness, states that “One banker from Chicago gets up from his desk when his thoughts come too fast and furiously for him to make any sense of them at all. 'After a mile or two, my body and mind have come together and I'm thinking at a much more manageable rate” (Andrews, 1978, p. 9). Another writer vividly describes his own experience of running for problem solving, during a time when he was struggling with a specific issue, trying to make sense of ideas in opposition. He explains:

I had been struggling with the question for a couple of days. I went for a run, still thinking about it. At around 35 to 40 minutes, the issue became distasteful. I had,

then, a series of disjointed, odd facts, notions, and bits of flotsam and jetsam seemingly not at all related to the problem I was working on. Finally, after I returned home and as I cooled down, I refocused my attention on the original problem, and there lay, in my mind's eye, a clear, logical, and concise contrast between the two forms of analysis. It was as if I had “consulted” another portion of my mind. This consultant responded first by clearing my conscious mind of the problem and throwing in the proper amount of other material to help arrange the synthesis. In speaking to runners I have found many who have experienced the same thing with only minor variations. Some author-runners make the statement that their personal creativity is directly connected to their running. (Kostrubala, 1976, pp. 100-101)

Annie, a writer with whom I spoke in an informal conversation, expressed the need for exercise as a way to make room for composing to happen, a clearing or cementing of thoughts before the act of writing. Annie feels not just that movement can stimulate thinking, but also that lack of exercise can even create, for her, a block to writing. She explains: “I can not engage in a sedentary activity such as writing if I haven't been physically active first. Sometimes I actually have to embrace the philosophy of 'play before work' rather than the other way around...the activities that help me think and write more clearly are making sure I get enough exercise each day, at least a couple of miles of dog walking.”

For yet another writer, running clears a space for a flow that happens in no other sense, in which he can “escape from time and passively await the revelation of the way things are,” and when this waiting comes to fruition, he says that “there, in a lightning flash, I can see truth apprehended whole without thought or reason. I experience the sudden understanding that comes unmasked, unbidden. I simply rest, rest within myself, rest within the pure rhythm of my running” (Sheehan, 1998, p. 14). When thinking seems blocked, locked, “running is the key to this lock. Somehow in the relaxation, the letting go, we arrive at a state that Heraclitus described as 'listening to the essence of things.' We

open ourselves up to the world” (Sheehan, p. 95). This opening, with the world and our thoughts coursing through us, so like electric current, represents a circuit of understanding, of self in the world, the world in the self, a wholeness. How do runners and practitioners of other forms of moving meditation experience this wholeness of mind and body? What body and mind practices enable and allow this phenomenon to happen? What is the lived experience of other writers and movement practitioners who use motion as a tool for thinking and writing?

Tuning In, Tuning Out

I know that I run to find my self and to give her voice. I do not know how or why it happens, but words manifest in my body as I move. It may not look like writing, but it is. It may not look like meditation, but it is. In my body, I am fully present and absent at once. In the motion of my body, I am subsumed by nothingness, and in the best of these moments, words emerge. Is it the true self I am finding, the swirling storm cloud, from which powerful thought may strike? Is it emptiness I find, clearing? Ram Das describes the meditative act of selfless composition:

there is writing happening
 maybe that's hard for you to understand
 I am here but “I” am not here.
 I am writing but “I” am not writing
 inside of me in the heart cave is a
 mantra going on that reminds me
 who I really am
 over and over again
 in this inner place
 I am
 and even as I write, where this
 mantra is going on I am just watching with
 great awe and wonder. (1978, p. 33)

Somehow, paradoxically, practices that help me be more centered in my body,

connecting me with self and separating me from the world, also connect me more deeply in the world. I understand myself more clearly, my own patterns, my sense of time and space and thought; I am also able to take in, clarify, process, synthesize, and transform information into understanding. Through my body's movement I can find focus that leads to the deepest meaning and insight. Sheehan calls this place of health, motion, and potential power the “tuned-in self that could listen with the third ear, was aware of the fourth dimension and had a sixth sense about the forces around us. That tuned in self that was sensitive and intuitive, and perceived what is no longer evident to [our] degenerating bodies” (1998, p. 53). When we write from this state of engagement, of being tuned-in, we produce resonance and flow. Movement meditation brings me to my tuned-in self.

While running, states Andrews, one is able to tap into the subconscious for insight and problem solving, to “obtain a power charge that runs from the psychic core up to the conscious level and evokes childhood memories, uncovers secret goals and unarticulated wishes, inspires vivid fantasies and dreams, and illuminates the interior framework of the soul...” (1978, p. 78). This power charge can zap words to life, give us the force to speak or write in a sense that is closest to our deepest understanding and what we really mean. I tune out of the world to tune into my self, and yet, in a circuitous pattern, I tune out of the vibrations of everyday life to tune more deeply into the world. Movement meditation allows me to disconnect in a way that creates deeper engagement and insight, and that insight often translates into written inspiration, powerful words.

One of the motivations for this writing, my own research, then, is the clear disconnect between what I knew I needed as a blocked writer (movement for clearing my thoughts and providing inspiration, for tuning out of jumbled thinking and tuning in to

insight) and my inability as a teacher of writing to translate the functional aspects of embodied writing to students who suffered from writer's block, who were tuned-out in an unproductive way. I return to the image of student bodies in hard desks who looked up at me in frustration and said: "I can't." I struggled, and continue to struggle, with the limitations of the writing classroom: four block walls, florescent lights, desk bound bodies, tied tongues. Xiaoyan and Lin (2011) assert:

It is essential we have a profound understanding of our body as a small universe which is inextricably linked with the energy and spirits of the larger universe. We must design ways to help our students to open their pores, their heavenly eye between the two eyes, their acupuncture points, and their meridians, which are the energy path for exchanging energy with the universe, according to Chinese meditational traditions and medicine. Thus, education for the transformation of our body, mind, and spirits is not just metaphorical but literal. (p. 347)

The bodies in my classroom generally speaking, during the act of writing, were performing a task, not transforming thinking, not building energy or cultivating connection. There seemed a clear paradox between the way I wrote on my own and the way I asked my students to write in the classroom. The contrast between what I know about my writing process and the way it is taught in schools is another paradox: one between practice and pedagogy.

Moving meditation, for me, allows for awe, wonder, meaning-making, and centeredness in the world. I do feel "linked with the energy and spirits of the larger universe." In the regular practice of running, I find answers to problems, fuel for my ideas and composition, revision of writing and thinking, and sometimes, when I am very engaged, full works of writing, poems, or essays will emerge in a flow. This experience connects clearly to traditional practices of movement across cultures and times. The paradox of moving meditation, as conceptualized in Buddhist spiritual practices, is that

one must empty one's self, become an empty vessel in order to become filled.

Detachment, distance, is a cornerstone of spiritual practice in both Taoist and Buddhist beliefs, and yet detachment from the world also permits a deeper sense of engagement with the world—tuning in, tuning out. This may be true for writing, as well, particularly phenomenological writing. If one must, as van Manen (1997) suggests, begin with a phenomenon in which we deeply engage and which commits us to the world, we must also learn to step away and disengage from that phenomenon to see it as it is lived by others, to bring into clarity the intersubjective; we must rise above our own singular conceptions of something we love and that interests us in the world; we must tune out our singular experiences and tune in to the collective, the intersubjective. This chapter turns toward the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing as a phenomenon that exists beyond myself and my understanding of it. I ask: how do others experience this phenomenon?

This phenomenon—the connection between the body and the written word—is inexplicable and real. It surfaces in literature, in poetry, in the writing habits of legendary authors and amateur scribblers. I have felt it myself, and, turning to this phenomenon, I investigate, engage, and illuminate the writing body through a thematic exploration of these channels, as well as through conversations with practicing writers. To do so, I channel the currents of spirituality, classroom practice and pedagogy, literature, religion, history, and meditation practices to examine lived experience that can uncover and illuminate this phenomenon, further revealing its essential components, refining the phenomenon of moving meditation, and fleshing out its implications for learning, writing, and the classroom. What does the research work say about movement meditation as a

thinking tool? What traditions exist that illuminate the use of movement meditation as a thinking tool? What do other writers have to say about the lived experience of moving meditation?

As introduced in the previous chapter, essential aspects of moving meditation for thinking and writing continue to surface throughout this work. I move more deeply into the metaphor of the circuit and also explore its variations, cycle and spiral. Additionally, I question the three part path of moving meditation in more detail. I continue to dwell in essences for understanding the experience of moving meditation for finding flow in thinking and writing: process, practice, flow, solitude, and, additionally, nature. In this chapter through further discussion of texts, and in following chapters through the words and experiences of my conversants, those who will engage in the practices of movement and writing alongside me, I continue to make meaning from motion, defining and uncovering the essence of moving meditation. How does one learn to use the movement of the body to open the writing mind? What is it like to experience movement meditation as a way of finding one's thoughts and inspiration? Again I turn and return to the question: *What is the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing?*

Of Circuits, Cycles, and Spirals

...'I' Will be no more a datum than the words
 You link false inference with, the 'Since' & 'so'
 That, true or not, make up the atom-whirl.
 Resolve your 'Ego', it is all one web
 With vibrant ether clotted into worlds:
 Your subject, self, or self-assertive 'I'
 Turns nought but object, melts to molecules,
 Is stripped from naked Being with the rest
 Of those rag-garments named the Universe.
 Or if, in strife to keep your 'Ego' strong

You make it weaver of the etherial light,
 Space, motion, solids & the dream of Time —
 Why, still 'tis Being looking from the dark,
 The core, the centre of your consciousness...
 (Eliot, 2011)

A common trope found in comic strips and cartoons involves a light bulb appearing above the head of an individual who has a bright idea. Many spiritual traditions discuss enlightenment, the warm glow of understanding a true nature and path, the flooding in of awareness, ideas brought to light. Religious iconography abounds with images of haloed saints, prophets, gods, and goddesses, brilliant beams flowing from their heads and hands, bringing insight to the world and drawing out darkness. This light of understanding symbolized across cultures and throughout centuries offers an archetypal sense of the way we find ideas. We are illuminated, thoughts are brought to light, we generate insight.

The Circuit

The light bulb is a simple circuit through which electrons flow. Their movement causes atomic vibrations that emit heat, and when hot enough, light. Free electrons travel a circuit through which movement creates heat, and that heat creates light. This motion “completes a circuit. As electricity passes through, the electrical current excites the metal and gets it hot. [...] it doesn't just glow red, but it glows white” (The Naked Scientists, 2011). This white light, cycled through a circuit, brings illumination in the darkness. White light, too, circles the heads of saints in archetypal art, forms in the lightning flash of understanding. We use white light to symbolize ideas illuminated in the circuits of the mind.

The simple light bulb and illuminating light in general transcend surface

description when we think symbolically. White light we equate with insight, the circuitous path of understanding. The word circuit, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is derived from the Latin word *circuitus*, meaning “to go around.” A circuit is a “sphere of action” and also “The action of going or moving round or about; a circular journey, a round,” or “The journey made by thoughts...” (Circuit, 2011). The word circuit can also refer to a “roundabout process or mode” of “speech or expression: circumlocution” or “reasoning” (Circuit). In the verb form, circuit means: “To go, pass, move, or travel round; to make the circuit of, compass about” or “To compass in thought, circumvent, get round” (Circuit). Moving from concrete to abstract, the course of thought mimics physical motion. A circuit is a journey made by thoughts, the path of insight. Guided by insight, thoughts become words, and in writing bring power to the page.

Additionally, however, the word circuit describes a physical journey made by the body: “A course or round of various athletic exercises” (Circuit, 2011). This word also refers to the path traveled by judges, ministers, or entertainers in rural areas, a set path on which they set their steps to meet the needs of the communities they traveled. This is a kind of roundabout motion for the purpose of communal understanding, a physical journey in which physical bodies meet. However, by journeying a circuit with their bodies, these circuit riders also carried insight, the ideas going round inside them, moving out into the world around. The circuit riders brought ideas to word, by word of mouth to those they served.

On a more physiological level, our bodies are conductive circuits. We are composed of electrical charge, neurons firing. Energy circulates through us, and thought

mimics energy, coursing through us. Energy cultivation can be a drive and a reason for running, as “We live far below the energy we have and therefore must learn how to tap these reservoirs of power” (Sheehan, 1998, p. 203). We are active agents in the creation of our own physical, spiritual, cognitive, and poetic energy. One running writer states: “The first half hour of my run is for my body. The last half hour, for my soul. In the beginning the road is a miracle of solitude and escape. In the end it is a miracle of discovery and joy. Throughout, it brings an understanding of what Blake meant when he said 'Energy is eternal delight'” (Sheehan, pp. 225-226). In this solitude and discovery, submerged in the movement of the body, creation happens. Sheehan insists, “The energy of my body becomes an energy of the mind” (p. 226). This mind energy explodes into insight, may manifest in words, and “a tremendous energy pours through my body. I am whole and holy. And the universe is whole and holy and full of meaning,” that “becomes an awareness of the sacred” (Sheehan, p. 226). In terms of electrical science, a circuit is “The course traversed by an electric current between the two poles of a battery; the path of a voltaic current” (Circuit, 2011). This is not unlike inspiration—the sudden strike of phrase or word that brings the writer sharply to the word, an emergence of words coming out in a flow, a path from the movement to the page.

The definitions and the sense of original meanings of circuit apply to moving meditation, writing and inspiration, as well as the process of phenomenological research and writing. The metaphor of the circuit relates to the circular pattern of body traveling through the world, of breath traveling through the body, sensory input of the world traveling through the body, thoughts traveling through the mind, and the formation from thought to word, the ideas moving in a circular motion. The circuit parallels the

recursiveness of the writing process. The metaphor also connects to going around or circumventing a block in one's thinking or to create a current, a flow between thought and word, experience and articulation.

The body as circuit both perceptive and conductive. The body is a thing (object), which we experience, but it is also a field in which and through which experience is made possible, organized, and enacted. According to Merleau-Ponty,

The awareness that I have of my body is a sliding awareness, the feeling of power, of a being-able to. I am aware of my body as an undivided and systematic potency to organize certain unfoldings of perceptual appearance... I organize with my body an understanding of the world, and the relation with my body is not that of a pure I, which would successively have two objects, my body and the thing, but rather I live in my body, and by means of it I live in the things. (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 74)

The body is both subject and object, to sense with and to be sensed. It is a point of location and vehicle of motion, a mediator of perception, a sensory circuit through which meaning-making flows. The body is: "...interposed between what is in front of me and what is behind me, my body standing in front of the upright things, in a circuit with the world, an *Einführung* with the world, with the things, with the animals, with other bodies (having a perceptual side as well) made comprehensible by this theory of the flesh" (Merleau-Ponty, p. 209). All meaning making is mediated through the circuitry of the body in a circuitous relationship with all other components of the world around us.

We are not just biological, sensual beings, and the body is not just functional—a product of biology—nor is it instrumental—a tool for receiving and seeking stimulation; the body is perceptive, in a circular relation with the world. It is a “perceived thing that perceives itself, and thereby inserts the world between self and self—a mass of pleasures and of pains that are not closed in on themselves, but is used by us to please and to suffer

from the world and from others...” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 211). By virtue of our bodies, we take in information, process that information, create new insight, and through our bodily responses, circulate that insight back into the world: “The circuit is what the corporal schema means: it is schema, organization, not an informed mass, because it is a relation to the world, and this because it is a relation to the self in generality” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 223). Understanding is a kind of looping of sensory material in, through, and from the body.

The body is more than just a tool of perception, a subject/object in and of the world, however. The body is perception itself:

My body does not perceive, but it is as if it were built around the perception that dawns through it; through its whole internal arrangement, its sensory-motor circuits, the return ways that control and release movements, it is, as it were, prepared for a self-perception, even though it is never itself that is perceived nor itself that perceives. Before the science of the body (which involves the relation with the other) the experience of my flesh as gangue of my perception has taught me that perception does not come to birth just anywhere, that it emerges in the recess of the body. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 9)

In this sense, perception creates the body senses, which in turn create the body. Merleau-Ponty discusses the flesh as “gangue,” a mining term referring to the rock around a precious mineral; the body is built around the center of this jewel of understanding, the circuitry of the body brings this precious mineral to light. Conductivity in the body creates and becomes perception; the body is the conductor of our awareness.

The body itself is a circuit of perception and conductivity, affecting what we draw in, engage, and release. The body is the process by which we come into being: “It is the body (not simply a guiding consciousness) that understands its world, and it is the body which holds within it those intentional threads that run outward to the world: the body's grasping of the world is like a set of invisible but intelligent threads streaming out

between the body and the specific world with which each body is familiar” (O’Loughlin, 2006, p. 81). The body is the process by which and through which we know, the streaming threads of sensory current connected to all being.

The inward flowing experience of the world and outward streaming threads of our perception are what make us uniquely human, providing sentience, consciousness, sense, and intelligence. The circuit of our bodies in the world embeds us in place, time, and community, breathes us to life: “because between my body looked at and my body looking, my body touched and my body touching, there is overlapping or encroachment, so that we must say that the things pass into us as well as we into the things” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 123). Meaning is animated in this circuit.

The breath as circuit that enables the circuit of language. In yoga and other forms of moving meditation, much attention is given to the quality of breath. The yogic three part breath involves deep inhalation, integration, and release. We take in, process, and exhale breath in a circuit. The parts of this process are intertwined and yet distinct, requisite for our continued life.

Life is compared to breath in Merleau-Ponty's lectures on nature: “Nature is both passive and active, product and productivity, but a productivity that always needs to produce something else (for example, human generation, which ceaselessly repeats without end). There is a double movement of expansion and contraction, [...] which never goes to the end of its movement except in death, and which designates the character of a relative production as always begun again” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 38). The sustained process of breathing is regenerative interaction with the environment, the lungs a circuit through which the ether moves. We literally take the world into our bodies with

each breath and exhale something of our own essences into the world as we breathe.

It is the circuit of our breath that gives birth to speech. Language is cerebral, but it is also biological, physical, and transactional: “Language is the indissoluble extension of all physical activity, and at the same time it is quite new in relation to that physical activity. Speech emerges from the 'total language' as constituted by gestures, mimicries, etc...But speech transforms” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 12). It is the transforming effect of speech by which we communicate, through which language shapes thought. Language travels physically throughout the circuit of the body—biologically, we must breathe in, breathe out, to make words; as such, spoken language also travels a circuit. We live in a word-rich world. Language is internal and external; it is gleaned from the environment. It is not spontaneous; rather, it is always preceded by all language already spoken: we “receive the sense of language” from the environment, even in infancy, before we form our first words (Merleau-Ponty, p. 14).

The words, unformed, which churn in our minds are everpresent. We are all wells of unformed words, babble waiting to bubble up, prompted by the call from the environment, surging within us, in response to the world around us: “...perhaps certain aspects of the adult's interior language, which is often not formulated, are no more than a continuation of the babbling. On the one hand, from the beginning of life, there are anticipations of what will become language. On the other hand, there is a persistence, right up into adulthood, of what was previously babbling” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 16). Communication manifests in the intersection of the visible and the invisible, when the babble becomes breath, and the breath becomes speech: “The sensible world is visible, and relatively continuous,” while “the universe of thought” is “invisible and

contains gaps” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 12). We seek, through language, spoken and written articulation, to fill those gaps.

Reading and writing as circuits: Generating meaning. Writing at the place where mind and body meet can produce powerful meaning. Like body and breath, language is a circuit—it provides powerful stimulus for future language, depends upon past language, shapes and is shaped by an unending current of language, communication, relationships. Language is conductive and productive and “becomes something mysterious, since it is neither a self or a thing” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 5). Language “has a kind of signifying power,” but that power is not separated out into individual signs; rather, it functions wholistically: “It is not a set of signs corresponding to a set of ideas, but rather it is a unique whole, in which each word gathers its signification through the others as a mass that is progressively differentiating itself” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 5).

Words are charged with meaning, and the power of words changes based upon their context (in a conversation, in a sentence, in a topic, genre, or venue). Words become significantly powerful related to circuitous feedback from other words, other speakers, other readers, and so on. Language is “neither interior to the consciousness of a subject, nor an external reality” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 6). It is both inside and outside of us, generated from within and without at once. We are influenced by the spoken word, and also by the written word. Merleau-Ponty identifies this influence in written language as significant in that “the word actualizes the idea and allows itself to be forgotten: successful language and successful thought are one. Language is obscure in terms of its function, which is to render everything else clear. It cannot be observed or grasped

directly; it can only be exercised” (p. 6). Like the circuit, language is a process by which we communicate and in which communication is generated. It is continual motion, never fixed.

This continual process, the circuit of language, translates into the process of working with written texts, both in consuming and producing them. Reading, according to Rosenblatt (1978) is an active process, an event, a “compentration” or “coming together” of a reader and a text (p. 12). Readers “lean into” a text, and interpretation “comes into being in the live circuit set up between the reader and the text. As with the elements of an electric circuit, each component of the reading process functions by virtue of the presence of the others. A specific reader and a specific text at a specific time and place: change in any of these, and there occurs a different circuit, a different event...” (Rosenblatt, p. 14). This process engages lived time, lived space, lived body, and lived human relation in van Manen's (1997) conception of lifeworld existentials. The body is always here and now—the text is always here and now, and reading is a “live process” of interaction between the self and others (characters, author, other readers). The reader acts upon the text, and the text acts upon the reader in a recursive circuit.

The writing process is also recursive and works as a kind of circuit. Language works upon us in shaping our thinking, and we work upon language in composing writing. Writing occurs in a context, in interaction with the environment. It is personal and social, public and private. Rosenblatt discusses writing as transaction:

Writing, we know, is always an event in time, occurring at a particular moment in the writer's biography, in particular circumstances, under particular pressures, external as well as internal. In short, the writer is always transacting with a personal, social, and cultural environment. (We shall see that the writer transacts also with the very text being produced.) Thus the writing process must be seen as always embodying both personal and social, or individual and environmental,

factors. (1988, p. 11)

In the circuit of composition, the “quickenened fund of images, ideas, emotions, attitudes, tendencies to act and to think, offers the means for making new connections, for discovering new facets of the world of objects and events, in short, for thinking and writing creatively” (Rosenblatt, p. 13). Writers draw from the world for inspiration, gathering words from without and from within, make meaning in the process, and share their words with the world. Writers compose, revise, and publish in a circular fashion. We create, generate, communicate in the circuit of languaged being.

The Cycle

While we circulate through the world, blood and breath circulate through our bodies, and thoughts circulate through us, as well. Bly (1995) discusses human understanding as analogous to electric current: “The concept 'electricity' and the visualization of the electric current is surely a great intellectual leap of the human being. Each invention in the outer world gives us a new vision of the psyche, and brooding on how electricity passes through wires or air, apparently 'called' by a ground, we have for the first time a model for the way some psychic energy moves” (p. 287). If we are bodily charged with insight, it is no wonder inspiration feels electric as it wells up inside us, exciting as we share our thoughts.

Body cycle: Being and meaning. To walk is to trust in our physical structure to carry us, move us, hold us. To talk is to trust in our ideas to hold, carry, and move our thoughts to another from thought into something more solid. To write relies on both musculature and mind, and in it, thought solidifies. The body contains behavior, enacts behavior, holds all possible future behaviors, and remembers and holds past behaviors.

The body is not mechanical, never final. It is a field in which behaviors reside and cycle (both past and future), where behaviors are enacted, and where behaviors are processed and circulated. The body is both being and meaning, charged with energy, and "...Our physical being is continually affected by the electrical impulses circulating in the universe as a whole. Hence, we are not just a collection of organs and parts but a cosmological system interacting with the universe at large" (Andrews, 1978, p. 135).

In biology, the full use of the body emerges as a realization of cyclical use and potential; the sedentary body functions differently than the living, breathing, active body does. While the "animal body must be defined dynamically" by what it does (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, pp. 145), the human body may be defined more organically because "There is no precise border between attitude and action: the action of the organism can be considered as a posture and an attitude, albeit the calmest [and it] can always be understood as an action or a preparation for an action" (pp. 145-146). Insofar as every attitude is action or preparation for action, the cycle of our being in the world is always manifest within us, pure potentiality, electric and alive with the prospect of impending action or realization. Kostrubala (1976) describes a cyclical running experience as "a sense of energy and a kind of pleasure," that the "exercise had stimulated, or triggered, a new sense of energy" (pp. 38-39). That energy, then, is carried into whatever activity we do after running, cycling back into our lives. Writing and thinking that grow out of this body cycle are generative, producing more writing and thinking. For example, according to one author, "The activity of running and then writing in the spiritual journal forms a circular movement [...]. When you run, you may have experiences that you write down in your spiritual journal, then the spiritual journal provides inspiration and motivation the

next time you run” (Kay, 2007, p. 7).

Our bodies function in cycles. We are governed, in part, by neuro-electrical impulses that cycle through the nervous system as we move in the world. “The brain stem operates at the unconscious level, producing electrical impulses that control basic bodily functions such as breathing and heart rate. The limbic system is responsible for behavioral and emotional reactions, and operates at both the conscious and unconscious levels,” explain Lynch and Scott, discussing human multi-level functioning comprised of purely physical neurological activity and the limbic system, which is “automatic, reflexive, primitive, emotional” (1999, p. 16). Thought functions at the conscious level and in the cerebral cortex, in which the composing process happens, in “our higher-consciousness, thinking brain [which is] responsible for information storage, memory, abstract thought, sensory, and motor functioning” (Lynch & Scott, p. 16). When we align body cycle with breath and thought cycle, inspiration occurs easily. As such, thinking and body are inseparably connected.

When we are relaxed while moving, while running, our basic body cycles are perfectly aligned with our higher-consciousness cycles, allowing free flowing neurological impulses and free flowing composition of ideas. Tension, on the other hand, produces dysfunction in limbic functioning and in physical movement, as well as in thinking. Strain in the breath and body cycle resulting from tension is “directly responsible for the multitude of deleterious physiological responses that the body generates to protect itself,” and “hinders the body's ability to fluently perform” (Lynch & Scott, 1999, p. 62). When we are tense, blood vessels constrict, blood flow is limited; likewise, the flow of thought is limited when we are tense. Movement meditation is an

opportunity to tap into natural cycles of body, breath, and neural functioning, to

enter into the quiet single-mindedness where the moment-by-moment responsibilities in all of life, for the time being, are reduced to placing one foot ahead of the other as we listen to the inner rhythms of each step, of each heartbeat. Such narrowed focus and concentration helps to create a calm, safe place much like the eye of the hurricane, a miracle calm amid the chaos of the everyday world. (Lynch & Scott, p. 110)

When physical discomfort happens, thinking becomes strained; finding one's pace is finding one's breath, balancing effort and ease, centering in the moment, time out of time. Finding one's breath and body cycle is finding one's fluent thought, and for writers, it is finding writing.

Breath cycle: Deep breath, steady mind. Our body cycles are supported by the cycle of our breath. Breath is critical for connection with the body in running and in yoga, as easy and deep breath, fully cycling, enables sustained practice. In meditative writing, “Deep and focused breathing alters our brain chemistry (it shifts the speed of our brain waves and stimulates the creative mind). A writer must breathe deeply (capture the breath in the belly), steady the mind, purify the consciousness, one breath at a time” (Sher, 2006, p. 149). The flow of breath connects to the flow of words, and “As thoughts dispel, we invite into our awareness an open-minded attention. This consciousness moves out of focus the events in our lives and allows us to see that it is the invisible moments between the events that are important” (Sher, p. 22). In running, too, as in other forms of moving meditation, the breath serves as a guide; if we work too hard or too fast, our breathing capacity is strained. As a result, thinking is also strained.

The Sanskrit word *vinyasa*, or flow, is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “movement between poses in yoga, usually accompanied by regulated breathing; a form of yoga in which a flowing sequence of such movements is coordinated with one's

breathing” (Vinyasa, 2011). Connection between movement and breath cycle seems to generate clarity of thinking and, for some, words. Interestingly, the *Oxford English Dictionary* entry on the word *posture*, in addition to being defined as “the position and carriage of the limbs or the body as a whole, often as indicating a particular quality, feeling,” also means “stance, or attitude” and “mental or spiritual attitude or condition” (Posture, 2011). In yoga, one takes a physical posture to cultivate a mental posture, to posture an idea. One sense can not be separated from the others: the position of the body is indelibly tied to the position of the mind, body in the world, and the interworld materialized, supported by the breathing body.

In meditative body practices, “Gentle movement, breathing and meditating is touted to cleanse, circulate and strengthen the life energy in the body to restore optimal health” (Brinker, Kanazawa, & Leisinger, 1996, p. 48). Breath cycle is integral for health, according to fitness practitioners, and the circulation of breath aids in the circulation of blood: “Every movement or inner function of the human body, voluntary or involuntary, is brought about by manipulation of the muscles, which is impossible without air pressure. Bodily motion, no matter how insignificant, would utterly cease without it. Active circulation of fresh blood, utterly essential to healthy tissue, is stimulated and regulated by this inner air pressure (tissue breathing)...” (Pike & Pike, 1993, p. 57). Movement meditation is an “intentional act closest to the unwilled rhythms of the body, to breathing and the beating of the heart. It strikes a delicate balance between working and idling, being and doing. It is a bodily labor that produces nothing but thoughts, experiences, arrivals” (Solnit, 2001, pp. 23-24). These thoughts, experiences, and arrivals are meaning making, born in the body, generated from the energy of steady motion and

deep, easy breath. One writer explains what it is like to experience movement as writing, relaxation in motion, explaining that “As I began to breathe deeply and relax, I found the introduction taking form, and by the time I'd finished running, I'd outlined the entire article in my head. [...] I sat down and miraculously typed out, word for word, the narrative that came to me as I ran” (Andrews, 1978, p. 155).

Evident here is a set of cycles, each supported by the other. The cycle of breath supports the cycle of blood, which supports the body as it cycles through the world, and the flow of the body in moving meditation mimics the flow of information one processes through the moving body. We are mediators in our environments, and when we plug into the text of the world (created by the environment, motion, and thought) as a meaning-making trajectory, then an inward-outward looping cyclical flow is created:

texts qua semi-material artefacts [sic] are functional components of a meaning-making trajectory that extends from the organism's central nervous system through its bodily activity and into its ecosocial environment and then loops back again to the organism. Participants in meaning-making activity must lock into and draw from the resources afforded by texts in order to coordinate their activities across a diversity of time-space scales. (Thibault, 2004, pp. 52-53)

The inward-outward looping, cyclic process of understanding and transaction with the environment is reflected in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. In a cycle of living, “Life becomes ideas and the ideas return to life, each is caught up in the vortex in which he first committed only measured stakes, each is led on by what he said and the response he received, led on by his own thought of which he is no longer the sole thinker” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 119). A transactional cycle is evident in the reading and writing process, and the recursive writing process of invention, creation, and revision is an open, continually generative cycle. We take in words and ideas, process them, and release them out into the world in an infinite process, and the natural cycles of our bodies support

us in doing so.

The Spiral

A secret turning in us
 makes the universe turn.
 Head unaware of feet,
 and feet head. Neither cares.
 They keep turning.
 (Rumi, 2012)

The spiral is an infinite circuit, a continuous cycle, looping without end, an energy to which we all belong. Across cultures, this energy is characterized as a flowing force that moves through all things: Ki in Japan, Ch'i in China, Prana in yogic practices. And movement helps us find stillness, time out of time, feeling that energy inside the spiraling storm: "Tops that children often play with approach a state of calm stability the faster they spin. We might say that their perfect state of calm is reached when they move at the greatest speed. The truest calm must contain the nature of the most rapid movement" (Tohei, 1978, p. 112). A deep seated sense of some circling force that brings us insight is evident in literature and art, as exemplified by Blake, who writes in verse that "Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy" (1793/1995, p. 40). The spiraling energy is creativity from the source.

Levin (1985) discusses the circle, the spiral, as a source of energy and world building across cultures including the Sioux and the ancient Greeks. The Sufi dervish spins for insight, whirling his way into holiness, gathering energy through one palm, processing it through the body, and releasing it through the opposite palm. The spiral is a celebration of all aspects of being, of every living thing, inclusive, the worlding of the world. The circle is the clearing of ground for the experience of being, of truth, illumination. It is "A recollection of the primal taking-place of space: an event taking

place in, and taking place as, an appropriation of the mortal body in a movement for the sake of the coming-to-presence of truth in the communal ring of protection” (Levin, p. 334). The spiral grounds us and connects us, allows us to take in and give off energy.

The spiral is ancient and primal. Evident in fern fronds, nautilus shells, fingerprints, the whorl of hair follicles on the back of one's scalp, the coil of DNA, the spiral appears everywhere. The spiral holds the power of "the movements of the sun, moon, and stars, the flight of birds, the slow growth of trees, and the cycles of the seasons," the life cycle "whirling into being, whirling out again," and our own archetypal mode of understanding (Starhawk, 1979, p. 5).

My experience when I run, writer in the midst of the circling snow, places me in the middle of this kind of spiral of understanding. We are always in a spiral: we move amidst ideas swirling and whirling, draw them down into a single coherence, weave the whirl into words, and release it again, so it can spiral out, away, and beyond. When we perceive something, it “is caught up by the vortex of exploratory movements and perceptual behaviors and drawn inward” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 9). From there, we “rejoin” our perceptions with those of others, with what we already know, and then “communicate” the resulting understandings with others. Writing that originates inside us and is sent out into the world spirals away from us and into the understandings of others.

Not only can understanding be characterized in a spiral sense, but so can existence in general. Heidegger characterizes being as an “encircling unifying,” a circuit that reveals instead of embracing, that clears the way for understanding of truth, which “does not consist in a circuit which then embraces, but in the unconcealing center that, lightning, safeguards present beings. The sphericity of the unifying, and the unifying

itself, have the character of unconcealing lightening, within which present being can be present” (1971/2001, p. 120-121). In this sense, the circuit that unconceals rather than embraces, is an open circuit, a spiral of sorts, which allows an ever moving, ever changing, recursive but not repetitive understanding of essence. It is a unifying spiral, “which precisely does not embrace since it uncovers and reveals, but which itself releases, lightening, into Presence [...], thought by way of the nature of primal Being in the sense of unconcealing Presence” (Heidegger, p. 121). This brings about a kind of unity, which Heidegger calls “the Open,” in which meaning generates meaning, “as the pure forces serried, boundlessly flowing into one another and thus acting toward one another” (Heidegger, p. 122).

Action generates meaning, generates more meaning, revealing, in an open, spiraling circuit. This widest orbit of being, understanding, and knowing comes not from disembodied logic; rather, it comes from a deeper place, “the inner and invisible domain of the heart,” which “extends further than does the realm of merely producible objects” (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 125). From the depth of our passion, that which we care about and for which we feel deeply, spirals truth that is both inside and outside of us, as “The widest orbit of beings becomes present in the heart's inner space” (Heidegger, p. 125). This spiraling understanding places us deeper within ourselves and deeper in the world and is never ending, productive, and open. It is a progressive reason that engages us and commits us to understanding.

Crossley (2004) suggests that “Patterns of bodily activity constitute forms of reason—reason which, qua habit, is irreducible to our conscious and reflective life and which, consisting as it does in uses which the body makes of itself, cannot be separated

from the body” (p. 35). Perception and thought can not exist independent of our bodied awareness: “Body techniques, then, are forms of practical and pre-reflective knowledge and understanding. They are our way of being-in-the-world, that is, of acting in the world, rendering it intelligible and constituting it as meaningful context for action” (Crossley, p. 37). Doing, in this sense, is more than action: it is also knowing. The body, cycling through the world, thoughts circling through the mind, in the circuit of moving meditation, places us deeply in the spiral of being, seeing, sensing, and understanding.

When we compose, we find something of ourselves, allowing to surface our own, inner language, igniting imagination, as “in the poem's speaking the poetic imagination gives itself utterance. What is spoken in the poem is what the poet enunciates out of himself. What is thus spoken out, speaks by enunciating its content. The language of the poem is a manifold enunciating” (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 195). This manifold enunciation creates a ripple effect, a spiraling meaning that extends beyond the writer, the written word, and the reader, circling out.

The doing-knowing spiral emerges in good teaching practice, too. By teaching, we learn, and the best learning allows us to teach others. Baranay asserts: "A teacher of writing or of yoga shows you what more you can do, what you haven't noticed, where you are cheating yourself by holding back. You teach by learning, you learn by teaching, and each time you find that out it seems like it's new" (2011, p. 109). Our efforts as teachers of writing spiral out and away. To illustrate, a former student in one of my AP English language and literature courses recently wrote to me, saying, "You challenged me [...], and I'm not sure I would be where I am today without that class and without you." This student is now an experienced writer and thinker, a PhD student in English

literature, teaching other writers, his energy spiraling out. We may go through the same, circuitous process of teaching or writing each time we do it, and yet, each time it is not the same; each draft is different and perhaps better, each moment of learning richer and more powerful, progressing through a similar cycle in an open, upward and outward spiral of growth, illumination, light.

If the metaphors of circuit, cycle, and spiral so aptly apply to the movements of the body, the breath, reading, writing, learning, and teaching, how does this happen? How does one get to the center of the circuit, lean into the cycle, and harness the spiral energy of this phenomenon? What steps may be taken to achieve a sense of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing?

Purgation, Illumination, Union: The Three Part Path

Artress (2006) speaks of the meditation walk in the circuit of the labyrinth as a three fold path. The three stages in the process of moving meditation are purgation (clearing the mind), illumination (allowing ones self to receive), and union (carrying or communicating the experience into the world).

Purgation: Clearing the way. The first step in moving meditation is to cultivate a quiet mind: purgation. Focused exercise does this by concentrating effort. When one is purposefully moving, there is nothing else to do. When purposefully moving we are “in our bodies and in the world without being made busy by them. It leaves us free to think without being wholly lost in our thoughts” (Solnit, 2001, p. 24). The task of movement meditation is body centered, focused, allowing the mind to wander and clear. Once this clearing takes place, meaning can bubble up, be received. According to Artress:

The sheer act of walking a complicated path—which discharges energy—begins to focus the mind. A quiet mind does not happen automatically. But the labyrinth

experience sensitizes us, educates us, and helps us distinguish superficial extraneous thoughts from the 'thought' that comes from our soul level and that each of us longs to hear. Many of us are discovering that this is much easier to do when our whole body is moving—when we are walking. (2006, p. 71)

Movement facilitates depth of thinking, particularly in our modern, multi-tasking, never-sit-still world; it creates a sacred, lived space in lived time, separate from clock time.

In his memoir describing his life as a runner and novelist, translator and writer Haruki Murakami describes the clearing effect of moving meditation, the way the mind empties to allow receptivity:

The thoughts that occur to me while I'm running are like clouds in the sky. Clouds of all different sizes. They come and they go, while the sky remains the same sky as always. The clouds are mere guests in the sky that pass away and vanish, leaving behind the sky. The sky both exists and doesn't exist. It has substance and at the same time it doesn't. And we merely accept that vast expanse and drink it in. (Murakami, 2009, p. 17)

The mind of the sky clears, the blocking clouds vanish, and we taste something of the vastness of possibility, the blank expanse of existence. This release, this clearing, prepares us to receive our own inner thinking. This quiet motion, purgation, “the path of silence,” according to Artress, allows us to “reach the spaciousness within that allows us to move within the flow of our complex world. The labyrinth can be a tremendous help in quieting the mind, because the body is moving. Movement takes away the excess charge of psychic energy that disturbs our efforts to quiet our thought processes” (2006, p. 25). Outward motion creates inner stillness.

Finding stillness inside movement can help focus one's concentration, hone in to produce insight, since “Where rest includes motion, there can exist a repose which is an inner concentration of motion, hence a highest state of agitation, assuming that the mode of motion requires such a rest. Now the repose of the work that rests in itself is of this

sort. We shall therefore come nearer to this repose if we can succeed in grasping the state of movement of the happening in work-being in its full unity” (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 47). Work-being can represent total and complete immersion in the activity of something, total immersion in the practice, in the task, and in the self. Stillness has a dual meaning: to be still, to rest, and to be continually, to still be. There is rest in motion of moving meditation, “as the stilling of stillness, rest, conceived strictly, is always more in motion than all motion, and always more restlessly active than any agitation” (Heidegger, p. 204). Language resounds and “speaks as the peal of stillness. Stillness stills by the carrying out, the bearing and enduring, of world and the things in their presence;” it is stillness that gives form to thought. Those who move seeking stillness, find a duality of motion and rest intertwined, a “double stilling” (Heidegger, p. 205). Listening to oneself in the motion of meditation, one listens, “heed[ing] the bidding call of the stillness of the difference even when they do not know that call,” because “Speaking that listens and accepts is responding” (Heidegger, p. 206). When we write from our deepest selves, we are both responding and creating, “receiving and replying,” immersed in the circuit of language (Heidegger, p. 207). Immersion allows us to speak, to respond, and “Responding is a hearing. It hears because it listens to the command of stillness” (Heidegger, p. 207).

Illumination: Insight. Once the mind is quiet, there is room for the second step: illumination, or the receipt of insight, the “listening to the command of stillness” (Black, 2011, p. 96). Moving meditation allows for softened but steady gaze, inwardly focused receptivity. Yoga practice cultivates a soft, steady calm that allows observation and participation. It also allows deep listening, as one writer attests: “No longer did I hear the

doubts and fears, only the steady sound of my breath in and out as I flowed from pose to pose, and a voice from deep in my heart whispering...” (Black, p. 96). Moving meditation allows us to hear the “still, small voice within” (Artress, 2006, p. 118). This bubbling up of thought is manifest in the body; thinking submerges through the flesh of the self and the world. Merleau-Ponty states, “By virtue of the uncontested evidence that one must see or feel in some way in order to think, that every thought known to us occurs to a flesh” (2007a, p. 405). Mandell (1981) refers to running as transcendence training and describes the experience of illumination in an anecdote about running: “Sometime into the second hour comes the spooky time. Colors are bright and beautiful, water sparkles, clouds breathe, and my body, swimming, detaches from the earth. A loving contentment invades the basement of my mind, and thoughts bubble up without trails” (pp. 211-212). Inner stillness allows access to one's own inner wisdom, illumination—engaged disengagement. Once the mind is quiet, Artress posits, we can access what she calls the cataphatic path, or the path through images:

In cataphatic prayer the meditator never really abandons the mental process. It becomes like a paddle that guides the canoe of the heart through the waters flowing to the soul. The mind, when quieted and expanded beyond everyday consciousness, opens a path to the sacred through the gift of the imagination. Images offered up through our creative imaginations can help us heal our broken psyches, and discover new capabilities. (p. 27)

That inner thought, in word or image, once it rises, creates meaning that we bring back into the world; this is the third part of the process: union, the translation and publication of one's inner thinking and the carrying out of that thinking in the world. Poet Mary Oliver writes that in her experiences, motion releases poetry: “For myself, walking works in a similar way. I walk slowly and not to get anywhere in particular, but because the motion somehow helps the poem to begin. I end up, usually, standing still,

writing something down in the small notebook I always have with me” (1994, p. 119). It is important to note that images gained from cataphatic prayer can also be words or phrases like those that Mary Oliver might jot in her journal as she walks, or that Wordsworth scribbled into poetry during his strolls in the countryside. These images, words, sounds, notions, can easily surface during movement. Sheehan (1998) quotes *Runner's World* magazine editor Joe Henderson as saying: “I write,' he says, 'because the thoughts inside have to be put in more visible form. I run because it's inside pushing to get out” (p. 74). These images push their way out during the illuminative process of movement meditation.

Union: Radiating out. The third step in the three part path of moving meditation, union, can consist of articulating that which was received: in writing, in speaking, in daily habits of living. Union also represents the integration of new insight into the self. This is the result of active meditation, a mind and body wholeness, engaged motion in practice, a way of knowing that allows a fullness of understanding that perhaps may be achieved no other way. Stinson (2004), describing body knowing as inseparable from cognitive understanding, states: “Despite the common perception that knowledge resides above the neck, I find that my entire body is the repository for all that I know” (p. 160). To tap into that repository, movement is a way “...to allow my confused thoughts to shake down to my feet, where I may walk in them and figure out where they are going. I cannot claim to know how widespread the experience of bodily-based thought may be—only that I do not know how to think otherwise” (Stinson, 2004, p. 163).

Britton (1982) discusses the idea of spontaneous shaping, of words and ideas coming fluently for writers, with the level of comfort experienced with writing and

language. Moving meditation may be key in engaging writers with the environment, tapping into their own concentration and inner knowledge, thereby assisting in spontaneous shaping of thought and writing. It is manifest in the recursive cycle of interaction with the lived space environment. Writes Britton:

I want to associate spontaneous shaping, whether in speech or in writing, with the moment by moment interpretive process by which we make sense of what is happening around us; to see each as an instance of the pattern forming propensity of man's mental processes. Thus, when we come to write, what is delivered to the pen is in part already shaped, stamped by the image of our own ways of perceiving. But the intention to share, inherent in spontaneous utterance, sets up a demand for further shaping. (p.141)

This shaping and reshaping of thought, influenced by the environment and revision of understanding, is key to the recursive, circular writing process. In meditation, repeated practice of body process builds “an expanded mindful perception that connect[s] inner and outer experiences” (Bresler, 2004, p. 142). In writing, too, fluency comes with emphasis on process; in the long term, a written document is secondary to the fluency writers gain with practice in the process. The repeating practice of movement meditation makes the union stage easier. Since each experience is built upon each past experience and contributes to each future experience, the union phase grows richer and more powerful. The bringing back into the world what one has learned—through writing, through living, or through action—is vital to movement meditation. Whether union consists of printed pages of published words or scribbled journal pages, the final step represents a release, radiating, spiraling out.

Looping Back: Revisiting Essential Themes

In chapter 1, I introduce the concept of essential themes, parts of a greater whole, which help in understanding the phenomenon of moving meditation for finding a flow in

thinking and writing. These themes are identified as process, practice, and flow, and through my own experience, I reflect upon and begin to uncover meanings related to these themes. In this chapter, I continue to work with these thematic elements, drawing from research writing, literature, and informal conversations with writers. This chapter also begins to explore the essential theme of nature. These essential elements seem to appear and reappear in the literature and in conversations with writers engaged in movement meditation practice. I begin to address the question: how do these components contribute to the phenomenon of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing?

Process: Releasing, receiving, returning.

Take my hand.
 We will walk.
 We will only walk.
 We will enjoy our walk
 without thinking of arriving anywhere. (Nhat Hanh, 1999b, p. 194)

We sense the world through our bodies, and, yet, at the same time, our bodies create the sensations through which we perceive the world and convey our response to those sensations to other beings. This recursive cycle of perception and interaction parallels the writing process, insofar as we make meaning through writing, perceive meaning from reading and writing, and convey meaning through writing and language. O'Loughlin (2006) elaborates: "Since sensory experience is always unstable it is through the body in its totality and all at once, that the world is made accessible to us. But it is always the body itself that furnishes those sensations which constitute our experience of the world" (p. 46). This unending feedback loop mirrors the recursive process of writing.

The writing process commonly taught in schools is one of the mind alone:

prewrite, draft, revise, publish. Often the process is linear, the steps completed in order, once each, one after the other. School writing may be recursive and reflective in its best manifestations, but it is a cerebral process, confined to desks or computers and classrooms. Moving meditation takes us into a world of kinetic process instead of a world of seated stillness; during moving meditation, we are immersed in action, following a path toward our inner selves and deep knowing. This allows free thinking, the wandering mind, leading to access to stillness of thought, a sense of timelessness or expanse. Even though the mind may still, the body in motion necessitates engaged awareness: “Our eyes are open in this receptive, non-judgmental state, and we can receive whatever arises within us... In this state of open attention we can again be guided by the movement, through releasing, receiving, and taking out again into the world” (Artress, 2006, p. 77).

Journaling, drawing, and writing are processes. Running is a process, as is yoga, martial arts, and other body based practices. The meditative walk, states Artress, “takes us into a process world where we can see between the lines of linear thought through to our imagination and intuition” (2006, p. 132). This lived space, lived time, process world is one of our own body making, apart and embedded in the physical world. This pattern process of releasing, receiving, and returning parallels the writing process of invention, revision, and publication.

Etymologically, the word *process* connects to moving meditation as a tool for finding flow in thinking and writing in a number of ways. The most common use refers to “continuous and regular action or succession of actions occurring or performed in a definite manner, and having a particular result or outcome; a sustained operation or series of operations” (Process, 2011). However, another meaning of process reveals a definition

related to thinking, writing, and reason: “narration, a narrative; an account; a story; a play; a discourse or treatise of any kind; an argument, a reasoned discussion, a disquisition,” or “the passage of discourse” (Process). Moving meditation manifests in process defined as “onward movement in space,” and “the course of becoming as opposed to static being” (Process). This passage of discourse can parallel the passage of the body through time and space in moving meditation, as thinking manifests in writing and as writing is always becoming in the recursive writing process.

As in the three-fold path identified by Artress (2006), Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, and Rosen (1975), in their study of writing development, three stages are identified in the process of writing: conception, incubation, and production. The conception stage involves the conscious decision to undertake a writing task and a writer's “selecting from what he knows and thinks...and embodying that knowledge and thought in words in which he produces, no matter how much he draws on the language of a book or the teacher's notes. Many young writers realize their own need to be themselves in their writing, even within the framework provided for them” (Britton, et al., p. 23). The incubation stage involves rumination, engaging with one's own thinking and then thoughtfully calling words into being, the emergence of conception, bringing ideas forth from thought to language; this stage may involve note-making and conversation with others. The final stage, production, is the solitary, deeply engaged stage in which the physical act of writing, of bringing ideas into physical shape, happens: “The writer is, essentially, alone with his thoughts, his pen, and his paper” (Britton et al., p. 32). Like the process of moving meditation, however, the process of writing does not immediately imply fluency. As with physical practice, writing fluency also takes practice.

Practice: Pathway to fluency.

Think of writing practice as loving arms you come to illogically and incoherently. It's our wild forest where we gather energy before going to prune our garden.(Goldberg, 2005, p. 17)

Practice, the regular, patterned performance of a particular activity, is a connector between moving meditation and fluency. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (2011) has revealed different meanings of *practice*, characterized as not only “to exercise oneself in a skill or art in order to acquire or maintain proficiency,” but also “to pursue or be engaged in” a particular activity. Numbers of texts have been written about harnessing through practice the meditative power of running or yoga for fluent thinking. Andrews (1978), in *The Psychic Power of Running*, asserts that a consistent, regular running practice can provide focused thought: “The regular, repetitive movements of the run also lead us into a twilight mental state—similar to the moments just before sleep when we can unlock the powers of suggestive learning and overcome psychological resistance to difficult subject matter” (p. 150). Kay (2007) characterizes running practice as spiritual practice, a depth of engagement that leads to something beyond the self.

While practice may not make me a better runner or writer, it makes the act of doing both easier. This parallel also rings true. I wonder whether writer's block is the natural state of being when it comes to writing, or whether it has become the default due to lack of practice for many people. The human body was not meant to be sedentary, and yet a sedentary lifestyle has become the default for many people. If the body is healthier, will the mind be healthier, too? John Ratey (2008), an author and psychiatrist, argues this case in a book documenting brain development associated with increased exercise in all kinds of situations. Physical activity, according to Ratey, helps to lubricate neurological

pathways to increase the rapidity with which we understand the world and its content: by exercising our bodies, we build stronger minds. Physical practice builds cognitive practice and soulful practice.

If one understands the world through body-based metaphor, as Lakoff and Johnson (1999) assert, then feeling compelled to write really is an understanding of a physical force. One can think about writing this way, too, as a purging, with the body/mind as a container full of words that one transfers to another container, the page. If running or stretching is the same kind of body process as learning is a kind of mental running or stretching, then the connection seems clear—that practicing patience, awareness, reflective thinking in one state can lead to the same fluency in another.

Bresler (2004) argues for movement and body based activity across disciplines, bringing wholeness from what is typically conceived as an outside/inside dichotomy. Focusing on the practice of how we do something brings awareness of the self into focus, “draws on the kinesthetic sense, involving the interaction between the outside and the inner perception of movement. [...] Cognition is regarded as taking us into the outside world. [But] ...the kinesthetic sense, combined with the visual, and the auditory, can also take us into the inner world” (Bresler, p. 140). The balance of inner and outer awareness can offer a deeper sense of understanding, movement toward wholeness. Bresler emphasizes practice to bring the importance of rhythm, conscious awareness, and form for cultivating a deeper sense of inner and outer understanding. Practice, too, makes movement effortless, so the mind is free to compose, as this writer describes: “As, almost unconsciously, I move my legs, I line the words up in order in my mind. I measure the rhythm of the sentences, the way they'll sound. With my mind elsewhere I'm able to run

for a long while, keeping up a natural speed that doesn't tire me out" (Murakami, 2009, p. 101).

Emig (1983) discusses the habits of writers making writing a practice. What empowers the daemon of inspiration, she argues, is not habit but ritual, which she describes as "evocative," "regulatory," and stirred by "rhythms" of music and language (p. 52). In running and writing, practice becomes ritual, not habit, because, according to one writer, "Habit kills awareness and separates us from ourselves" (Sheehan, 1998, p. 119). Ritual practice, however, creates us and our understanding because, for Sheehan, "there is an excitement in practice. Perhaps the greatest of all excitements. The discovery of who I am. Alone with myself and my stopwatch, I learn who I am. I find out what I can do" (Sheehan, p. 164). I would add to this, as a writer engaged in deep ritual body practice, I learn what I think, and I give it words.

Britton (1970) discusses the idea of children's continued practice in relationship to language learning: "They must continue to use it to make sense of the world; they must practice language in the sense in which a doctor practices medicine and a lawyer practices law, and not in the sense in which a juggler practices a new trick before he performs it" (p. 130). This is the same way in which body meditation and writing process are practiced, for deepening understanding, for building a life, for fluency rather than performative skill. Seeking the fluid, ever strengthening body, the fluid, ever evolving mind: language as practice also deepens one's reach and presence in the world.

Perl (2004) elaborates on Gendlin's theory of felt sense in the teaching of writing as a practice that can be learned and cultivated:

Felt sense, then, is the physical place where we locate what the body knows [...] ..once we realize we have access to this knowing in our bodies, we can learn to

cultivate it. We can practice directing our attention to it. We can develop a way of attending to ourselves that can guide us during acts of creativity. Even though the initial experience often comes as a discomfiting one, we can learn how to welcome and cultivate it rather than avoid it, how to use our body as a touchstone, a guide, that can inform us if the work we are creating makes sense in the ways we want it to. Relying on the body's wisdom, we can set up a creative rhythm and find our stride. (p. 4)

Like body motion and practice, thinking and writing are always open to revision and refinement. There are no absolutes, no finite endings. In body meditation practice and in writing, everything is always a draft, every finished draft a spark toward new possibility, because

In a philosophy of experiencing based on felt sense, it becomes clear that any idea can always be taken further; there is never a final answer. If we follow how language operates within us, we discover that any experience can open onto a range of perceptions, ideas, and insights, and such opening is endless [...] in a philosophy of embodied knowing, there is no such thing as a full story; instead there is the endless possibility of never-ending stories. (Perl, 2004, p. 59)

The never-ending stories are a kind of fluency, in which practice makes easier the process of both writing and moving meditation. It is practice that leads to such fluency, and fluency leads to flow.

Flow: Unbroken current.

breathe deeply,
in through your nose,
out through your mouth.
feel the breath in your belly and hold it,
then release. (Osman, 2008)

After the clearing effect exercise often has, words may come in a flow. *The Oxford English Dictionary* traces the word “running” to a rarely used meaning “the rhythmical flow of verse” (Running, 2011). In this way, the two connect, the running together of language and body, words in a flow. The word “run,” too, has similar connotations, and can be applied both to body and to language, to words and motion. The

OED finds this dual meaning in such definitions in reference to thoughts as: “to come suddenly into, to course or pass through the mind... to evolve *in* the mind, to occur or return persistently to the memory... to form, be present as, an impression or indistinct recollection” (Run, 2011). In this sense, running is physical and mental, both in the mind and of the mind, as well as embodied activity. The flow of writing, as running, as yoga, is a balance of effort and ease, an opening to new ideas and possibilities, a challenge to the body and the brain.

Oglesby (1981) describes running as meditative and as a means for defining the self and broadening one's limitations. It is a way by which “expressive/instrumental, intrinsic/extrinsic, means/ends dichotomies will be transcended” and as a “potential healer of the mind/body dichotomy so prevalent in our thinking processes” (p. 162). Oglesby characterizes running as a method for increased thinking through increased blood flow to the brain and defines the flow experience of running as one in which there is a “merging of action and awareness; self-forgetting or loss of self consciousness; centering of the attention in the activity; effortless control over self and environment; coherent, noncontradictory demands for action and clear, unambiguous feedback to action; and no need for extrinsic goals or rewards” (p. 163). This flow experience provides for the opportunity of autonomous authenticity: motion by means of coming into one's true self.

Csikszentmihalyi (1996), in his work on flow, describes one particular poet, Mark Strand, who seeks rituals to allow himself to step away from the physical act of writing but still maintain engagement in the process. Strand walks his dog, plays solitaire, runs errands, or drives, ways of focusing concentration in a meditative state. This meditative

awareness, movement with focus, allows Strand to unblock, stimulating flow. One writer, Miki, with whom I informally spoke, talked about the flow stemming from movement as a kind of purging. Sometimes, the words come so fluidly and fluently that one needs patience to get them on paper: “You want to write it all out, but you can't write it all out *now*. You can only write one idea at a time. You can't dump it all in one paragraph. You have to have patience to get one idea down at a time.” In this sense, the writing flows out, in a “gush” like the inspirational flow discussed by Heidegger as a “consecrated libation” (1971/2001, pp. 170-171). Such moments of flow feel sacred.

Gendlin (1996) discusses the concept of felt sense, a bodily manifestation of a dilemma, answer, experience, or problem that may emerge during lifework or therapy. Often, felt sense manifests as a way to guide a person toward understanding steps toward healing. Containing an element of the ineffable, felt sense prompts one to find language to describe it; however, this may prove difficult, yet “when the right words are found, the felt sense opens: it flows forward. Where before it was stuck, now it flows into the meaning of the words. These words become continuous with the felt sense. With them the felt sense moves and opens” (Gendlin, p. 58). Opening movements occur during body meditation. Felt sense opens when the body opens.

Emig (1983) discusses the surfacing of unconscious thinking which allows words to flow, unbidden, in writing, particularly in terms of the awe and power with which inspiration may come:

All other writers of whom I know convey implicitly or explicitly not only the awareness that there is an unconscious actively performing in all their writing, but a belief—more, awe—in its importance, efficacy, and power. Often, in fact, they personify the unconscious part of the writing self into daemons [...] that part of the writing self with which the writer will not tamper, of which he is in profound respect, to which he consequently gives careful autonomy. (p. 49)

The flow of words that comes with the flow of the body evokes a sense of understanding that is rich, deep, and powerful. It is a force that draws the writer's respect, and movement meditation can assist the writer in tapping into that place within herself.

Solitude: Engaged disengagement.

You've learned by now
to wait without waiting;

as if it were dusk
look into light falling:
in deep relief

things even out. Be
careless of nothing. See
what you see. (Booth, 2000, p. 17)

Koch (1994) discusses creativity and solitude as engaged disengagement that “can involve an indirect or substitutive engagement with others” (p. 55). In this sense, engaged disengagement of solitude is both cognitive and affective; we are alone with our thoughts and feelings, but these thoughts and feelings necessarily connect to our being in the world with others in lived human relationship.

Running, yoga, and writing are solitary activities. While they can all be done with a group, they primarily involve the challenge of the self against the self, freeing inner thoughts and inner strength. They balance physical and mental challenge with breath, being, and awareness. They balance effort and ease, ebb and flow. The writer, the runner, and the yogi are all capable of being alone in a crowd.

Even though moving meditation can be done in a group, the actual act is a solitary activity. In a recent trail race, for example, passing other runners, sometimes speaking, sometimes not, I considered the difficulty of the course. Each runner was engaged in the

same difficult task, namely, finishing the race at his or her best potential at that moment. Even so, each runner was engaged in a different task because of his or her circumstances, ability, and determination. We were running the race together, yet each of us strode alone in separate lived spaces, separate lived time. Yoga is the same: each yogi is stationed in a separate lived space, on his or her mat, connecting with a lived body and breath solely his or her own. A posture looks different for each of us by virtue of our differing bodies and abilities, even though the general principles are the same. In this sense, writing is also both a group activity and a solitary pursuit; even in a public setting, with feedback and discussion, the heart of the task is the writer's to conceive and carry alone. Miki, in an informal conversation, discussed the idea of writers' retreats. She says she is invited to one every year, and in it participants spend time in a state park in small cabins or lodge rooms. Meals are prepared for them, and times are allotted for group writing activities, but it is "mostly being by yourself away from responsibility." That time out of time, the idea of disconnection from other tasks and chores, the hassle of the everyday, respite from responsibility, is important for writing, yoga, running, and other meditative practices.

Time spent alone, in engaged meditative practice, can open up the senses to encounters with the universal inside the self. Moving meditation provides the solitude of focused practice that allows ideas and words to flow. We must detach in order to engage. As in the practice of meditation as a kind of pilgrimage, as documented by Artress (2006), the pilgrim withdraws from the world momentarily in order to more deeply enter the world through union. Smith (1991) discusses the practice of renunciation by prophets across religions; purposeful withdrawal from the everyday world yields great meaning:

transaction, transcendence, transfiguration. Moving meditation may represent the Bhodi tree, 40 days in the desert, a cave on Mount Hira. It allows a lived time, lived space experience that permits a flood of insight to integrate back into the living world and to strengthen lived relationships, with others and with ourselves.

Movement meditation and writing both allow for a kind of solitude that facilitates an inward turning, cultivates inner knowing, understanding at the level of the deepest self, “the innermost invisible region of the heart's space. Here everything is inward: not only does it remain turned toward this true interior of consciousness, but inside this interior, one thing turns, free of all bounds, into the other. The interiority of the world's inner space unbars the open for us. Only what we this retain in our heart (*par couer*), only that do we truly know by heart” (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 128). The depth of inward turning, the solitude of moving meditation, is that it unbars within us the potential to receive, opens us to the world and allows us to speak poetically and freely. As such “the freer (that is, the more open and ready for the unseen) [the writer's] saying—the greater the purity with which he submits what he says to an ever more painstaking listening, and the further what he says is from the mere propositional statement that is dealt with solely in regard to its correctness or incorrectness” (Heidegger, p. 214). This deeper listening, more engaged expression allows a transcendence of simple truth, revealing essential understanding in a circuit that encourages more listening, questioning, saying—a deeper and deeper turning that uncovers richer insights, more powerful questions.

Moving writers address solitude across accounts of their writing processes. Sheehan states that “Writing is the final form of the truth that comes from my running,” and that this truth is found “in my heart, my inner universe, my inner landscape, my

deepest inner forest. To reach these recesses, these hiding places below the conscious, I must first create a solitude. I must achieve the aloneness that is necessary for the creative act..." (1998, p. 13). Writers with whom I informally spoke write best when they are alone. While she also values a neat, orderly workspace, novelist and yogi Annie describes her ideal writing situation as "having a quiet house, including no music and no people, not even my partner."

Lee recommends that a writer needs solitude to make sense, and that "if the muse is asleep," should "wake up your body with exercise, attention, healthful food, with a long walk through the woods...Your body knows what you need. And it isn't going to produce one inspired word until it gets it" (1994, p. 111). Miki, a non fiction columnist, novelist, and avid exerciser, balances her work, three children, her husband, and a dog. Sometimes, when she really feels the need to write, she will separate herself from her family physically and completely. She explains that "What works for me is alone time. I have to go into the place where I can turn stuff around in my brain. When I finished my book, I had very little contact with anybody. I left Chicago and went to Arkansas by myself for a week. I spent my time writing and exercising, running trails in the national forest."

That solitude can be cultivated well and deeply in nature, allowing the natural world outside to cradle the inside world of the mind, where "The rhythm of walking generates a kind of rhythm of thinking, and the passage through a landscape echoes or stimulates the passage of thoughts or a series of thoughts. This creates an odd consonance between internal and external passage, one that suggests that the mind is also a landscape of sorts and that walking is one way to traverse it" (Solnit, 2001, p. 25).

Nature: The self in the circuit of the universe.

I feel them, hear them even now,
 The syllables of aspen leaves,
 The words of waterfalls,
 The stanzas of stones.
 They make the whole world vibrate. (Smith, 2003, p. 578)

Being a writer, in my evolving definition, is being a body in motion. Writing happens for me when I am running, but it happens best when I run outside. Training for distance races means hours of moving solitude in inhuman places, sometimes not seeing another person for several miles. I do see animals, however, and birds. These encounters often leave me breathless, inspired, in awe and wonder, and burning with writer's passion, an electric vibration that clears the mind and produces a flow of words and thoughts.

At different times, on different runs, I have had all kinds of encounters with nature. A flock of swans floated silently on the river; at least thirty, still in the current like a painting.... Once, approaching mile twelve of a seventeen mile run, I saw two otters, playing in the canal alongside the trail; when I approached, they barked at me, so I barked back. When I did, they came right to the edge of the water to get a better look at me—and we held a gaze for several moments before they went back to their play.... A black bear sauntered across the path, casually, unafraid.... A protective mother goose chased me for almost half a mile when I got too close to her nest of eggs; it was the fastest seven miles I ever finished.... A herd of deer emerged from a thicket onto the trail and overtook me, a deer on every side, running with and alongside me, for several moments.... Two huge blacksnakes, as wide around as my arm, intertwined around the trunk of a tree.... Painted box tortoises sunned themselves in warm summer air.... It is as if, in seeing and being seen by these animal others, I find my animal self, moving through

the cycles of the seasons and forests, that some part of me is ignited, as “In one unguarded unequivocal gaze, one sharp straight line from one heart to another, I would be illuminated like a countryside by a lightning flash” (Sheehan, 1998, p. 41).

And there are too many of these moments to continue to elaborate, each its own story, yet these chance meetings, these animal exchanges, always feel like magic to me. They feel like stories, too, and they fuel my imaginative wondering with words and their awe filled naming. My writer's voice surfaces after animal coincidences, words emerging uncontrollably. Sometimes I have an entire poem or essay drafted before the end of a run; I stretch in the grass at the end and scribble it out in my journal, a piece of writing, whole, hatched complete, sometimes with little need for revision. I feel these words in my body, as shock and light.

This feeling of deep, electric connection to the world around us seems requisite in some texts; one suggests that a person might “...Experience magical encounters that can happen when you run—in the mountains or on hills and trails; with the deer, eagles, and other creatures—and recapture the innocence, the momentary bliss, the passionate connections to the deeper reasons to run. Here is the mystical going beyond, that which you thought impossible, times where you seem to run out of your body and into another dimension” (Lynch & Scott, 1999, p. 176). My writer friend Miki took time alone near a national park to finish a novel she had begun several years before. Her days were spent in sessions of intense writing interspersed with running on trails in the forest to clear her thinking and release tension. One morning, as she jogged along a forest path, she had a magical encounter: “There was an owl; it was morning, but it was in the daytime. As I came up the trail, it swooped down out of the tree at me. For me, [the magic] it's the

nature, getting out of yourself, by yourself, in nature. I have to be by myself [to write well].” Being by herself, in this sense, means being free of human contact; however, she derived unforgettable inspiration and pleasure from her meeting with the owl, enough that it is ingrained in her memory of a time when writing came naturally and in a flow.

Encounters such as these, with the wild animal world, bring us back to our wild animal bodies, and “This cycling of the human back into the larger world ensures that the other forms of experience we encounter—whether ants, or willow trees, or clouds—are never absolutely alien to ourselves” (Abram, 1996, p. 16). As in Mary Oliver’s poem, in an animal encounter, “The world offers itself to your imagination/ calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting--/ over and over announcing your place/ in the family of things” (2002). This offering up, cycling in, is felt in a sacred sense for many who practice movement in nature. In one example, “Sister Marion Irvine, a Catholic nun, once said that she never felt more connected to her Creator than she did while running through the best natural environments” (Lynch & Scott, 1999, p. 176). This immersion in motion and nature sparks connection with the self, the world, and the sacred. Andrews cites another nun who sees running as sacred space and time: “My early morning runs are like prayer time,’ explains Sister Ann, a San Diego nun who petitioned her order for permission to run the mountain trails at Big Bear. ‘At first I felt so alone. When I got to the top of the mountain, I thought, ‘No one on earth knows where I am!’ Suddenly, I realized God did. As I ran through the tall pines I knew his attention was on me” (1978, p. 97). Meditative motion in the setting of nature creates, for some, an arcing energy to something much larger than the self, the act, and the mind. How could a writer not seek to transform this power into words?

As a space for contemplation and for physical activity, nature has long been explored by writers, thinkers, and seekers wishing to connect more deeply with the self. One runner expresses that movement is “physical activity that we have in common with other animals. But running is not just a physical activity; it is a spiritual activity as well. I feel good when I do it right; I have a feeling of, shall I say, ecstasy in the middle of a long run through the forest when I am in good shape” (Kay, 2007, p. 96). Runners who practice outdoors report a greater sense of connection with themselves and the world.

Abram (1996) considers the synaesthetic experience of truly being in the world, arguing for the “recuperation of the incarnate, sensorial dimension of experience [that] brings with it a recuperation of the living landscape in which we are corporeally imbedded” (p. 65). The life-world which brings forth our true understanding, Abram says, is one of the senses, of other human and non-human beings in nature. We must orient our animal bodies to reveal our most human thoughts. A body in motion, a writer is also an animal. “As animals,” says Johnson (1987), “we have bodies connected to the natural world, such that our consciousness and rationality are tied to our bodily orientations and interactions in and with our environment. Our embodiment is essential to who we are, to what meaning is, and to our ability to draw rational inference and be creative” (p. xxxviii). The creative act of writing, the rational act of written communication then, is dependent upon my orientation within my animal body in an animal world. This is movement toward wholeness.

In his essay *Building Dwelling Thinking*, Heidegger (1977/1993) addresses the fourfold “primal oneness of being” in which “earth, sky, divinities, and mortals—belong together in one” (p. 351). In this oneness, we are able to dwell, and in dwelling, so build.

The meaning that emerges through dwelling upon the earth, beneath the sky, in the presence of divinity, in recognition of mortality, is built out of dwelling. A similar mindful dwelling is the center of my understanding of moving meditation; the oneness of being that Heidegger describes may be the same open sense that gives way to flow thinking in moving meditation. The Buddhist walking meditation seeks a sense of wholeness of self in place and time, in communion with world and spirit. It is a presencing of self, a still wholeness that manifests best in motion.

There is a tradition of writers being in nature, and also of writing as a metaphor for the natural world: Thoreau, Emerson, Whitman, Whittier, and countless others have incorporated the natural world into the human senses. Bringing the outside inward also is fundamental for bringing out what is inside the self. Bachelard discusses the forest as a metaphor and vehicle for reaching one's own inner immensity, entering the spiral, saying, "We do not have to be long in the forest to experience the always rather anxious impression of 'going deeper and deeper' into a limitless world" (1994, p. 185). The sense of depth in the forest reveals a depth of self, "losing oneself in the detail of light and shade, one feels that one is in the presence of an 'essential' impression seeking expression" (Bachelard, p. 186). In this sense, the forest, and the natural world in general, is a metaphor for inner mystery, the universal circuit inside us, the secret place from where wild words come: "forest peace...is inner peace" (Bachelard, p. 187). And inner peace in our bodies resides.

The Understanding Body

Way and weighing
 Stile and saying
 On a single walk are found.

Go bear without halt
 Question and default
 On your single pathway bound. (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 3)

Body movement, the bringing to the surface of understanding by motion of the body, is brought to light in this poem, one in which a walker moves through a block, finding insight that generates still more questions in a cyclical pattern of understanding. On the walk that Heidegger envisions here, one finds the way, the route, the weight or significance, the means of surpassing a stile (a set of steps or a way of passage over a wall or barrier) and the words for which to express one's thinking, all in a "single walk." He instructs us to carry our ideas and notions without stopping, to think and rethink, to question continually along our journey. This pathway, for the moving writer, is both physical and cerebral, channeled in the currents of the body and the mind, built in the understanding body, one of the practice of motion and the process of composition. How is it that the motion of the walk, both symbolic and literal, can become associated with thought and problem solving? What does meditative movement have to do with finding words, solutions, inspiration? How do moving bodies connect with moving minds, forward motion?

Motion Ignites Creativity

Moving meditation ignites creative thought. Some writers have posited that humans' first stirrings of creativity came out of the capacity for movement. McDougall (2010) has documented the Tarahumara tribe of Mexico, known for their ability to run extreme distances with profound speed and endurance, in an account of running culture. He describes running as a primal human drive, connecting running and creative inspiration:

That was the secret of the Tarahumara: they'd never forgotten what it felt like to love running. They remembered that running was mankind's first fine art, our original act of inspired creation. Way before we were scratching pictures on caves or beating rhythms on hollow trees, we were perfecting the art of combining our breath and mind and muscles into fluid self-propulsion over wild terrain. And when our ancestors finally did make their first cave paintings, what were their first designs? A downward slash, lightning bolts through the bottom and middle—behold, the Running Man. (McDougall, p. 92)

McDougall connects body motion to the primal drive to generate and create: “Running is rooted in our collective imagination, and our imagination is rooted in running. Language, art, science, space shuttles, *Starry Night*, intravascular surgery; they all had their roots in our ability to run. Running was the superpower which made us human—which means it's a superpower all humans possess” (p. 239).

Perry and Sacks (1981) define running as creative play, the motion itself an act of inspired meaning making. In running,

movements, the goals, the space, and the time come from within. Just as young children are alone as they create a make-believe world, runners are also alone as they create a similar intermediate world in order to play with reality and struggle with limitations. The aloneness of the long-distance runner helps make the running experience a more private creation, and therefore, more personally meaningful. (p. 78)

Focused motion is creation: “Playing with what is possible and what is not is the essence of play, the grand illusion. The runner sets out to create a magic world, while realizing at the same time that it is only make-believe” (Perry & Sacks, p. 79). One runner discusses movement as a recapturing of a childhood self, recalling childhood experiences as connected with running as an adult: “After racing and running around, I'd either climb a tree or lie down on the ground to watch the sun go down. And my mother would come out and yell, 'What are you still outside for?' 'Because it feels great. I love the ground, I love the earth, I love the sky'” (Andrews, 1978, p. 22). Movement that is play brings us to

wholeness, engages us in the world, and clears the way for writing to emerge.

Brown (2009) argues that physical play and creativity are connected: “The impulse to create art is a result of the play impulse. Art and culture have long been seen as a sort of by-product of human biology, something that just happens as we use our big, complex brains. But the newer thinking is that art and culture are something that the brain actively creates because it benefits us, something that rises out of the primitive and childlike drive to play” (p. 61). Play makes us whole and imbues us with a sense of wonder, and movement is key in play. The play that sparks creative energy is not slogging miles on a treadmill, or done from a sense of duty. Instead, creative play is the work of inspiration and fun. “Exercise that is not play accentuates rather than heals the split between body and spirit. Exercise that is drudgery, labor, something only done for the final result is a waste of time;” rather, it is the process and deep engagement in meaningful activity that is key to understanding (Sheehan, 1998, p. 76).

Beyond allowing people to tap into creative power, moving meditation brings people closer to themselves and provides a sense of wholeness. Motion with intention, moving meditation, becomes a kind of ritual. More than a series of actions, movement meditation is a way of knowing, a bodily based process for engaging with and understanding the world and self as whole: “modes of being in the world, a synthesis of mind and body” (Schilbrack, 2004, p. 13). The motion of one's body and the rhythm of the breath can call one back into oneself, center one's awareness in body and mind as well as in the surrounding world. Moving meditation can merge reason and creativity, ignite the senses and the imagination.

According to embodied mind theory, everything we know originates in the body,

and “Cultivating the conditions for movement to be whole cultivates the conditions for awareness to be whole. It's not mechanical, it's reflective” (Sher, 2006, p. 151). Ideas and solutions come easily with body movement as an incubator for thought, and “If you don't have answers to your problems after a four hour run, you ain't getting them” (McDougall, 2010, p. 213). One runner states that “When I got into my body I felt like I was in a different world. And while running didn't solve my problems, it did give me a temporary feeling of relief—like an aspirin—and enabled me to solve my problems on my own” (Andrews, 1978, p. 37). Moving through space, one notices different things, orienting oneself as a thinker to the world, finding “...stories we can walk into and inhabit bodily, stories we trace with our feet as well as our eyes” (Solnit, 2001, p. 170).

Problems can be circulated, salved, and sometimes solved in the motion of meditation, and body movement has long been tied to thought. The Peripatetic philosophers, for example, walked a colonnade, wandering, thinking, and lecturing: “In English the word peripatetic means 'one who walks habitually and extensively.' Thus their name links thinking with walking” (Solnit, 2001, p. 45). The Greek thinkers moved in sacred dances that “were designed to translate order into action,” and “it is reported that Socrates, when asked how he kept his mental faculties so acute, replied, 'I dance every morning’” (Andrews, 1978, p. 134). And there is a tradition of writers immersing themselves through body motion in the natural world to cultivate insight and communicate it in text. What is the experience of these writers? Who are they? How does the phenomenon of moving meditation for finding writing manifest in their lives?

Words in a Surge: Composing in Motion

Drops of sweat fall on the hard ground.
Poems fly along the furrows.

The hoe handily on my shoulder, poetry flows from the breath.
(Nhat Hanh, 1999a, p. 138)

The novelist Joyce Carol Oates (1999) discusses the tradition of walking writers in an essay on writing and running, citing Thoreau's long walks, Dickens's famous midnight strolls, and the meanderings of Wordsworth, who apparently literally wandered lonely as a cloud. Like me and others with whom I have informally spoken, these writers wandered in the wild, waiting for wild words to surge, then transcribed those words to the page. Like me, they moved, they listened, and the words came.

Oates (1999) refers to writing and running as “twin activities,” stating: “Stories come to us as wraiths requiring precise embodiments. Running seems to allow me, ideally, an expanded consciousness in which I can envision what I'm writing as a film or a dream. I rarely invent at the typewriter but recall what I've experienced.” Another writer testifies that “There are times when I am not sure whether I am a runner who writes or a writer who runs. Mostly it appears that the two are inseparable. I cannot write without running, and I am not sure I would run if I could not write. They are two different expressions of my person. As difficult to divide as my body and mind” (Sheehan, 1998, p. 13).

Solnit (2001), in her work on walking as way of knowing, lists a history of walking thinkers, writers, philosophers, including Hegel, Kant, Hobbes, Nietzsche, Rousseau, Bertrand Russel, John Stuart Mill, Coleridge, Thoreau, and others. Lynch and Scott assert that “Thoreau, Plato, Einstein, Wordsworth, and Lao-Tzu sauntered through woods and over the hills to achieve mental clarity, fresh, original thoughts, and epiphanies to help replenish their souls and sustain their imaginations to illuminate their work and all of life” (1999, pp. 177-178). The transcendental poets saw forays into nature as “a devout

act” (Solnit, p. 281). Kierkegaard, Solnit reports, “composed all his works afoot” (p. 67). Husserl “described walking as the experience by which we understand our body in relationship to the world” (Solnit, p. 72). Heidegger also felt the pull of motion in silent woods, and that current allowed him to write: when drafting *Being and Time*, Heidegger “retreated to the Black Forest, and on long walks along its wooded paths, in glades and clearings, skiing down its slopes, and in long hours poring over books in his hut, he patiently crafted a special language” (De la Durantaye, 2007).

Jane Austen used walking as a kind of freedom both for herself and for her characters, for whom “solitary walks express the independence that literally takes the heroine out of the social sphere of the houses and their inhabitants, into a larger, lonelier world where she is free to think: walking articulates both physical and mental freedom” (Solnit, 2001, p. 239). Andrews reports that Joseph Heller “explains that his best ideas come when he is away from the typewriter, and he puts in 360 laps at a nearby YMCA on his lunch hour. ‘Running puts me in a free-floating frame of mind where random bits of dialogue coalesce into major scenes,’ Heller acknowledges” (1978, p. 151). Solnit quotes the writer Victor Hugo as having said: “To rove about, musing, that is to say loitering, is, for a philosopher, a good way of spending time...” (p. 397).

One newspaper column writer is quoted as using running as a writing tool: “On Monday I run ten miles and think about my column and if the ideas don't come, I sleep on it,” he explains. “Then I run first thing Tuesday morning. By then the article has usually written itself” (Andrews, 1978, p. 153). The beat poets reportedly found “motion or travel was enormously important” (Solnit, 2001, p. 449). Stinson (2004) uses walking and swimming as tools for writing, and writes vividly about an experience in which

movement sparked insight during her dissertation writing... “...I went for one of those long walks that were a necessary part of my thinking process. When I returned, I lay down to rest and instantly became conscious of how differently I perceived the world and myself when I was standing up compared to when I was lying down” (p. 161). Stinson goes on to say that “within moments” she had received the insight she needed to continue writing, stating “I had to find my framework within my own body,” and “attended within my body” for understanding (p. 161).

William Wordsworth is one of the most well-known walking writers, one who is “said to have made walking into something else, something new, and thereby to have founded a whole lineage of those who walk for its own sake and for the pleasure of being in the landscape, from which so much has sprung” (Solnit, 2001, p. 199). Wordsworth “seems to have gone walking nearly every day of his very long life, and walking was both how he encountered the world and how he composed his poetry” (Solnit, p. 248). In his poetic practice, walking was “a mode of being” as Wordsworth completed acts of thought and composition; in his youth as he walked “a two-thousand-mile journey on foot,” and in his later years as he “paced back and forth on a small garden terrace to compose his poetry” (Solnit, p. 248). Wordsworth “linked walking with nature, poetry” (Solnit, p. 249). He walked “as both a means and an end—to compose and to be” (Solnit, p. 255). Furthermore, walking was Wordsworth's “means of composition. Most of his poems seem to have been composed while he walked and spoke aloud, to a companion or to himself,” and “His steps seem to have beat out a steady rhythm for the poetry, like the metronome of a composer” (Solnit, pp. 269-270).

There is also some evidence of the experience of musicians walking for inspiration.

Patti Smith, for example, prepares for performances in this way, since “such walking might toughen and sharpen the sensibility, wrap one in an isolation out of which might come songs fierce enough, words sharp enough, to break that musing silence” (Solnit, 2001, pp. 440-441). Lynch and Scott (1999) state that “Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones said that he runs up to 5 miles a day prior to an extended concert tour,” and discuss another “musician-runner who claims that some of his best songs were conceived on the trails as he ran through the mystical redwoods” (pp. 180-181).

The experience of movement, the experience of writing, these gifts are one and the same. It may be that the same sense of awe in the body connected to moving through nature is present in the writing of John James Audubon, Annie Dillard, Mary Oliver, and Henry David Thoreau, who advised, “You must walk like a camel, which is said to be the only beast which ruminates while walking” (2008, p. 13). These poets, these writers, have escaped the world and created the world in the midst of the moving world outside.

I know that the practice of yoga can cultivate the same phenomenon. Holding a posture for five breaths, making minor adjustments, feeling muscles minutely shift in the small details of the pose, my mind will clear, my gaze will soften, and words will come, unbidden. Breathing into postures, motion coordinated with the circular pattern of the breath, a spark for writing may materialize from nowhere, carry me through the rest of a session, and flow onto paper as soon as my journal is in my hands. A small miracle, this spontaneous blossoming of words, is summed in Emily Dickinson's words: “If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry” (as cited in Trustees, 2009). I am an open vessel; lid removed, the words pour in, through me, soak the paper.

If we return again to Lee's (1999) assertion that the call to write is a call that is naturally received in the body, then the body can be primed to receive that call through meditation awareness practices: “For a writer to align his mind with the forces of the universe ('to be so neutral that he becomes the sound'), he must first align his body” (Sher, 2006, p. 92). Once a writer's body is aligned, she can receive the words, hear her own inner wisdom, and then transcribe that wisdom to the page.

Nhat Hanh (2009) likens the words that emerge in meditative mindfulness to body speak, or mantra: “In Buddhism, a mantra is a sacred formula that has the power to transform reality. You don't need to practice mantras in some foreign language like Sanskrit or Tibetan. You can practice in your own beautiful language: for if your body and mind are unified in mindfulness, then whatever you say becomes a mantra” (p. 93). This does not translate just to words, but also to the body as a source of communicative expression: “A mantra can be expressed not only through speech, but by the mind and body as a whole” (Hahn, p. 94). The words that emerge in moments of mind-body unity are expressions of inner wisdom, deep, embodied truth, the lived body aloud.

It is important to note that one's deepest thinking can and perhaps must be accessed through the lived body. Gendlin (1996) calls the act of sensing the body's knowledge “focusing,” which involves quieting the mind and reading the body. A kind of engaged disengagement,

...focusing involves deliberately attending down where activity arises and staying with something. One should keep one's attention on the unclear discomfort, on the felt sense that comes in response to one's deliberate seeking. One seeks the whole sense of what is wrong at the moment, (or, in a given concern). This is clearly different from one of the common meditative states in which one's inward activity is altogether quiet... (Gendlin, p. 66)

Although not limited to moving meditation, focusing, as a meditative act, allows words to

surface and thoughts to emerge. It allows one to pause, sense, and center.

Writing comes from the active body, participating in the world, from a place of pre-conceptual understanding. As we concretize ideas into words, we do so bodily: “The idea here is that you write not only with your hands and your brain but also with your body. But for this process to work, you need to slow down and pay attention to your felt sense—the place in your body where you sense an idea beginning to form—even before you have the words to express it” (Perl, 2004, p. 23). Sher (2006) writes: “If you pause to find your center before beginning to write, you may find yourself writing about your real subject NOW, instead of what you thought your subject was or planned to take as your subject, neither of which would be as compelling. If you slow down...your content will effervesce” (p. 45).

The centering concentration of moving meditation can put a writer in touch with the state of the body, with inner knowledge, as well as with creative energy. This is the idea of mindfulness at work in writing—focused attention, drawing deeply inside one's self. In yoga and tai chi, this is often referred to as centering. Perl (1994) writes of centering oneself to write: “The basic process begins with paying attention... Once a felt sense forms, we match words to it. As we begin to describe it, we get to see what is there for us. We get to see what we think, what we know. If we are writing about something that truly interests us, the felt sense deepens. We know that we are writing out of a 'centered' place” (p.103).

Finding one's center, centering, can be likened to the idea of grounding a circuit, which protects against excessive static, electrical shock, and allows for absorption of excess current. This focusing of energy provides safety, clarity, and predictable patterns

related to circuitry, but the same can be said of moving meditation. If a regular practice and process for finding a flow in thinking and writing through movement meditation creates a sense of grounding, then a writer can use this practice to focus and ignore static, to ease excess negative energy, and to tap into a somewhat predictable method for finding words. Writing from a centered, grounded place taps into our best truths, our deepest flow. The body is a necessary component in this grounding.

If we as educators are asking students to write, and we are asking teachers to help them to do so, why do we appeal only to their minds? I do not mean to generalize: not all writers are moving writers. Not all those who practice moving meditation also write. However, I must return to the image of my students: big kids in small desks who gripped pencils in frustration and said, “I can’t.” Is there a way to transform “can’t” to “can” in the motion of the body? Is there a way to help those stifled writers find “stille and saying” on a “single walk,” to unblock their thinking, to help their minds move?

The Writing Classroom as a Grounded Place

Wholeness of self in the world is one product of moving meditation, as is contemplative awareness of others. Another is the sense of wholeness in opposition to the modern notion of Cartesian duality, of mind over spirit, of reason over imagination, cognitive understanding in opposition to affective knowledge. Several writers have discussed the sense of unity provided by moving meditation as a way for challenging this philosophical schism. Berthoff (1994) conceives of perception and conception as “natural powers” that people “do not have to teach” (p. 109). One may practice and deepen them until they become essential to one's metacognitive process. Moving meditation may allow continual practice of the ritual of imaginative attention. Fleming (2010) writes: “Running

is a specific action under specific circumstances, in specific times and places, that for the duration of the action adds motion generated from within to the Cartesian duality between mind and body and so unites them both. Running also heals the great modern split between the self and the world...” (p. 121). In the sense of lived body knowing, however, it is not just the reclaiming of imagination or of balancing affective and cognitive perceptions; it is the reawakening of the body to which we must attend. There is evidence that educators may be considering this matter in terms of learning and development of thinking. What are teachers doing to tend to the bodies in their classrooms?

Learning in the Circuit of the Self

Shusterman (2004) argues for a somaesthetic, body-mind focus to learning and awareness, and that the body is the origin and locus of all understanding, since “knowledge is largely based on sensory perception” (p. 51). Our understanding and knowledge of what it means to be alive are distorted when we do not consider the human physical dimension, and “If self-knowledge is a central aim of philosophy, then knowledge of one's bodily dimension must not be ignored” (Shusterman, p. 52). As such, the body provides a source of understanding and signals for interpretation. For example, “We rarely notice our breathing, but its rhythm and depth provide rapid, reliable evidence of our emotional state. Consciousness of breathing can make us aware....” (Shusterman, p. 52). This awareness, intensified and given precision through physical training and embodied practices, makes us more capable of right action, happiness, and transcending social expectations.

As such, mindfulness can help learners to find their own centers and to center

themselves in the circuit of the world. Markula discusses learning as mindfulness practice, a “physical exercise executed with a profound, inwardly directed awareness or focus,” which concentrates on process over product or goal, on being present in the moment, space, and time, and “flow of one's intrinsic energy or vital life force” (2004, p. 70). This kind of learning, Markula argues, creates centered, aware learners, capable of careful action and depth of thought.

In a discussion of dance as movement meditation and the development of symbolic understanding, Miller (2007) states:

The body is the centre in this symbolic process. Through dance children develop “muscle sense” or kinesthetic perception of bodily movement. In dance they gain a sense of flow and rhythm, as movement is not isolated but part of a whole. While dancing, the children develop a sense of fluency, as their bodies become more centered. As the children gain this 'muscle sense' they learn to express their own feelings and they also learn which movement is appropriate. Dance, then, becomes a vehicle for expressing the inner life of the child. (p. 124)

Physical expression clears the way for language and written expression, relationships, and full manifestation of understanding in each person, so “by exploring psychophysical re-education, movement, dance, mindfulness, eurythmy, yoga, and drama we can help the student connect mind and body. By connecting mind and body, we facilitate human wholeness” (Miller, pp. 128-129).

Schmid (2007) argues for the use of martial arts to move students to wholeness, stating that:

the Taoist philosophical beliefs that underpin the development of qigong practices posit no absolute differentiation between mind and body, no Cartesian split between “spirit” and “matter” to begin with. In this sense, qigong practice itself represents a radically different training paradigm—and world view—than those offered in the typical Western university. Traditionally, mind and body are trained entirely separately and the division of courses by subjects and the university into academic departments function generally to isolate forms of knowledge from one another. To use qigong in the classroom is immediately to explore new ways of

knowing and developing. (p. 35)

People of all ages know what they know by virtue of being embodied beings embedded in a sensory world. Perl (2004) states: "...it is not just with our minds or our eyes that we perceive phenomena, but with our living, sensate bodies. For centuries, however, we have been taught to think otherwise. We have been living within and accepting the false separation between body and mind and between thoughts and feelings" (p. 52) Not only does knowledge originate in the body, so does communication, and everything we do, in transaction with the world, is a kind of communication:

As embodied subjects we are in communication with a rich and inexhaustible sensory world that we do not in any sense possess and which takes place anterior to ourselves. Nevertheless our 'non-personal' self cannot be separated from its intermingling existence in things and in the personal lives of individuals... There is...only this incarnate communication, the natural—cultural momentum of existence, the unmotivated upsurge of being, of which the body and its environment are always moments. (O'Loughlin, 2006, p. 78)

This natural state of constant communion makes every act an act of meaning making; there is no way to separate reason from creativity, cognitive from affective, self from the world. If this is true, and I return again to the image of my students, stuck in their hard desks, pencils in hand, writerly minds blocked, I see that still, they were learning with their bodies. They learned that writing comes from a place of uncomfortable chairs, immobility, structured format, fifty-minute sessions. Bound in space, time, and structure, school writing teaches them to turn off—not to tune in or tune out. Is there another way to teach writing, one more like the way I (and other moving writers) write, surrendered and engaged in the turning circuit of the world?

Teaching Writing as a Spiral

Mancuso (2007) advocates the use of Gendlin's focusing and Perl's felt sense of

writing in the English language arts classroom; she has urged students to “wait for the body's answers” in generating responses to writing and questioning (p. 16). Mancuso writes, advocating the integration of the body in the classroom for helping students move toward wholeness:

The knowledge our bodies carry may not be readily accessible to us because, in general, we do not receive instruction in reading our bodies, and if any, far less in reading our minds or emotions. Writing, after all, is a physical as well as a mental and spiritual activity, and physical awareness, as we know from Howard Gardner's description of kinesthetic intelligence, is in itself a kind of literacy. I suspect we actually have greater capability than we know for teaching ourselves the grammar and vocabulary of the body—extending as it does from experience with our own physical being to reading that of others. (pp. 19-20)

The grammar and vocabulary of the body, as Mancuso discusses, allows for connections with ourselves and with others, and opens a new kind of literacy invaluable for all arenas—but also for writing.

Counihan (2007) recommends Hatha yoga asanas in writing courses to ease student anxiety about grammar, correctness, and form. The stress reduction her students found through yoga, Counihan posits, allowed them to focus more on their thinking and less on their anxiety. Getting comfortable, states Counihan, “We just have to relax and let it flow out through our pens onto the paper or fingers on the keyboard...Relax into the breath; be mindful of both the ease and effort it takes to breathe. Relax into the mind; be mindful of both the ease and effort it takes to write” (p. 28).

It may be that educators are coming to recognize that the body and the environment are critical components in the meaning making process. When students are asked to sit still and write, they learn that the work of the academic mind is separate from and perhaps more important than the work of the sensing body, yet the senses are a necessary part of creating meaning. Meaning making is dynamic, fluid, and incorporates

the whole of a person.

Characterizing the split between cognitive and affective reasoning as an “abyss,” Berthoff (1994) calls for a theory of imagination that honors the abstraction ability and constant revision of evolving thought that moving meditation can help cultivate. Berthoff states that “A theory of imagination can help us solve the problem of the abyss by removing the problem: there is no abyss if composing is conceived of as forming and forming as proceeding by means of abstraction” (p. 110). He goes on to argue that, specifically in teaching writing: “...the positivist differentiation of cognitive and affective is wrongheaded and misleading: indeed, it is the root cause of the widespread failure to get from so-called personal writing to so-called expository writing, from informal to formal composition—even from so-called pre-writing to writing” (Berthoff, p. 110). Just as there are no clear linear delineations between cognitive and affective, mind and body, there are no clear delineations between modes of writing or stages of the process of writing as they exist in the real world, in the wild; and yet, in schools, we seek to split the circuitous spiral into portioned segments.

In order to fully make meaning, we must use all senses afforded to us; in order to teach others to make meaning, we must be aware of their embodiment. We must acknowledge our own wholeness in order to make meaning, for “to understand is to participate immediately in life, without any mediation through concepts” (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 208). As teachers, we must know our selves to know our students. Among the lessons of the body Stinson (2004) advocates is bodywork's ability to be “one's own teacher,” which connects to “self control (telling oneself what not to do) as well as self direction (telling oneself what to do); this kind of self-management (or lack of it)” as

“intimately connected with the body” (p. 156). We must practice these awarenesses in order to teach them to our students; a ripple effect spirals outward.

The awareness that comes from moving meditation gives us access to meaning-making. Meaning is not discovered, even when it feels like a lightning bolt; rather, it is constructed from what is already within in concert with feedback from the environment. Insight gained in the circuit of understanding is developing, not spontaneous. Like “dawning,” it is part of an infinite cycle. It may feel like spontaneous discovery, but it is not. It is emergent understanding that originates in the body and the world. Dependence upon the body and environment to shape understanding makes the concept of the purely rational mind, separate from body, a false construct:

...Reason, far from being the distinguishing feature of a traditional conception of mind, is shaped in crucial ways by the specificities of our bodies, that is, by the complex and amazing neural structures of our brains and by the particulars of our everyday engagement with the world, that is the peculiarities of our emplacement in time and space. Rationality is precisely that which builds upon and utilizes our basic animal natures, not something transcending the body and demanding its regulation as a lowly vehicle or instrument. (O'Loughlin, 2006, pp. 169-170)

The body is necessary in shaping reason, and thinking can be refined through a continual process of cyclical, circular, feedback from the body and the world: “If we can reclaim imagination as the forming power of mind,” Berthoff (1994) reasons, “we will have the theoretical wherewithal for teaching composition as a mode of thinking and a way of learning” (p. 109). If we learn ourselves, we can teach students to live in process thought, generative states, where illumination can be found. And yet, how can we get there, speak the ineffable, that which, in lightening dawning, is without words? In a state of deep immersion, Sheehan describes this kind of insight:

I reached a state of blessedness that I have rarely equaled. I was for those minutes completely and utterly relaxed, unconcerned about the outcome, yet completely

absorbed in what I was doing. I was in what has been described as a cocoon of concentration, absolutely involved, engaged in running [...] Everything was harmony and grace. Everything was pure. Effort had become effortless. These things are much easier to experience than to describe. (1998, p. 174)

In a state that defies description, which is pure being, are we our most creative? This circuit of the in-between is liminal, the place where insight surges. Solnit (2001) describes the meditative walk as a state of possibility, of in-between: “Pilgrimage is a liminal state—a state of being between one's past and future identities and thus outside the established order, in a state of possibility” (p. 126). Between the thought and the page, between draft and revision, between childhood and adulthood in the school classroom; these liminal spaces represent the possible; they also represent the joining of body and mind, movement toward wholeness. If movement meditation is the liminal space between in the writer's process, how do we cultivate that space, in which writer's thoughts may surge and expand?

One way to find ineffable insight, liminal space, and to give words to inspiration may be to work toward what yoga calls the beginner's mind. Levin (1985) discusses the inherent “pre-logical” body awareness of the infant, the development of the ego, and that true understanding requires the incorporation of the infant primordial awareness (in addition to enlightenment beyond the ego—awareness of others). Adults, in some sense, have lost the infant-self connection—we must develop our “felt sense.” This higher sense of being is an unending process, is cyclical, and always evolving. The role of the writer and philosopher, then, is to call attention to and articulate this awareness. Good writing is “seeing things as if for the first time, seeing the familiar as unfamiliar, the common as uncommon”... and “bringing to that running, that play the attitude of the child, the perception of the poet. Being a beginner with a beginner's mind, a beginner's heart, a

beginner's body” (Sheehan, 1998, p. 119). The role of the teacher is to help students develop and maintain this awareness; to do this, she must first develop it herself. A teacher of writing must also be a writer. A teacher of embodied students must acknowledge her own embodiment, ground herself and find her center, and ground and center her students in themselves and the circuit of learning. How is it for teachers of writing to work toward being writers? What is it like for teachers to be bodies in motion? What does it mean for their writing when we ask teachers to move? What might learning look like from the perspective of teachers who move, write, and find their embodied insight?

Moving into the Vortex: Next Steps

I find myself today all alone
at this crossroads
that offers both opening and closing. (Nhat Hanh, 1999 c, p. 93)

I have opened this chapter with a description of a January run through spiraling snow; representative of one hour of one day in my circuit of process and practice. That day could have been any day, and yet, each run is different. The process would have been the same: set intention or ask question, move, come to synthesis, but the insights sparked would have been different. Most days, it happens that way for me. As a writer, I have practiced this method for thinking and writing for many years, and yet, each experience is new, the pattern the same but the outcome changed. As a teacher, the static still swirls around me: I am still trying to make sense of whether this may work for others. I am a learner still becoming a teacher. As a researcher, the challenge seems immense; the electric storm whirls, and I can see only a few feet down the path. Yet I keep going, pushing my way through the crackling sparks; I am a learner yearning to be a

philosopher, a researcher.

Learning proceeds from “from momentary insight to worldview” in which “an encounter is processed and the contents of the transaction are made conscious—pondered—so the new information can become a part of the entire package that we call intelligence” (Bradley, 2001, p. 34). This kind of learning—the integration of lived experience into one's understanding in an expansive and holistic way, is difficult to measure because “empirical research is based on isolating variables and limiting exposure to other variables. Learning a prescribed, programmed pattern is an easy process for which to test” (Bradley, p. 34). This kind of measurement is not possible when one seeks to understand the meaning of a particular phenomenon as it is lived, and as those who live it process and learn from the experience.

Bradley calls for descriptive research to investigate the power of movement for learning because it “takes place in a multi-modal, highly sensory, creative, and generative context for learning, and it also requires practice, reflection, and refinement of skill. Dance education research can, should, and must demonstrate that when children move, they learn. We know this; we see it every day. We can't prove it except by living it, reflecting on it, and writing about it in depth” (Bradley, 2001, p. 35). As a practitioner of movement for my own learning, I know that when I move, I learn, I compose. Phenomenology places me directly in this circuit of myself, lived experience, philosophical inquiry, and the world, in that “First an idea interests me. Then I put it in my head and allow it to germinate for a while. [...] Next, I try to organize this raw material. Attempt to discover its essence, its true meaning, what it is all about” (Sheehan, 1998, p. 14). I must live in my questions, since “If you would write the truth, you must

first become the truth” (Sheehan, p. 14). I must also recognize the incompleteness of my interpretation because “writing is never easy. And no matter how well done, never to one's satisfaction” (Sheehan, p. 15). Caught up in the circuit of myself as writer, teacher, researcher, and practitioner, I live, reflect, and write about this lived experience, not only to enhance my own understanding and practice, but to expand the understanding of others.

In this chapter, I give an overview of the research, literature, theory, and thought related to moving meditation and its connections to spirituality, writing process, and teaching implications. I have further explored the essential elements of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing, and I have detailed ways in which this phenomenon appears outside my own experience. In chapter 3, I move forward, deeply engaging with the philosophical groundings of phenomenology that guide me through conversations with others invested in writing, teaching, learning, and moving. In the spiral, I must maintain my orientation to myself as writer, practitioner, teacher, and researcher; I must use my inquiry as the solid ground on which I stand while the literature, research, conversations, and interpretations swirl around me. In the circuit of this research, my question is both point of departure and site of safe return. To maintain my focus, my question is my guide; I continue to turn and return to the question: *What is the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing?*

CHAPTER 3

PHILOSOPHICAL GROUNDING: PARALLEL CIRCUITS

The Self In a Circuit with the Questions: Why is Phenomenology for Me?

When I am stalled in my thinking, ideas blocked, I have found I can achieve an opening flow through focused movement. Setting an intention, I lace on my running shoes, step out the door, and let my body take control, freeing my mind to wander as it will. Immersion in automatic movement seems to allow my thoughts to roam, allows me unbounded freedom of thinking. This movement is not just exercise; instead, it can be seen as a life practice and a bringing into being of self, “a dynamic and passionate way of living—involving heightened attentiveness, boundless questioning, and continual self-discovery—that permeates our existence and expands our awareness. It is a journey into the unknown, not a 'discovery' of someone else's path” (Rubin, 2001, p. 127). Movement meditation through running, yoga, labyrinth walking, or biking allows me to channel my own energy in a way that is wholly mine. It makes me who I am and deepens my understanding of self and the world (as I discuss in chapter 1). For myself, and also for others (as I discuss in chapter 2), moving meditation allows a setting into motion an engaged circular relation to the self, to thoughts, and to others in the world.

As a writer, when I feel that the energy of my thinking has stopped, my running shoes call to me, and moving through space I find my way. I find the notion that words surface in my body to be true, that our bodies are the source for all insight, that “The body is where all religion, all culture, all literature must start. The body is where all writers must start, but few do” (Sheehan, 1998, p. 115). I start with my body, not just as a writer, but also as a researcher.

I feel drawn to a particular way of thinking, of moving, that suits my energy and sense of awareness. Similarly, as a researcher I feel called to a particular way of seeking to make sense, to uncover patterns and meaning, to dwell in experience, to discover intersubjective understanding. Phenomenology, as a way of understanding the world, calls to me, allows me to enter a specific kind of relational, circular, and energetic awareness with myself and with the lived experiences of others. The metaphor of the circuit manifests repeatedly as I attempt to understand the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing; likewise, the circuit emerges in my growing awareness of phenomenological research. In this chapter, I channel the words of the phenomenological philosophers to further illuminate phenomenology as a way of knowing and to connect phenomenology with the metaphorical circuit. I also explain how and why phenomenology is an appropriate research approach for me and the best lens through which to answer my question: *What is the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing?*

I Felt It in My Body

In my first semester as a doctoral student, I found myself questioning whether I had made a wise decision to leave the teaching classroom that I loved in order to pursue a higher degree. I was aware of myself as a writer and teacher, but the research methods courses I was taking were not a good fit. Instructors critiqued my writing for being expressive but not research oriented or “scientific” enough, yet I was writing about my classroom and real things that happened. Those writings were descriptive and particular; I tried to convey a sense of the real, what had happened, and what meaning it made. After winter break that first year, I walked into a Thursday evening course in interpretive

research, Phenomenology I. As we settled into our seats in a circle, our instructor began with a poem. Throughout the evening, we heard about phenomenology, sampled examples, and I knew I was home. I felt an electric sense of place and time, a prickle in my scalp that tells me when something is right. I found a truth that night: I am not a quantitative statistician, not a post-positivist researcher. I am a teacher-researcher and a philosopher.

“Philosophy,” Merleau-Ponty argues, “is not a science, because science believes it can soar over its object and hold the correlation of knowledge with being as established, whereas philosophy is the set of questions wherein he who questions is himself implicated by the question” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 27). Phenomenology is not hard science, bound to quantifiable evidence, reproducible generalizations. I am not a hard scientist; it is difficult for me to separate what I want to know from who I am. Rather than soaring above, I hope to sink into my questions, live in them. I am a learner and an individual, a reader, writer, runner, and teacher; I am a practitioner of that which I study and seek to understand. I started with questions, and those questions have continued to build, circulating through my life, through the practices of writing, running, moving, teaching. The questions make more questions, and the questions make me. I came to this work by noticing what happened to me and then by asking myself: What connections exist between moving meditation and writing process? How does this happen? What does this mean? Am I alone in this experience?

The questions encompass me, and when I discuss them with others, the questions engage them, too, pulling them in, generating new ideas for me and for those others. This work relates to the practice of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and

writing. As a writer and a runner, I have found that sustained movement (a hike, a run, the use of a labyrinth for walking meditation, a bicycle ride) can help me find focus, clarity, and inspiration when I feel “stuck” in the thinking process. The physical act of sustained movement can open a flow of words or thoughts that can break through a wall of writer's block, provide solutions to a problem, or help me weather a personal dilemma. As I began to articulate to other people this pattern of practice in my life, I found that my experience is not singular; many writers find that activities which place them more deeply in their bodies facilitate the flow of thought and words. Some profess to writing in the shower; the steady flow of water, the depth of bodily sensation brings words to the surface. “I write while I am biking” says one writer. “I write when I swim,” says another, or while hiking, or during yoga practice. Centering inside oneself, mind sinking into body, awareness apparent, inner thoughts can manifest, come clear. The questions began to drive me and define me. Phenomenology is right for me because phenomenology requires that I live in the inquiry: we become our questions. Discussing this topic casually with others seems to trigger an intersubjective spark: when introduced at a social gathering, there is nearly always a moment of “Oh!” and “Yes! Me too!”

The intersubjective commonality found in these informal conversations, the chatter that bubbles up at the introduction of the topic, has led me to live in the questions: What does it mean find words in the world, to filter them through the self, and to create from them writing? How does this fluency (so like magic) happen? If I can train myself to do it, to believe in it and rely upon it, can I do the same for other teachers of writing, and, ultimately, student writers, who themselves struggle not only to conceive of what to write, but also of how? What is moving meditation, and how does moving meditation

stimulate the flow of thoughts and words for myself and other writers? What can I do to help teachers of writing move and, in doing so, write—and perhaps teach—more freely? *What is the lived experience of moving meditation for finding flow in thinking and writing?*

Movement Toward Wholeness—of Understanding and of Research

According to Gadamer, hermeneutic phenomenology “denotes the basic being-in-motion of *Dasein* that constitutes its finitude and historicity, and hence embraces the whole of its experience in the world. Not caprice, or even an elaboration of a single aspect, but the nature of the thing itself makes the movement of understanding comprehensive and universal” (1960/2006, p. xxvii). Recognizing both commonality and the particular, but not generalizable replicability, phenomenology crystallizes the difference between a measurable, predictable response and intersubjective essences of experience. Phenomenology does not seek to present a replicable fact, a cause, or an effect. It does not seek to show a measurable statistic; rather, it intends to describe phenomena in wholeness as reflective lived experience—this includes the lived experience of the philosopher-researcher and that of others. It fixes, contextualizes, and represents *Dasein*—Being, or more accurately translated, “being there”—in a way that engages us, reader and researcher alike. It is open to interpretation, and serves to “awaken a sense of wonder about the order of what is ordinary” (van Manen, 2005, p. 49). This sense of Being, *Dasein*, acknowledges the past, present, and future; it is contextual and relational. It is life as it is experienced in all its facets; it is knowledge situated and contextualized in the particular.

The interpretive stance is movement toward a unity of understanding—the whole

of an experience in its essential components; experience is distilled to essence. This wholeness is also a wholeness of research—not compartmentalized into a controlled setting, tested or evaluated; rather, it is a phenomenon as existing in the lifeworld for those who live the experience. Phenomenological research refers also to a wholeness of being, of person, not separated body from mind, mind from body. The event is not separate from the person; the research is not separate from the researcher.

Phenomenology does not base its understanding in dualities or in fragmentation of purpose or person.

The general stance of phenomenological research is that the natural science approach is not appropriate for investigating human science phenomena.

Phenomenological inquiry does not present quantifiable fact; this is not its intention.

According to Gadamer (1960/2006), human science research is historically modeled upon a quantitative paradigm, looking for legitimacy on the model of the natural sciences.

Phenomenological inquiry makes the departure into interpretation, which takes on a life of its own, independent from the phenomenon and from those who experience it. What is the truth? There is no one truth. It is all truth. There are many possible truths.

The unconcealment of beings and the presencing of meaning. Heidegger (1971/2001) suggests that in the way in which art reveals or uncovers truth, an “entity emerges as the unconcealment of its being. The Greeks called the unconcealment of beings *aletheia*. We say 'truth' and think little enough in using this word. If there occurs in the work a disclosure of a particular being, disclosing what and how it is, then there is here an occurring, a happening of truth at work” (p. 35). If I view my research as a kind of art or a creating, then the research work uncovers a different kind of truth; one that

resonates for me and for those with whom I share it in a particular way, in contrast to a generalizable or measurable way.

When we write from a place of the truest self, embedded in the self, immersed in meaningful practice, then we somehow get at the edge of truth, of being, *alethia*, unconcealing what is hidden. Heidegger asserts that art can provide this unconcealing, which is a revelation of the highest sense of self and truth emerges when “the art work opens up in its own way the Being of beings. This opening up, i.e. e., this deconcealing, i.e. e., the truth of being, happens in the work. In the art work, the truth of what is has set itself to work. Art is truth setting itself to work” (1971/2001, p. 38). This truth happens for the observer, the participant, in interacting with art; it also happens for the artist engaged in the work. Movement is the work in which the moving writer engages, and that work produces words.

Phenomenology, also, in the work (both the process and the product) reveals a sense of being, of *alethia*, an understanding of what is *as* it is. The writer researcher creates the work, and yet the work also creates the writer researcher, because “When a work is created, brought forth out of this or that work-material—stone, wood, metal, color, language, tone—we say also that it is made, set forth out of it...The work as work, in its presencing, is a setting forth, a making” (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 44). Each act of creating is also a forward step, setting forth, a making which places us deeper in the work, and thus, deeper in the world.

The embodied researcher in the circuit of research. Merleau-Ponty (1964) characterizes phenomenological research as differentiated from other types of research in that it is collaborative, bodily based, and grounded in the lifeworld. He further suggests

that scientific thinking must move away from the idea of objectivity, which, according to the positionality a phenomenologist assumes, is not even possible. Phenomenological research acknowledges the impossibility of separating or bracketing one's self from others as human beings or from life as it is lived. Merleau-Ponty states:

Scientific thinking, a thinking which looks on from above, and thinks of the object-in-general, must return to the 'there is' which underlies it; to the site, the soil of the sensible and opened world such as it is in our life and for our body—not that possible body which we may legitimately think of as an information machine but that actual body I call mine, this sentinel standing quietly at the command of my words and my acts. Further, associated bodies must be brought forward along with my body [...] the others who haunt me and whom I haunt. (1964, pp. 160-161)

As such, in composing a phenomenological work, I am living in the “sensible,” “opened” world, in my “actual” body, to interact, imagine, and create with other bodies who also live in that world.

This difference between phenomenology as an interpretive way of knowing and empirical, objective science is a difference of perspective. While the philosopher seeks vision, the scientist seeks to grip or grasp, to hold fast and find stasis in a whirling, changing world. This attempt to define and measure and contain does not suit the philosopher, because in attempting to contain, to grasp, we also change that which we attempt to measure, as “The very content of the measurement obliges us to conceive the measurement differently. The act of measuring is going to fix the object, make it appear in its individual existence” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 94). Part is separated from whole, decontextualized, removed from the field. When studying the lived experience of the body, we deny the existence of a duality of the body: “The duality of the body and the field evokes the duality of the perceptual process, more and more global and attentive” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 97). The body can not separate from itself, can not separate self-

perception from perception of the things studied, and the researcher can not separate herself from the lived experience in which she dwells; we automatically change something by studying it. Rather than perceiving the world as having statistical order, we can merely catch glimpses of the world in chaos, ever-changing being, spiraling and circling. Our attempt to grasp and measure is merely a snapshot of isolated, decontextualized information, yet phenomenology reaches toward a wholeness, unfragmented, and perceptually whole: “Perception teaches me the infinite divisibility of space and teaches me that Being is not composed of elements” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 100).

Being is not composed of elements, cannot be parsed out, and the phenomenologist can never have objectivity. Furthermore, objective “soaring above” is not the goal of phenomenology. Rather, we hope to move deeper into the self, immersion in rather than separation from that which we hope to understand. According to van Manen, for the human sciences writer researcher, “To write is to stir the self as reader. Therefore, the human science researcher is not just a writer, someone who writes up the research report. Rather, the researcher is an author who writes from the midst of life experience where meanings resonate with reflective being” (2005, p. 238). Because the researcher participates in life, her sense of understanding is naturally shaped by living and being. As a phenomenological researcher, practitioner of moving meditation, and writer, I must speak from the position of my own heart, my own practice, and my own way of living. In doing so, I gain understanding that I can communicate to others. I do this by participating in life, reflecting upon that participation, and attending to it as a phenomenological researcher and writer.

Before I begin any kind of research, I must acknowledge the complexity of the

phenomenon as it resides in me; as a person who practices moving meditation, I can not approach it objectively. Because this phenomenon is deeply a part of my daily living, its essence ingrained into my own, I can not find a view that is objective. Objectivity is an illusion. Regardless of the best intention to separate myself from my own subjectivity, I cannot, because “our spontaneous experience of the world, charged with subjective, emotional, and intuitive content, remains the vital and dark ground of all our objectivity” (Abram, 1996, p. 34).

This then becomes a search for meaning grounded in my self and the world, a reflection of my past understandings, and a forward look toward my future, since “Every experience has implicit horizons of before and after, and finally fuses with the continuum of experiences present in the before and after to form a unified flow of experience” (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 235). In doing phenomenology, I must recognize that the meaning I make is constructed out of lived experience, intentionality, and thematic engagement with others, and as such:

Every such intentional experience always implies a twofold empty horizon of what is not actually meant in it, but toward which an actual meaning can, of its nature, be directed; and the unity of the flow of experience obviously includes the whole of all experiences that can be thematized in this way...The flow of experience has the character of a universal horizon consciousness, and only from it is the discrete experience given experience at all. (Gadamer, p. 237)

It is the intersubjective essence of moving meditation that I seek to describe: the flow of movement meditation, the flow of words or thoughts that may spring from moving meditation, and how these fit in the flow of the lives of those who practice it. I intend to view moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing as it manifests in the horizon of its historical presence, how it has manifest in the lives of others in the present and throughout the centuries, how it manifests in my life now, and

how it manifests in the words of others who agree to share their lived descriptions of this phenomenon. Through their words, I will find common themes, and through those themes, I will open myself to the phenomenon and open the phenomenon for my readers. Through words, I will create a description that has a life beyond my own life, words beyond my own words.

It is through my own positionality as a practitioner of moving meditation that I hope to illuminate its meaning, and that personal connection may help me as a learner, as a teacher, and as a researcher. My positionality is important because “Phenomenological engagement is always personal engagement; it is an appeal to each one of us, to how we understand things, how we stand in life, how we understand ourselves...” (van Manen, 1997, p. 156). As a practitioner of moving meditation, I find a thinking flow in the practice of running, or walking the labyrinth, or hiking, or yoga; as a writer, I translate this thinking flow into words and texts. This happens to me regularly, and it has become a ritual in my life. Likewise, informal conversations with others reveal I am not alone in this experience. By starting from this very personal phenomenon, and moving toward a common understanding of the phenomenon as it resides in other bodies, I endeavor to eke out a sense of how moving meditation may inspire in other writers and learners a productive flow like the one I find in its practice. Phenomenology as an approach is critical for the work of this research.

Phenomenology Is the Study of Lived Experience

In order to make meaning fully, we must use all senses afforded to us. We must acknowledge our own wholeness in order to make meaning, for “to understand is to participate immediately in life, without any mediation through concepts” (Gadamer,

1960/2006, p. 208). As a practitioner of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing, I participate in that which I research. It is not a phenomenon isolated and separate from me; it is ingrained into my life.

Moving meditation is part of my body understanding, my sense of the world. Levin (1985) discusses the inherent “pre-logical” body awareness of the infant, the development of the ego, and that true understanding requires the incorporation of the infant primordial awareness (in addition to enlightenment beyond the ego—awareness of others). Adults, in some sense, have lost the infant-self connection—we must develop our “felt sense.” This higher sense of being is an unending process, is cyclical, and always evolving, spiraling out. The role of the philosopher, then, is to call attention to and articulate this lived experience awareness. My “felt sense” is brightest and best when I move.

Philosophy, then, is the transposition of lived experience into a kind of meaning that filters through a circular, reflective process of meaning making, or hermeneutics, which we communicate through language. Philosophy “consists in restoring a power to signify, a birth of meaning, or a wild meaning, an expression of experience by experience, which in particular clarifies the special domain of language” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 155). As a classroom teacher, when I asked my students to create words in the wild, this wildness is not exactly what I meant; but, the wild words of real writing are not so far from the wild meanings of lived experience interpretation as represented in the kind of research I do. They are alike in that they move beyond mere task or technique, cause wonder to surge, and generate engagement.

Van Manen states, “Experiential accounts or lived-experience accounts—whether

caught in oral or written discourse—are never identical to lived experience itself” (1997, p. 54). This is because all experience is recalled reflectively, and as such, has already undergone transformation. Phenomenology allows us to “find access to life’s living dimension” through close attention to personal accounts, a tracing of etymological sources, idiomatic phrases, and essential elements of a phenomenon (van Manen, pp. 54-62). The concept of lived experience refers to life as it is lived moment to moment, without reflection or pre-conception; it is the elaboration of meaning immediately as it comes into being. Lived experience is complex, instantaneous, and cannot be fragmented. Being in the world, and the text of that being, makes up the material through which phenomenology is developed. Lived experience, according to van Manen, is an involvement “immediately and naturally in the activity” of engagement (p. 36). Through this deep engagement, we might sense a loss of time, a loss of self-consciousness, a loss of spatial awareness, a complete immersion in an activity which fully engages our being. Lived experience is the fabric of our existence, surrounding us, composing us as we compose it, since “The world is not what I think, but what I live through. I am open to the world, I have no doubt that I am in communication with it, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002, pp. xviii-xix). I can never capture the full meaning of life as it is lived, but through careful reflection I may catch a glimpse of resonant moments.

Gadamer (1960/2006) discusses this as exemplified in the concept of *Erleben*, experience: “Erleben means primarily 'to be still alive when something happens'” (p. 53). Lived experience, according to this conception, is the dual vision of an experience as it happens to us and also as a text for further development, as well as the lasting effects of a

particular moment in time. In this sense, lived experience is the before and the after, both the text and the reflection upon it. It is “the immediacy, which precedes all interpretation, reworking, and communication, and merely offers a starting point for interpretation—material to be shaped—and its discovered yield, its lasting result” (Gadamer, p. 53). To be clear, then, lived experience is both the events through which we live and the reflective texts or effects drawn from these experiences.

Like experience, lived experience is our engagement as we are in the world as it is, with no mitigating analysis, thoughts, or reflection; additionally, however, lived experience must hold significance for us. Experience is what happens to us, while lived experience is presencing in the moment, an experience of intention, body, time, place, and human relation. Lived experience differs from experience insofar as lived experience is not a random moment or moments in day to day living; rather, it is action crystallized and imbued with memory, intentionality, and potentiality: “Something becomes an 'experience' not only insofar as it is experienced, but insofar as its being experienced makes a special impression that gives it lasting importance” (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 53).

Lived experience is the particular, time, place, space, body, action, in context. We can not be decontextualized, as we are part of a legacy of events centered in a world of understanding:

We have no other environment. The facts and the essences are abstractions: what there is are worlds and a world of Being, not a sum of facts or a system of ideas, since space and time are not the sum of local and temporal individuals, but the presence and latency behind each of all the others, and behind those of still others. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 117)

The goal of phenomenology, then, is to describe an experience in a way in which

meaning emerges, in which understanding can open, and something meaningful and whole can be revealed or uncovered, and at the same time, to recognize that what is revealed or uncovered is not the only possibility for understanding. In creating a phenomenological work, I am “cognizant of the realization that no interpretation is ever complete, no explication of meaning is ever final, no insight is beyond challenge” (van Manen, 2005, p. 7), and I recognize that, like a good, long run or a meaningful session of writing, everything is always a draft. Even so, every run, every revision, every moment of growth makes me richer, engages me more in the practice, is a “deepening experience,” just as “phenomenological inquiry has formative consequences for professional practitioners by increasing their perceptiveness and tactfulness” (van Manen, pp. 7-8). Living in the circuit, I make the work, and, at the same time, the work makes me.

Overlapping Circuits of Meaning: Why is Phenomenology Fitting for This Work?

Hermeneutics is a writing (and re-writing) based method of understanding. Though I seek to describe an experience as it is in essence, “To do hermeneutic phenomenology is to attempt to accomplish the impossible: to construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the lifeworld, and yet to remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal” (van Manen, 1997, p.18).

Hermeneutics enables me to give written words to the essence of the experience of moving meditation, in spite of its ineffability, its nebulous quality. In giving words to this practice, in the spiral process of writing, rewriting, revising, re-visioning, I seek to make the phenomenon vivid, acknowledging its complexity and its essence, revealing its pedagogical implications for writers of all kinds. I ask: What is it like to find words in motion? What sensations come to writers as they move to find words? What thoughts

surge forth for practitioners of moving meditation as they seek embodied inspiration?

What is the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing?

Phenomenology is appropriate as a framework for my questions because it recognizes the role of the body: as a maker of meaning, as ground for experience, as a part of nature, and as present in the classroom. Phenomenology allows for the possibility of motion as a source of meaning and for words as products of the body. Phenomenology is wholistic in its approach to what it means to be human. Furthermore, phenomenology allows for the understanding of the embodied writer in the circuit of the world.

Phenomenology Recognizes the Body as a Generator of Meaning

The body exists in a relationship with the world, and this relationship allows the body to draw in information in order to generate meaning, and to conduct information out in order to channel that meaning to others in the world. According to Merleau-Ponty, the body has a double function of turning outward to the world for information and turning inward to the self for making meaning:

...the characteristic operation of the mind is the movement by which we recapture our corporeal existence and use it to symbolize instead of merely to co-exist. This metamorphosis lies in the double function of our body. Through its sensory fields and its whole organization the body is, so to speak, predestined to model itself on the natural aspects of the world. But as an active body capable of gestures, of expression, and finally of language, it turns back to the world to signify it. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 7)

This continual cycle of turning outward to gather, turning inward to construct, and turning outward to release mirrors the cyclical, circuitous process of writing and of moving meditation. As such, the body can be seen as the grounding center for all generation and communication of meaning in continual, cyclical relationship.

Everything we learn about ourselves and the world is a product of participation in the world, the perception and action of our bodies present in a context. We make the world, and the world makes us, “Hence the role of the perceived world [is] a milieu of experience, where there is not the projection of consciousness on everything, but rather a participation of my own life in everything, and vice versa” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 40). My life is inseparable from the context in which I live it, just as mind is inseparable from the context of the body. My perception is collaborative between myself and the world, and my perception is dependent upon the self-perceived, so my embodied understanding is, in part, a lens through which I see myself and others in the world.

Human participation in the world is characterized as both “union and distinction,” “neither spirit nor beast” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 18). I am integrated in the world and cannot be removed from that context, but I am separate from the animal world in that I inhabit my own individual body in a specifically human way, a way that ties me to other people by virtue of our shared embodied similarities, like the orientation of our eyes and ears on our skulls, the position of our hands, our upright postures. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1999), human embodiment is the source of all we know, our human way of being. That way of being is “shaped in crucial ways by the body and brain and how the body can function in everyday life” (Lakoff & Johnson, p. 565).

It is the human body that makes the person not merely a mind, and it is the human mind that makes the body not merely an animal. It is thinking that distinguishes the human body from being a merely reactionary, animal body, because “Thought [...] is placed in the service of the body and functions according to the disposition of the nervous machine. The body becomes the medium of the soul” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 19).

Thus, the human body (as opposed to the animal body) is a perceiving, meaning making body. Without the ability to think and reason, "...humanity is just another corporeity [*sic*]" (Merleau-Ponty, p. 208).

So phenomenology recognizes the human body as a responsive, thinking body rather than a reactionary, animal body. Likewise, phenomenology recognizes the human body as one capable of empathy. Corporeality allows us to feel in our bodies the impressions and words of others, even though we may not physically share their experiences. The body is "the sensible matter that assists in the apprehension of the self or others" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 46). We know what we feel through our bodies, and we respond physically to emotional and intellectual stimuli. We can feel the intentions of others, empathize with our bodies and emotions, and be physically affected through and by the word. Phenomenological writing allows me, as a researcher, to capture the corporeal in the lived experience. Part of the phenomenological writing process, then, is to produce lived experience accounts that represent intersubjective truth, but also feel true for the writer and the readers. Merleau-Ponty elaborates: "In a fire, only the subject who is burned can feel the sensible sharpness of the pain. But everything that the burn represents: the menace of fire, the danger for the well-being of the body, the signification of the pain can be communicated to and felt by other people" (Merleau-Ponty, p. 47). Phenomenology seeks to bring to words meaning that can be felt in the body, to communicate a felt sense.

This communication happens through language. We feel it viscerally, in our bodies as a source of meaning. Although positivistic science leans toward a dualism of mind and body, leading us away from what is felt, ideas "would not be better known to us

if we had no body and no sensibility; it is then that they would be inaccessible to us” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 140). The body makes thought possible, bodiless, senseless objectivity impossible, and phenomenology recognizes this. It is with and through our embodiment that we are capable of deep, rich, full meaning, compassion, empathy, understanding. It is in our bodies that we feel and create versions of truth. Phenomenological writing allows that felt truth to be distilled in words that spark connections between ideas and people. I argue that all good writing must do this, and it is through a phenomenological exploration that we can get to the place where this writing surges forth through focused use of our bodies.

Phenomenology Sees the Body as a Ground for Experience

The body is the source and the processor of all our experiences, and yet it is also the ground for and location of all our experiences. The body is the channel through which we experience, and also the generator of our response. Thought, understanding, and being are called into action by our “posture, our stance, our gait and comportment, and in the thoughtful gestures of our hands” (Levin, 1985, p. 92). We can alter the world merely by our being aware, becoming visible, seeing and being seen. We alter by our presence anything we wish to see and attend to. Even as we immerse ourselves in the ideas and subjects that draw our interest, we become shaped by them, and new selves emerge from those ideas and subjects. We are filled and emptied by virtue of our bodily presence. We see and are seen, participate directly in the world we wish to understand. Merleau-Ponty states:

The visible can thus fill me and occupy me only because I who see it from the depths of nothingness, but from the midst of itself; I the seer am also visible. What makes the weight, the thickness, the flesh of each color, of each sound, of each tactile texture, of the present, and of the world is the fact that he who grasps

them feels himself emerge from them by a sort of coiling up or redoubling, fundamentally homogeneous with them; he feels that he is the sensible itself coming to itself and that in return the sensible is in his eyes as it were his double or an extension of his own flesh. (1964/1968, pp. 113-114)

In a continual circuit with the world, we create our perceptions and our perceptions create us in a coiling, spiraling transaction; the sensible world is both in us and from us, and with everything we gather, we also grow in our perception. Our perception is governed by vision, body awareness, perception of the self within one's own body, and the sensing body within the world.

We are in our bodies, and yet we are our bodies. The body is always here. The body is always now. The body is always contextualized, relationally situated among other (human and non-human) bodies. The body is “a thing that has a particular relation with things, and which furnishes us here with its mode, the zero point of orientation,” and, as such is “the absolute 'here'” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 75). As a ground for and starting point of experience, the body is also situated within a particular context. We are in our bodies, of our bodies, are our bodies, situated in a world, and that world is “the soil of our experience,” and “the living stock from which the objects are engendered”... and “the carrier of all possible” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 77). The body on the earth is a field within a field. As such, we are manifestations of the earth, on the earth. Phenomenology recognizes the inseparability of self from context, of body from mind, and of researcher from research. In this phenomenological work, I explore the embodied experience of others as an embodied researcher and participant. My body in motion shapes my experience; likewise, as a moving writer, it also shapes my words. In my thinking body, I engage deeply in the natural world, of which I am a product myself. I shape my world, and the world shapes me.

Phenomenology Contextualizes the Body as a Manifestation of Nature

The human body, a sentient body, is also a biologically functioning body and as such, is emplaced in the natural world. Much of moving meditation recognizes the natural body and the body in nature, in all its movements, senses, and awarenesses, emphasizing that “with every movement, there is also the noting mind, the awareness of the movement” (Silananda, 1995, p. 4). We are simultaneously aware of our bodies, our thoughts, the world, our movement through it.

Phenomenological philosophy recognizes, too, this sense of nature as a relational place and time through which we move. There exists a circuitous relationship established between human understanding and the natural world as “a sort of reciprocity between Nature and me as a sensing being. I am a part of Nature and function as any event of Nature; I am by my body part of Nature and the parts of Nature allow for them relations of the same type as those of my body with Nature” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 117).

We have an animal awareness, and yet we are more than animals. The human body is “a sensible thing,” that serves as a grounding, a starting point for all our understanding, and through which all understanding is processed. As “keystones” in the world, our bodies are the centers of our awareness, here and now. Nature is perceived as “a spatio-temporal unfurling” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 119), as it opens to and is drawn in by our awarenesses. In our bodies as we are, space and time “unfurl” ahead of us and behind us, spiraling out. This spiraling includes projections into our expectations for the future and reflections upon our perceptions of the past. Lived experience is that spiraling awareness.

By virtue of our human (as opposed to animal) awareness, we can both participate

in and reflect upon nature both inside and outside ourselves. We can orient ourselves in the circuit of the present time and space, the here and now, since “Nature presents a 'now' that serves as the model of the construction of time: and on the other hand, a spatial foyer, which means the definition of the present, to be here” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 117). Nature is perception, but also a process of becoming, of participation; it is always here, always now, as the body is always here, always now. Like the body, nature carries the past, present, and future together as one in a circuitous, constant process that has no beginning or end, so that “If we want to understand the process of Nature in itself, we could say that Nature is the memory of the world” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 120). This memory surfaces in the human body in a way that is not just evolutionary, but is also historical and archetypal, since we carry the evolution of the human animal in our mouths, minds, and bones:

In every human voice, there are echoes of the mother's tongue, echoes of significant teachers, respected elders, close friends; and there are accents, too, which bind the voice to the history of a region, a culture, and generations of ancestors. The athlete of today repeats the race of the Olympian torch-bearers, bearing the history of centuries in the very span of his body. The carpenter of today repeats the gestures of skill which have always constituted his handicraft; and it is only by the grace of that ancient gesture that he belongs to the tradition of the craft as it has been handed down from generation to generation across thousands of years... (Levin, 1985, p. 175)

We are Nature in a particularly human way that has been made manifest through centuries of unfurling, spiraling space, time, body, and human relationship. We are our bodies, and we carry in our bodies the bodies of our ancestors. Our bodies are nature, natural bodies. As embodied beings, we are centered in nature, and nature is centered in us. This shapes all our perception, understanding, sense of being in the world, and connects us to the elements in a reciprocal, spiraling manner. Inasmuch, “The Nature in

us must have some relation to Nature outside of us; moreover, Nature outside of us must be unveiled to us by the Nature that we are” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 206). And so, “By the Nature in us we can know Nature, and reciprocally it is from ourselves that living beings and even space speak to us” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 206). We know the world through our natural bodies, and our bodies are of the natural world.

The human body is an animal body, but also different from an animal body. Both the human and the animal body define action through and with a sensing being; however, the human body is interpretive, not merely reactionary. The human body is “armed with instruments of observation and action, thus, it is not a relation with a system of pre-established triggers,” as the animal body is; instead, the human body is “‘interpretation,’ the projection of a system of equivalences and of nonnatural discrimination” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, pp. 221-222). Our interpretations and perceptions are shaped by and shape our natural being in the world. As human animals, we are bound by our corporeal senses to perceive and interpret in a particular way. Furthermore, we communicate and understand by virtue of our bodies, since “the thickness of the body, far from rivaling that of the world, is on the contrary the sole means I have to go unto the heart of things, by making myself a world and by making them flesh” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 135).

Phenomenology recognizes both the presence of nature in us and us in the presence of nature; it is by and through our bodies that we perceive and create and communicate with our world. For practitioners of moving meditation, body movement through the natural world can provide inspiration and energy, as one runner demonstrates, stating: “I crossed the bridge and went down to the path by the river and felt an almost instant surge. Somehow the movement of the river was pulling me along” (Andrews,

1978, p. 18). Movement, meaning, and nature—the natural body in the natural world, are intertwined. If the natural human body, as well as its presence in nature, are critical to perception and communication, then the lack of nature and body in formalized learning is particularly troubling. Phenomenology, however, can help me as a researcher to conceptualize the presence of embodied beings in classrooms, particularly in the sense of the teaching of writing.

Phenomenology Can Allow for Motion as a Source of Meaning

The body is a source of meaning making, and meaning can manifest in movement of the body, which holds “a permanent and global power capable of realizing gestures that are endowed with a certain meaning” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 36). We recognize gestural movement as a source of meaning in our bodies and the bodies of others when “a body encountering its counterpart in another body which itself realizes its own intentions and suggests new intentions to the self” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 43). Levin (1985) characterizes this gestural meaning-making as mimetic understanding; we see examples of physical response and interaction in others' bodies, and we duplicate these in our own bodies in particular culturally appropriate and meditated ways. When I smile at you, for example, you are likely to smile back at me, even if we are complete strangers passing on the street. Likewise, some research shows that adopting certain gestures and postures can alter a person's mood or perceptions, even when there is no other person around to view those gestures. According to one study, changing body posture to a position of openness, of gathering power with arms wide and chest open, even for just two minutes, can increase testosterone levels and reduce the stress hormone cortisol, creating a surge of confidence that is felt both by the mover and others with whom he or

she interacts (Carney, Cuddy, & Yap, 2010).

So we make meaning in our bodies through gestures, but we also make meaning through our sensual awareness of everything around us, including information, ideas, other people; accordingly, our bodies, in all their gestures, define our relationship to the world. Therefore, “The body is not only a thing, but also a relation to an *Umwelt*...” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 209). An *Umwelt* is a self centered world, a mode or field of understanding that encloses and encapsulates the mind and perception. Our mobility is a part of our understanding of this world, and our movement shapes what and how we see, feel, hear, smell, taste, sense. Movement and perception are intertwined, then, since “The human body is thus a body that moves, and this means also a body that perceives” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 209). As we move through the world, we take in everything, perceiving, processing and projecting our awareness about the world around us. My morning run on a wooded path, for example, may bring me to a wild tangle of honeysuckle, the scent of which may evoke a childhood memory, the feel of my father's large, calloused hand as he showed me how to carefully pinch off a honeysuckle blossom to taste the nectar for which the plant is named. This memory rises from the motion and embodied perception, lived experience in electric interaction with my environment.

The body is “a subject of movement and a subject of perception,” both integrative and reflective, “touching-touched, seeing-seen, the place of a kind of reflection,” and as such is the source of understanding, but it also is a source of connection, with “the capacity to relate itself to something other than its own mass, to close its circuit on the visible, on a sensible exterior” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 209). The body generates meaning and relationship for us. We know by and through bodily orientation, perception,

motion, and the body is a circuit through which meaning moves.

The body is the measure of our understanding, and all understanding manifests within us, so that “Instead of a science of the world by relations contemplated from the outside (relations of space, for example), the body is the measurement of the world. I am open to the world because I am within my body” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 217). In other words, the body is not just the vehicle through which we move through the world or the origin of our understanding; rather, it is the standard by which we measure all we know. Our movements through the world are acts of meaning making measurement because “the flesh of the body makes us understand the flesh of the world” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 218). Focused movement meditation is not just physical exercise; it is also a “practice of opening oneself to the essential core of things, allowing space for the immediacy of perception, letting oneself go in the dynamic of elementary existential contexts growing out of tranquility and calmness” (Brinker, Kanazawa, & Leisinger, 1996, p.12). We can perceptively make meaning during focused body motion, receive inspiration, and synthesize information.

Human body movement, then, consciously or not, shapes our understanding, and also makes us who we are because “In every instant of movement there is a *conatus* toward an ulterior becoming, a something-in-motion making a circular trajectory that has a kind of memory” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 43). This movement, the circular trajectory, is the circuit of understanding and the “*conatus*,” or impulse, to become ever more ourselves: receiving, processing, releasing. With our bodies, we make meaning that is contextually constructed, within us and in response to and in communion with what is outside us. Moving meditation itself is a phenomenological experience because it situates

us in a particular space and time that allows the writing and rewriting of the text of our lives; we move to make ourselves and our understanding, and often, that understanding translates into words.

Phenomenology Can Address Words as Generated by the Body in the World

The physical and physiological construction of the human body makes language possible: biologically, we are languaged animals with vocal chords, mouths and organs shaped for sound. We do not have to think about the process of moving or writing or speaking before we do it: these are naturally occurring physical manifestations of mental thought. We do not have to tell ourselves how to move, and we do not have to tell ourselves how to speak. “Before making a movement, we do not represent the movement to ourselves; we do not envision the muscular contractions necessary for effacing it;” instead, we focus on the goal of that movement, what we hope to achieve, where we want to go, what we want to grasp, etc., and “similarly, to speak, we do not represent the sentence to ourselves before pronouncing it;” our words are called up from interactions with others in the environment (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 32). Our words surface from our bodies, surging up.

In this sense, the body serves a mechanical function, as does language, since “One makes use of his own body not as a mass of sensations, doubled by a kinesthetic image, but as a way of systematically going toward objects” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 35). Language, in this same mechanical sense, is a means of moving thought from one person to another, going toward understanding. And yet, we are witnesses to our own words in ways that we are not witnesses to our movements. We can revise. We can hear ourselves, process what we have heard, and re-articulate.

Our understanding is always under revision, as “during the process of perception and learning,” a person's “cognitive system cuts across brain-body-world divisions by constantly reconstituting the 'sensory world’” (Wermcrantz, 2010, p. 45). Our thinking is in constant reshaping based on our senses, and our thinking takes the form of language when we attempt to articulate our understanding to our selves and to others. This relationship between thought and language is circuitous and recursive: we shape our thoughts through language, and language shapes our thoughts by providing us with a lens through which to understand. As such, “Man acts as though he were the shaper of language, while in fact language remains the master of man” (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 144). Language allows us to define the world around us, and yet it mediates our understanding, our interactions, our insights. Language situates us in a particular place, time, and relationship of bodily awareness.

Language relies on nature, developed as a product of the perceiving and reflective body. It also relies on the environment and communication with others to shape it. Logical thought, then, is constructed through our interaction with the environment and is emergent in our bodies. Understanding “speaks in us rather than [we speak] it” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 212). Language forms as a way to construct thinking, as “We never come to thoughts. They come to us” (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 6). Language is the way thought surges forth, as a kind of bubbling up from inside, and creates the bodily sensation of “drawing, as of water from a spring” (Heidegger, p. 73). As a writer, for example, I know when my words match exactly the thoughts I hope to convey—when the diction, detail, or emphasis is right, I feel it in my body when the words are “right.” And when I achieve a flow state through movement mediations, the words come in a gush,

unsuppressed, unstoppable.

We learn language by sharing language; we learn the rules, names for things, we do not generally name anything ourselves or construct our own grammar. Thus, language is cultural, archetypal, ancestral, and physical, a function of a community of learners and not the individual speaker. As our primary and primal connection with other human beings, language drives human relationships, since “Language is wholly the will to understand and be understood [...] Thus language is not a transcendent reality with respect to all the speaking subjects; nor is it a phantasm formed by the individual. It is a manifestation of human intersubjectivity” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 97). Thought is changed by the presence of the thinker and through speaking, and understanding happens in articulation: “not outside us and not in us, but where the two movements cross, where 'there is' something” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 95). This is bodily manifestation, inside affected by outside, outside affected by inside. When what is inside emerges, it can manifest in inspiration as ideas, thoughts, and words that spontaneously surge to the surface of consciousness. This spontaneous inspiration can be sparked in moving meditation, in solitude, and it may also happen in conversation or in text based activity. Another person's words may set my mind to turning, triggering the “aha!” of insight. Likewise, my own movement of embodied thought, the rhythm of my feet and heartbeat, can generate words. Meaning is made through language in this way.

We engage understanding with and from our embodied awareness, using bodily metaphors and meaning structures to shape our experiences even of mental events. Johnson (1987) discusses this as image schemata. One pertinent example of an embodiment metaphor for cognitive events relates to our awareness of learning as a

physical trajectory, a movement both toward and through clarity. In the process of reasoning and learning (and also in the process of writing), “We understand the process of reasoning as a form of motion along a path—propositions are the locations (or bounded areas) that we start out from, proceed through, and wind up at” (Johnson, p. 38). The motion of thinking is closely connected to the motion of our bodies, so when we move and think, we are acting physically and metaphorically at once, body and thought aligned. Likewise, according to Johnson, we use body metaphors for emergent ideas; we feel them as a force inside our bodies: grasping an idea, receiving a stroke of insight, seeing the light.

Words enable us to fully engage our selves in the world and in our own awarenesses: “Language is an act of transcending. One cannot consider it simply as a container for thought; it is necessary to see language as an instrument for the conquest of self by contact with others” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 63). It is through and by language that we understand the world, our own selves, and other people as well as make ourselves understood. Speech, a physical, corporeal act, makes this possible because “the word is a body through which an intention appears. Speech is not simple automatism in the service of thought. It is the instrument of actualization of thought. Thought is truly realized only when it has found its verbal expression” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 75). Language is a manifestation of our existence, and language enables our relations with others. Language is given body by and through our embodied awareness. Words, bubbling up in our bodies, bring us more bodily in the world.

Phenomenology Can Center the Body in the Classroom

Drawing from the philosophical phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, O'Loughlin

(2006) makes an argument for the presence of the body in the classroom, in teaching and in research. She argues that humans, as languaged animals, embody a human animality, what she calls “creatural” existence. O’Loughlin defines features of the creatural as consisting of several elements, including the capacity for language, decision-making, and reason with “roots in that sensuous existence which is the distinguishing characteristic of all sentient beings” (p. 59). Creatural existence consists of connections among and between other beings and environments, a sense of place, “bodily intentionality and the relationships between and among all kinds of bodies which constitute specific sites for action” (O’Loughlin, p. 59). O’Loughlin also argues that creatural existence is traditionally downplayed in education, which “involves the disembodiment of school knowledge as curriculum, as well as the privileging of the abstract in human affairs” (p. 60).

Contemporary American society divides the body and the mind into factions: the body, in education, is viewed as a “distraction” (Levin, 1985, p. 228). We seek in schooling to control and conform the body—or even to deny its use. When we do incorporate the body in schooling—in PE classes, or technical crafts—it is as a tool, not as a source of understanding. It is “reduced to the function of calculative thinking” (Levin, p. 229). We see it mechanically, as a tool through which acts are carried out, not as the charged and surging center of all our understanding. Levin argues that truly moral education should address the whole person, appealing to our primordial felt sense of motility and morality—our capability for movement, our embodied understandings, and our interactions with others.

There is wisdom in our bodies that we do not use in schools, and it is important to

note that “A well-balanced mind, clear and steady, requires a well-balanced body...” (Levin, 1985, p. 270). Healthy bodies yield robust thoughts. Furthermore, an educational system that recognizes the body may also be able to connect us to our best selves, to one another, to the past, the present and the future. The body in the classroom may hold the possibility of tapping into lived time, lived body, lived space, and lived human relation, recognizing “...rich potential relations between thinking and the body; the way one person's act can be an invitation to another's imagination,” by grounding us in place and space and acknowledging “the way each act reflects and reinvents the culture in which it takes place” (Solnit, 2001, p. 644). Allowing and encouraging students to feel, sense, and understand in embodied ways may allow them to “know the world from the inside” and can reveal “that we can come to know the deeper structure of the universe only through our own body and senses and living experience” (Sheehan, 1998, p. 218). The moving body opens the senses, engages the moving mind, surges learning forward and into the circuit of the spiraling world.

This embodiment extends beyond student learning of content; it is also manifest in interactions between students as embodied beings and teachers as embodied beings. Humanity should be manifest in the teacher's presence, “so that it visibly graces her stance and gestures, and she is visibly moved by it” in order to teach it by example (Levin, 1985, p. 238). Compassion, empathy, understanding are physical responses, are communicated physically, and are learned by mimesis. We must cultivate a “felt sense of being with others in a primordial intercorporeality” (Levin, p. 239). Intersubjectivity, in this sense, is also a kind of inter-corporeality. When students see teachers are embodied beings, in the whirl of the world, making sense and learning themselves, a precedent is

set for a specific kind of wholeness in the classroom. It has long been a belief of the National Writing Project as well as other process writing theorists that students of writing must see their teachers as writers in order to see their own possibilities; just as importantly, students must see teachers are people, with lives and bodies, in order to develop whole senses of themselves. A phenomenological approach to this research allows me, as embodied teacher, researcher, writer, and movement practitioner, to engage other teachers in embodied awareness and writing practices, to see them as their writerly, bodily selves, and to hear the words generated from their bodies and lived experiences.

Phenomenology is Wholistic

In a research and school climate that emphasizes duality over wholeness, the body is often seen as separate from the mind, as a tool for the mind's use, or as an encumbrance to rational perception. The phenomenological tradition presents the body and mind as indivisible; our bodies are our selves, can not be reduced to the status of mere sense instruments. In a study that attempts to understand what it means for movement to be an agent of thought, body-mind wholeness is critical to understanding. Phenomenology recognizes that the duality of thinking that separates mind from body is inappropriate for making meaning, in the classroom and in research.

Cartesian duality is not appropriate for the study of nature and human nature, and that the human body exists as a thinking body centered in the world. This research strives for seeing the body in the midst of the world, and wholeness of persons in nature, since “The body is nature at work within us” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 83). Living reveals a wholeness of meaning that can only be understood bodily because “the body is an existence that has a statute different from other beings and that only the use of life can

reveal to us” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 83). We are not separate from our human nature, and so we can not study it objectively, can not reduce it to parts. The distinction between physical body and rational mind, between inner and outer being is false. Simply, we are our bodies. Cartesianism “decomposes the body also into a network of objective processes” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 26). Phenomenology, on the other hand, recognizes the body as wholeness.

Because we are our feeling, sensing bodies, we can look to objective, quantitative science to begin our understanding, but empirical science is not enough. In human sciences research: “...as soon as it is a question of the living being and of the body, and a fortiori of man, it is indeed clear that no fruitful research is pure inductivity, a pure inventorying of constants in themselves” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 116). We may make assumptions and draw conclusions, but we also must recognize that these are only possibilities, affected and shaped by our embodied presence in a particular time, space, and situation. To understand what something means, we must recognize our presence as embodied beings in the midst of our questions: “The concern of the philosopher is to see; that of the scientist is to find a foothold. His thinking is directed by the concern not of seeing but of intervening” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 87). To see what something means, to observe, engage, and interpret, is the goal of phenomenology. It is a wholeness of research and researcher, since “subject and object are integrated—what I see is interwoven with how I see it, with whom I see it, and with whom I am. My perception, the thing I perceive, and the experience or act interrelate” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 59). Lived experience, too, is a wholeness, since “The flow of experience has the character of a universal horizon consciousness, and only from it is the discrete experience given as an

experience at all” (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 237). Every thing that happens is within the context of life as it is lived. We can not separate ourselves from our understandings, from our lives as we live them. Moving meditation, too, requires careful observation and movement toward wholeness, to silence the churning mind and silently notice what happens, allowing meaning to be generated. As observers of our own movement, we can notice anew what we may have missed, make new meaning, and be present and wholly ourselves in the immediate moment.

Additionally, phenomenology recognizes that there is no pure research situation. The researcher and subject matter do not exist in a duality, any more than the body is separate from the mind in a duality. To distinguish is incomprehensible—full perception is incomprehensible. Phenomenology is an attempt to understand a whole of living, and the work of phenomenology involves “explorations into the structure of the human lifeworld, the lived world as it is experienced in everyday situations and relations,” and, those explorations can reveal “the immense complexity of the lifeworld,” a wholeness of understanding (van Manen, 1997, p. 101).

We are bound by our humanness and by our positionality in the world; our bodies affect our research endeavors because our bodies are our positionality. Our bodies mediate and process all our understandings, are themselves a wholeness. In doing phenomenological research, I must

render explicit the cohesion of the obverse and reverse of my body which is responsible for the fact that my body—which is visible, tangible like a thing—acquires this view upon itself, this contact with itself, where it doubles itself up, unifies itself, in such a way that the objective body and the phenomenal body turn about one another or encroach on one another. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 117)

The body “doubles up” as both object and subject, sensor and sensed, gatherer, processor,

and transmitter of information. The body as a circuit takes in information, integrates that information, and releases new information back out into the world. Further, the body also senses itself as it does so. The body is origin of sense and maker of meaning, serving a complex range of functions. This subject-object complexity makes objectivity impossible and wholeness inevitable. It also makes experience rich and meaningful, embedded in our sensing-sensed meaning-making bodies. It is our embodied awareness that allows us to engage in a “circular relationship” with lifeworld texts, so that “the anticipation of meaning in which the whole is envisaged becomes actual understanding when the parts that are determined by the whole themselves also determine this whole” (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 291). We are able to move close, examining parts; we are able to step back, see the whole.

Fundamentally, phenomenology is a search for “wholeness, with examining entities from many sides, angles, and perspectives until a unified vision of the essences of a phenomenon or experience is achieved” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 58). It is also transformative, for when we question, we transform the world. When our bodies come into contact with other bodies, we transform one another. When we practice moving meditation, we transform our bodies and our awarenesses. And when we write, we transform thought. Writing transforms thought in the same way that body transforms perception, in the same way that phenomenology transforms understanding:

If there is an ideality, a thought that has a future in me, that even breaks through my space of consciousness and has a future with the others, and finally, having become a writing, has a future in every possible reader, this can be only that thought that leaves them with their hunger, that betokens a generalized buckling of my landscape and opens it to the universal, precisely because it is rather an *unthought*. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 119)

This circular relationship, movement toward wholeness of body, of research, and of

understanding is critical. Phenomenology recognizes that wholeness and the circular pattern in which it moves: “There is a circular relation between Being and beings” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 134).

Phenomenology is a Circuit

The metaphor of the circuit has so far guided this work. I discuss the body, breath, language, and moving meditation as circuits through which we engage. Like the body, breath, language, text, reading and writing processes, like moving meditation, phenomenological research is also a circuit, a recursive understanding that influences and is influenced by our being in the world and affects the way we engage with lifeworld texts and lived experiences. Phenomenological meaning-making is a “circular movement of understanding” that moves current-like and “runs backward and forward along the text, and ceases when the text is perfectly understood,” then spiraling out into interpretation (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 293). Phenomenology as a method circulates through our understanding just as we circulate in the lifeworld. The body generates phenomenological understanding by virtue of being “an exemplar sensible, which offers him who inhabits it and senses it the wherewithal to sense everything that resembles himself on the outside, such that, caught up in the tissue of things, it draws entirely to itself, incorporates it, and with the same movement, communicates to the things...” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, pp. 135-136). In phenomenology, as in the body, the within and without converge. Phenomenology is a theory of the mind that shows “the mind in a relationship of reciprocal exchange with the instruments it uses, but uses only while rendering to them what it has received from them, and more” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 7). This reciprocity in rendering is circular, cyclical, and spiraling.

Phenomenology “involves coming into contact with the facts, understanding them in themselves, reading them, and interpreting them so as to give them a meaning” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 8). This is a circuit of interpretation. It is not enough to observe and measure, because “attending exclusively to the measurable is insufficient for a description of the phenomenon in its entirety” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 9). Understanding through lifeworld texts must process through the researcher because “we cannot separate out our human attitudes” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 9). The hermeneutic circle of phenomenological reflection is a circuit, which moves us through meaning, which spirals to us, within us, and from us. In its movement, “The circle of whole and part is not dissolved in perfect understanding, but, on the contrary, is most fully realized. The circle, then, is not formal in nature. It is neither subjective nor objective, but describes understanding as the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter” (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 293). In this sense, then, the circle does not disappear once one understands, but becomes clearer instead; it indicates a generative circuit rather than a closed loop. Phenomenology allows this generation of meaning in a wholistic, transactional, circuitous way.

Qualitative knowledge as revealed by phenomenology “is not subjective; it is intersubjective. It describes that which is observable by all” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 10). Lifeworld experience is drawn from the world, integrated into a researcher and a research context, and released back into the world, and language is the circuit through which it is communicated. When we write carefully, using fully the circuitous process, we come closest to true description of lived experience. As such, phenomenology brings us more deeply in the circuit of the world, in the circuit of ourselves.

Researching Lived Experience: van Manen's Framework for Research

Although I introduced this framework briefly in chapter 1 in order to guide this study, I would like to return to van Manen's methodology as a way of refining thought and ideas in light of phenomenology as a philosophical approach. According to van Manen (1997), phenomenology seeks to make explicit description of real lives and find in those lives some universal meaning. Phenomenology “appeals to our immediate common experience in order to construct a structural analysis of what is most common, most familiar, most self-evident to us. The aim is to construct an animating, evocative description (text) of human actions, behaviors, intentions, and experiences as we meet them in the lifeworld” (p. 19). It is not intended to be empirically analytic, to speculate, to problem solve, or to define (van Manen). Rather, phenomenology seeks to provide rich, interpretive description that uncovers the particular and the universal in the lived experience. Instead of asking: “Why?” or “What does this prove?” or “How can this be corrected?” phenomenology asks “What does this mean? What does life mean? What does it mean to be human?”

Van Manen (1997) expresses that while there is no standard methodology for conducting phenomenological research, he recommends a set of methodological guidelines that draw from the tradition of the field. These six guidelines or research activities are not meant to be pursued in a linear fashion or pursued in isolation, nor are they rigidly fixed; instead, they are woven together throughout the research process and the written expression of phenomenological research. They are recursive. I again return to van Manen's six methodological guidelines, which involve:

1. turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;

2. investigating experience as it is lived rather than as it is conceptualized;
3. reflecting on essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
4. describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting;
5. maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation;
6. balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (pp. 30-31)

A further elaboration of these guidelines follows.

Turning to a Phenomenon which Interests Us and Commits Us to the World

Van Manen states that “Phenomenological research is a being-given-over to some quest, a true task, a deep questioning of something that restores an original sense of what it means to be a thinker, a researcher, a theorist” (1997, p. 31). The researcher is immersed in and inseparable from the research, with “no middle ground between the blind being of the thing and the being of the subject who makes use only of himself in order to know” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 43). A researcher comes to a phenomenon with her own deep conceptions and significant engagement, turning her understanding in such a way that she orients herself toward the phenomenon with a personal kind of interest, a care that “implies a particular interest, vantage point, or station in life” (van Manen, p. 40). That interest calls to the phenomenologist's own understandings and passions in a way that is more humanistic than scientific, since “science is and always has been that admirably active, ingenious, and bold way of thinking whose fundamental bias is to treat everything as though it were an object in general—as though it meant nothing to us and yet was predestined for our own use” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 159). In contrast, phenomenology treats everything as if it has meaning, as if it holds possibilities, as if it is something in which we must meaningfully engage.

Phenomenological inquiry begins with the researcher's own deep care. Inquisitive interest, however, is not enough to find the phenomenological significance of lived

experience; to expound upon one's own interests is personal reflection, memoir, and not phenomenological writing. A phenomenological researcher must express the phenomenon not only as it resides in her life, but also as it resides in the intersubjective lives of others who experience it. She must

recall the experience in such a way that the essential aspects, the meaning structures of this experience as lived through, are brought back, as it were, and in such a way that we recognize this description as a possible experience, which means as a possible interpretation of that experience. This is then the task of phenomenological research and writing: to construct a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience. (van Manen, 1997, p. 41)

Serious interest is followed by commitment to the world, to dwelling in that experience of interest with others who share it and who also seek to experience and to understand it. To do this, one must recognize her own preconceptions, assumptions, and pre-understandings; while those things that engage us can pique our interests, they can also lead us to make connections and draw conclusions before we gather enough information from sources outside our own understandings. Gadamer (1960/2006) advocates an approach of aware “sensitivity” to our own pre-understandings, that we not rely on our own “fore-meanings” because they may distort our concept of meaning; this is an aware engagement that does not deny one's own experience (p. 271). Instead, “this kind of sensitivity involves neither 'neutrality' with respect to content nor the extinction of oneself, but the foregrounding and appropriation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices” (Gadamer, p. 271).

The phenomenologist must formulate and live in continually evolving questions that both center her in and separate her from the experience, aware of her questions as she is aware of herself. Phenomenological research must consist of questions, because “to truly question something is to interrogate something from the heart of our existence, from

the center of our being” (van Manen, 1997, p. 43). Phenomenological research must also acknowledge that as we learn more, we change as our questions change. Our comprehension is reflective and always unfolding.

Through conversations with others, through language and literature, through history and art, the phenomenological researcher seeks to uncover questions, to follow the thread of the questions that are sparked by and are generated in her exploration of a phenomenon. In chapter 1, I begin my exploration by turning toward the broad, overarching question: *What is the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing?* Using this question as a guide, I illuminate my own experiences as a runner, writer, thinker, and teacher in the circuit of movement meditation. I ask questions about how this phenomenon manifests for me, about how it can be applied in other lives, about whether I am alone in my conception and experience of it. Questions generate more questions: I dwell in them, allowing them to surge forth. In chapter 2, I continue to stand in my spiraling questions, harnessing their energy to illuminate the phenomenon in literature, others' experiences, and other texts. And still, more questions are generated. In chapter 4, I ask these questions of others, the conversants who participate in experiencing this phenomenon with me, and our conversations generate ever more questions, spiraling out.

As questions give way to more questions, in a continuing exploration, the phenomenologist finds herself closer to the world and closer to her self: “Every question, even that of simple cognition, is part of the central question that is ourselves” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 104). The constant living in the questions allows the phenomenologist to investigate lived experience because questions represent the

unknowable in all knowing; questions generate more questions in the unending, cyclical, circuitous process of making meaning. When we run out of questions, it is because we have ceased to pay attention, because “the essence of the question is to open up possibilities and keep them open” (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 298). Thus, the phenomenological work signifies a possible interpretation that is particular, fixed in time, place, body, and relationship with the researcher, the phenomenon, and conversants; additionally, its questions remain open, generating more questions, moving beyond the scope of what one particular work can do.

Investigating Experience as It Is Lived Rather Than as It Is Conceptualized

Phenomenology, according to Merleau-Ponty (2007b), “tries to give a direct description of our experience as it already is, without taking account of its psychological genesis and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian, or the sociologist may be able to provide” (p. 55). Phenomenological inquiry seeks to describe experience in a way other sciences do not: it does not look for cause, for explanation, or for replicability. It merely seeks to describe a phenomenon as it always already is, to uncover the essence of the phenomenon, which van Manen describes as “that what makes a thing what it is rather than its being or becoming something else” (1997, p. 177). The essence of an experience of movement meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing, for example, must have some characteristic that transcends the particular moment of experience for each person—the common sparks that shine across particular experiences of the phenomenon may represent essential elements. The task of phenomenology is to describe that distilled essence. To do this, one must hold a moment, illuminate it, turn it, view it, inspect it from many angles, and describe for readers the whole of the thing as it

is, already, without preconception, without judgment, without prejudice.

Quantifiable evidence is not a pursuit here; phenomenology renders a description that engages the phenomenon. This is meaning making, but it isn't "the one" answer or the "correct" answer: "Phenomenology would not seek to explain the world, but to describe as closely as possible the way the world makes itself evident to awareness, the way things first arise in our direct, sensorial experience" (Abram, 1996, p. 35). The phenomenologist shows what it looks like, how it feels—reveals the sounds, smells, tastes, sensations.

To do this, the phenomenologist must use as material the lived experience descriptions of those immersed in the phenomenon of interest. She may start with her own experiences, but only insofar as they radiate the possible lived experiences of others. According to van Manen (1997), lived experience descriptions may be collected from a range of sources, including literature, art, history, cultural phenomena, biography, etymology, idiom, metaphor, phenomenological and philosophical writings, or the personal accounts of others, through written descriptions, conversations, or observation. In chapter 2, I engage works of theory, of walking writers, poetry, lived experience accounts, conversations with writers, and philosophical texts to illuminate the phenomenon of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing. I converse with these texts in relationship to my evolving questions. In chapter 4, it is the conversations with teacher-writers engaged in moving meditation that engage my interpretations.

It must be noted that hermeneutic conversation takes on some special purpose and significance, as opposed to everyday conversations. It is not an argument and it is not a

simple interview; it is an opening of the self to the questions and to the other. Gadamer (1960/2006) discusses hermeneutic conversation as a dialogue in which participants engage as equals dwelling in questions, and through continual questioning, create shared meaning that is not final, but gives way to more questions. These questions shape not just the conversation and meaning, but also they shape the conversants themselves, because “To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were” (Gadamer, p. 371). This meaning-making is shared understanding, transformative, and intersubjective.

The lived experience descriptions of others, according to Merleau-Ponty (1995/2003) provide us with access to the invisible, the intersubjective. Through them, we may begin to make meaning, to reveal what is obscured and common:

Language, art, history gravitate around the invisible (ideality): difficult relations of the invisible and the visible technical apparatuses that it constructs. This makes us advance toward the obscure center of subjectivity and intersubjectivity—ideal intersubjectivity held together by noncorporeity, internal to noncorporeity—ideal, correlative, virtual beings of symbolism organized around them, sustained by it, configurations of this new landscape. (Merleau-Ponty, p. 228)

This gathering of lived experience materials allows the researcher access to the life worlds of others, and yet, van Manen reminds, “Lived experience description is not phenomenological description. Lived experience descriptions are data, or material with which to work” (1997, p. 55). Once collected, through the circular processes of questioning, writing, and rewriting, the researcher may begin to reflect on the phenomenon in such a way as to “grasp the essential meaning of something” and convey that meaning to others (van Manen, p. 77). My conversations with English composition teachers, as we become immersed together in the process of moving meditation for

finding a flow in thinking and writing, yield experience accounts charged with potential for phenomenological rendering; additionally, the journal entries of conversants generate conversation, questions, and sparks for more conversation and phenomenological reflection.

Reflecting on Essential Themes which Characterize the Phenomenon

The essence of something is an element without which the thing can not remain unchanged. Merleau-Ponty (1964) states: “In order to grasp an essence, we consider a concrete experience, and then we make it change in our thought, trying to imagine it as effectively modified in all respects. That which remains invariable through these changes is the essence of the phenomena in question” (p. 70). The qualities of a phenomenon which transcend thought and questioning through multiple sources and accounts are essential elements.

Phenomenology seeks to reveal the narrative dimensions of real lives. In doing so, phenomenological writing suspends the moment as someone lives it, and uncovers and reveals the essence of the lived phenomenon, elaborating upon the common understanding of its relevance, possibility, and depth. Both descriptive and interpretive, phenomenological writing is conscious, deep, thoughtful, but not necessarily a singularly true interpretation of the phenomenon. There is no universal fact, but there is a common kernel of awareness, or intersubjectivity.

Phenomenological writing dwells in essences in order to uncover meaning. Essences are uncovered through reflective work and questioning with life experience accounts as material. These accounts may be written words, conversations, interactions, or meditations on all kinds of texts, spoken, written, or otherwise produced. In the history

of phenomenology, the understanding of essences has evolved. Husserl's concept of essence was such that it implied a universal, contextless, original essence present in every thing. Husserl's essence, in the reductive view, is unchanging. For this research, essence is contextual, shared, and created in meaning that reflects particular people in a particular place, time, and situation. In this sense, phenomenology is a “search for the essence, or meaning, but not apart from the facts. Finally this essence is accessible only in and through the individual situation in which it appears” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 95). There are many essences possible, and the ones I discover may be unique to my participants, myself, and our shared intersubjectivity as teachers of English and composition who experience moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing.

Even so, the uncovering and describing of essences require me to move beyond my own particular understanding and into the intersubjective understanding of a phenomenon:

In so far as the essence is to be grasped through a lived experience; it is a concrete knowledge. But in so far as I can grasp something through this experience which is more than a contingent fact, an intelligible structure that imposes itself on me whenever I think of the intentional object in question, I gain another kind of knowledge. I am then not enclosed in the particularity of my individual life, and I attain an insight which holds for all men. I get beyond my singularity not in so far as my consciousness is merely a series of facts or events but in so far as these events have a sense. The intuition of essences is simply a regaining of this sense, which is not thematized in our spontaneous, unreflective thinking. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 55)

Van Manen (1997) recommends thematic analysis as a means of revealing the essence of phenomena, and he discusses “four existentials that may prove especially helpful as guides for reflection in the research process: lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality or communality)” (p. 101). Van Manen elaborates on each of these existentials as elements

of the world as we perceive and experience it, rather than elements of the world as can be qualitatively measured. These existentials refer more to a particular sense of living rather than the objective understanding of each; the existential elements are the ways in which and the lenses through which we see and perceive the world.

Lived space refers to the sense of a place and its effect upon us: a forest, for example, may evoke a feeling of expansive vastness and connection with the transcendent, as seen in chapter 2, exemplified in Miki's encounter with the owl. Lived body refers to our embodied being in the world: we are never without our bodies, and our bodies mediate all information we receive. Writing and inspiration rely on felt sense, the bodily understanding that the right word fits, the surging forward and release of a productive thought, felt bodily. As documented in previous chapters, when words or ideas seem to gush forth, or bubble up in us, the physical pull of needing to put pen to page—these are examples of lived body. Lived time is subjective time rather than clock time and may refer to the sense of timelessness we feel during total engagement in an activity of moving meditation or writing, or the slow ticking of the clock as we wait for an event to begin, or as we wait for inspiration, stuck wordless and blocked. Lived time describes the sensation of movement through the labyrinth, as the slow walk generates a stilling calm throughout the body, a slowing down of the mind. Lived human relation refers to our perceptions of others as bodied beings in the world; how we approach one another, in what context, and with what gestures. Lived relation binds writer to audience and purpose, binds teacher to student. Lived human relation is essential to this study by virtue of the embodied nature of the writing and learning I explore, as well as the interaction implications for pedagogical relationships. Reflection upon these essential

themes can reveal information about how we live in the world as we experience the world and its significance to our relationships with the world and others in it. The phenomenologist works with these themes through text, the text of lived lives transformed through hermeneutic writing.

Describing the Phenomenon through Writing and Rewriting

Phenomenology is a language-based process. Thought is tied to language, in that “language is in the house of Being,” and “we reach what is by constantly going through this house. When we go to the well, when we go through the woods, we are always already going through the word 'well,' through the word 'woods,' even if we do not speak the words and do not think of anything relating to language” (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 129). All we know is shaped by the words we speak, and likewise, the words shape our world. “All beings, each in its own way, are qua objects in the precinct of language,” and language facilitates an inward turning, a look into “the innermost region of the heart's space can be accomplished, if anywhere, only in this precinct” (Heidegger, pp. 129-130). In a circuit of understanding, language brings us back to the things we talk or write about, and language brings us back to ourselves. By looking out, we look in, and by writing about something outside ourselves, we also write about ourselves.

In phenomenological writing, the lived experience texts of others' words gives way to the phenomenological text through writing and re-writing. Language represents, expresses, and appeals to or connects us with others. Van Manen posits that “Language is the only way by which we can bring pedagogic experience into a symbolic form that creates by its very discursive nature a conversational relation” (1997, p. 111). Even so, our language can not ever quite represent the whole of an experience or understanding,

since “the totality of meaning is never fully rendered: there is an immense mass of implications, even in the most explicit of languages; or rather, nothing is ever completely expressed, nothing exempts the subject who is listening from taking the initiative of giving an interpretation” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 29). We carry within us a much more complex understanding than anything our language can possibly express, and yet we try. Successful language is the point at which the internal potential comes closest to the external expression; successful phenomenological writing seeks to come as close to tangible, understandable, relatable expression as possible. This means that phenomenological writing must illuminate and describe, as accurately as possible, the essence of the lived experience of those moments and lives examined; it must interpret the shared understanding of place, time, body, and human relationship. Phenomenology provides an interpretive description of the intersubjective meaning of phenomena, and it does so through the writing and rewriting of text.

Merleau-Ponty discusses the role of language in expressing the significance of phenomena, as a kind of truth, a means of revealing the world and as a purpose of philosophy:

Because he has experienced within himself the need to speak, the birth of speech as bubbling up at the bottom of his mute experience, the philosopher knows better than anyone that what is lived is lived-spoken, that, born at this depth, language is not a mask over being, but—if one knows how to grasp it with all its roots and all its foliation—the most valuable witness to Being, that it does not interrupt an immediation that would be perfect without it, that the vision itself, the thought itself, as has been said, 'structured as a language,' are articulation before the letter, appearance of something where there was nothing or something else. (1964/1968, p. 126)

Although I am a beginning phenomenologist, I feel, as Merleau-Ponty describes, the need to speak the meaning of what I experience; writing allows me to work, rework, revise,

and re-see until the language feels true, is from the heart. When I find a thinking-writing flow during movement meditation, it is that deep, lived-spoken language that comes forth. When I write in a way that is true to that which I seek to describe, the lived experience phenomenon and the language I use to interpret it are as close as possible in meaning. Likewise, the circuitous working and reworking of phenomenological writing allows me to make meaning from those thoughts. The hermeneutic process provides new meaning, the “apparition of something where there was nothing or something else,” and as such, hermeneutic language is “the most valuable witness to Being” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 126). Through interpretive language, I harness what it means to be a moving writer, engaged in the circuit of making meaning.

This interpretive, meaning-making writing is set apart from other kinds of research writing. Philosophy “must uncover the meaning of those phenomena which are described by scientists. The role of philosophy is to reconstitute the world just as the physicist sees it, but with the 'fringe' which the physicist does not mention and which is furnished by his contact with the qualitative world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 10). While the scientist sees the general, the phenomenologist sees the particular, the unique, as well as the intersubjective, and phenomenology expresses that particular “fringe” through language.

Language is all around us, as “there ranges round the earth and unbridled yet clever talking, writing, and broadcasting of spoken words” (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 213). Language whirls around us in the very air, as “We encounter language everywhere. Hence it cannot surprise us that as soon as man looks thoughtfully about himself at what is he quickly hits upon language, too, so as to define it by a standard reference to its overt

aspects” (Heidegger, p. 187). Language comes to us from out of the world, and yet also enables us to define the world and to engage in the world through thoughtful looking and reflection. We draw in language, process language, and release language like breath. It is a point of reference, but it is also transactional, reflexive, and transformative, insofar as “Reflection tries to obtain an idea of what language is universally. The universal that holds for each thing is called its essence or nature. To represent universally what holds universally is [...] the basic feature of thought” (Heidegger, pp. 187-188). Language that brings us closest to the essence of thought is also language that is closest to truth, a kind of universal that is intersubjective.

Language is the joining of the inner and outer, the visible and invisible. Still, we can only approximate in words what we live in experience, insofar as “Words are physical phenomena that give rise to an accidental, fortuitous, and conventional link between the sense of the word and its physical aspect. Communication of consciousness is not possible; my words simply give other people a chance to remember what they already know” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 4). I can describe and interpret the nature of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing, and in doing so, I can provide insight into my own and others' lived experience. Nonetheless, I can never completely offer an account that is exactly the same as what is lived. As Merleau-Ponty illustrates, I can not communicate my consciousness, my being in the phenomenon of moving meditation for writing; the best I can do is offer words. Others will experience my understanding, translated to text, through the lenses of their own circuits of consciousness, what they already know.

This is not to say there is not meaning to be found in interpretive texts, even if the

best we can do is approximate what we live and experience. We can find authentic meaning in deep discussion with others and engagements with lifeworld texts because “Genuine conversation gives me access to thoughts that I did not know myself capable of, that I was not capable of, and sometimes I feel myself followed in a route unknown to myself which my words, cast back by the other, are in the process of tracing out for me” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 13). It may be that the engaging conversation that takes place in the process of phenomenological writing reveals more than we think we know; in the act of writing and rewriting, an in sharing that writing with conversants, we find what we can not articulate through our own, singular awareness. By speaking, listening, reviewing, and revising, more meaning comes to light. Thus, in phenomenological research, conversants and researcher create meaning collaboratively, and that meaning is intersubjective. The intersubjective text of phenomenology reveals what we can not see through objective scientific language and thinking and transforms the personal “I” into the intersubjective “we.”

Phenomenological writing has the capacity to shape our understanding and to fix it, but also to give new insight. Levin says: “In reading and writing, in the very gestures themselves, we are claimed by those qualities [patience, reserve, etc. as valued by the culture], but claimed precisely in and through our freedom; and our character is ordered, formed and in-formed, by way of a mimesis which incarnates its rationality, deeply inscribing it into our body of awareness” (1985, p. 190).

Van Manen (1997) discusses phenomenological writing as a method which “mediates reflection and action” (p. 124). In doing so, the writing builds a bridge between “What happened?” and “What does it mean?” To write phenomenologically, according to

van Manen is to live in the paradox of the questions by the following practices: separating self from understanding and also delving more deeply into understanding; distancing self from the lifeworld and also moving more deeply into the lifeworld; providing both distance from experience and depth of practice; abstracting and concretizing understanding; objectifying experience into text and subjectifying text into engagement. Through thoughtful and reflective writing centered around lived experience accounts, we transform collection into recollection and provide intersubjective substance to subjective moments. To do this, we must write and rewrite; truly, revision in this sense represents re-vision, a kind of seeing again. Composing is difficult, for sure, because it “consists not only in the difficulty of forming the work of language, but in the difficulty of going over from the saying work of the still covetous vision of things, from the work of the eyes, to 'the work of the heart'” (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 136). This work of the heart that can be found in thoughtful writing and careful revision. Moving from the saying of speech (the impulsive or shallow first draft) to the stilling revision of text in writing is a kind of deepening truth. Revision is re-seeing both one's work and one's understanding. Revision is revealing, re-working, until the felt sense of truth emerges.

Phenomenological writing, as one delves into and dwells in the work of writing and rewriting, brings forth new ideas in a kind of bubbling up of language. This language that bubbles up “brings to the surface all the deep rooted relations of the lived experience wherein it takes form, and which is the language of life and of action but also that of literature and of poetry—then this logos is an absolutely universal theme, it is the theme of philosophy” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 126). This writing is collective (shared) in understanding, recollective (remembered), and orients toward a particular purpose. In this

work, I engage others' writing, my own writing, and philosophical texts to uncover the phenomenon of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing. Through multiple visions and re-visions, I seek an experience that reveals the intersubjective truth that speaks in the voice of written and literary tradition, through philosophical work, and gathers power from the writing and conversations of the teachers who choose to walk and write with me.

Maintaining a Strong and Oriented Pedagogical Relation

Van Manen (1997) discusses phenomenology for the human sciences as a response to research methodologies that remove the learner from the research or produce theory that is separate from practice. Education in the form of human science research must convince us of what is evident, valid, but not necessarily generalizable; it should reveal the experience of learning as it exists in learners' lives. As such, researchers cannot separate themselves from the research any more than they can separate learning from learner.

Van Manen asserts that “Researchers and theorists tend to forget that pedagogy is an embodied practice and that pedagogical research and theorizing, too, are pedagogic forms of life” (1997, p. 139). Because we can not separate ourselves from our embodied being, we must acknowledge that teachers are bodies that teach student bodies. Likewise, because we can not separate the researcher from the research, teachers who are also researchers see through the lens of pedagogical need.

Phenomenological research is “the art of finding arguments and serves to develop the sense of what is convincing, which works instinctively and *ex tempore*, and for that very reason cannot be replaced by science” (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 19). As such,

phenomenological research necessarily deals with the particular, what is meaningful, felt, and timely; it can not be replaced by research that seeks to generalize across facts, among people, and throughout different places and times. For pedagogical research, this means that we must develop the sense of what is convincing with an eye toward teaching and learning—what works or is resonant in particular classrooms, or, in this research, with particular teachers with particular goals.

As researchers, then, we can uncover the particular by attending closely to the intersubjective, lived experience, “developing a communal sense of what is true and right, which is not a knowledge based on argumentation, but enables one to discover what is evident” (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 19). When we describe accurately what we see and hear, experience and observe, the “proof” of phenomenology “will be in our fidelity to the phenomena, that is, in the precise hold which we will have of the materials used, and, to some extent, in our 'proximity' to pure description” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 8). That proximity, van Manen (1997) argues, can be found through the writing and rewriting of phenomenological texts that are oriented in certain ways. They are written from a perspective that is “oriented to the world in a pedagogic way,” strongly oriented toward questions of how one interacts with learners, and deeply connected to the experience of the research and researcher (van Manen, p. 151).

The text that maintains a strong and oriented pedagogic relation gives the researcher and the reader access to a communal sense—intersubjectivity—an essence, shared understanding, the collective sense of what is. To look at the lived experience of teaching and learning from a phenomenological perspective means to see the particular learner, in a particular situation, as he or she learns, feels, breathes, and lives, and then to

express that experience in such a way that resonates beyond the individual learner or research in an intersubjective, impactful way. As a writer, I know that movement meditation works for me when I need to find a way to free a flow of thought and words; as a classroom teacher, I struggled to connect my moving meditation practice and writing practice to my classroom practice for students. The more I have spoken with others and read about moving meditation, however, the more I have begun to believe that what happens to me as a writer when I move is not limited to me. Because this is something that happens for and to other writers, it approaches the intersubjective. It is my intention to orient this research toward pedagogy by working with writer-teachers, practicing moving meditation, and in conversation applying what we learn to the teaching setting they inhabit. In my interpretation of these conversations, I intend to make clear for the reader the intersubjective sense of communal meanings made.

Balancing the Research Context by Considering Parts and Whole

Phenomenological research recognizes that all possible perspectives are still limited perspectives. Pre-conceptual understanding, even intersubjective understanding, at its best, is sense-making, ordering of events or facts or moments to create a whole that we can grasp in such a way that it resonates with meaning. These bits of information, however, do not always fit together in such a way. It is the role of the philosopher researcher to present life experience in such a way that it sings with intersubjective meaning for the researcher, conversants, and readers. As Merleau-Ponty (1964) describes, phenomenology recognizes that events and facts exist in a concrete way and must “gather together all the concrete experiences,” as they are, “but at the same time it must discover in this unrolling of facts a spontaneous order, a meaning, an intrinsic truth, an orientation

of such a kind that the different events do not appear as a mere succession” (p. 52). Rather, phenomenology must communicate “the 'spirit of the phenomenon' –that is, the visible spirit before us, not just the internal spirit which we grasp by reflection or by the cogito” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 52). One must acknowledge the concrete and linear and the reflective and spontaneous in order to communicate the meaning of a phenomenon in its wholeness.

This gathering together of a variety of conceptions offers a spirit of wholeness, but that wholeness is still just one conception. That conception may be whole and universal, but it is, at the same time, fragmentary and not representative of every experience. Since phenomenological description is always a retelling, the description is never the same as the experience, never quite whole. Every phenomenological description is one of possibility, not set in stone.

Like reflection, successful writing and reading require stepping forward and back, in and out in order to move toward a wholeness of understanding, asking how something exists or what something is like for a group of people, both as individuals and as a collective group: “My access to a universal mind via reflection, far from finally discovering what I always was, is motivated by the intertwining of my life with the other lives, of my body with the visible things, by the intersection of my perceptual field with that of others, by the blending in of my duration with the other durations” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 49). As researchers, phenomenologists must engage the experiences and lives of others and still maintain their own questions. By living in the question “*What is the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing?*” I will learn to gather and synthesize information from my sources in a meaningful way,

making fragmented parts into an intelligible whole.

Engaging in a hermeneutic circle, the research strives to “understand the whole in terms of the detail and the detail in terms of the whole” (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 291). This circular relationship requires interpretation of moments of experience, joining of parts to an overall sense, and then breaking of that sense into parts again, moving in and out, in a spiral of understanding. In Zen art and philosophy, the circle represents a melding of unity and void, a “symbol of the shapeless, colourless essence of all beings, the 'original countenance before birth',” insight, and true enlightenment (Brinker, Kanazawa, & Leisinger, 1996, p. 47). Much like this Zen concept of circular relationship is the hermeneutic circle of analysis, in which both wholeness and fragmentation must be attended to in order to create a full interpretation. In a circular motion of understanding, details must be viewed closely as well as viewing a phenomenon in its wholeness.

Wholeness gives way to more detail, and detail reveals more about the whole, and both detail and whole are situated in and inseparable from a larger context. Gadamer (1960/2006) suggests that we make meaning through relational interaction, through conversation; in that conversation, we explore questions of lived experience and reach an agreement, making meaning. Conversations with others, readings, and engagement in the phenomenon are all parts of a greater whole that form the circular research relationship; themes, metaphors, etymologies, and idiomatic phrases are still more parts of the whole.

The phenomenological researcher must find a way to organize and interpret fragmentary artifacts so that a meaningful wholeness is achieved; she must be prepared to question her own categorizations even while maintaining a movement toward wholeness. Successful science, in order to “respond to the questions of life which are only a

hesitation between the yes and the no...casts prevailing categories into question, invents new types of being, a new heaven of essences” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1968, p. 108). In doing so, however, successful research “does not entirely disengage its essences from the world; it maintains them under the jurisdiction of the facts, which can tomorrow call for another elaboration” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 108). This is a way of knowing, then, that is always questioning and always open, grounded in the world, and continually circuiting.

Philosophy maintains this perspective, and phenomenology

alone goes all the way in the effort to know what Nature and History and the World and Being are, when our contact with them is not only the partial and abstract contact of the physical experiment and calculation, or of the historical analysis, but the total contact of someone who, living in the world and in Being, means to see his life fully, particularly his life of knowledge, and who, an inhabitant of the world, tries to think himself in the world, to think the world in himself, to unravel their jumbled essences, and to form finally the signification of Being. (Merleau-Ponty, pp. 108-109)

The phenomenological researcher must be prepared to unravel her own thinking, to untangle the thoughts of others, and to braid together relevant themes drawn from those knots into a cohesive understanding. She must be guided by the questions and stay true to the texts she encounters, seeing herself and also not seeing only herself there. The phenomenological researcher must also be able to live in uncertainty, repositioning herself as learner, researcher, writer, and pedagogue, in relationship with others and the world, because:

Like the natural man, we situate ourselves in ourselves and in the things, in ourselves and in the other, at the point where, a sort of chiasm, we become the others and we become world. Philosophy is itself only if it refuses for itself the facilities of a world with one sole entry as well as the facilities of a world with multiple entries, all accessible to a philosopher. Like the natural man, it abides at the point where the passage from the self into the world and into the other is effected, at the crossing of the avenues. (Merleau-Ponty, p. 160)

The “chiasm” that Merleau-Ponty describes is the cross-space, the intersection of

researcher and research, a point of overlap in which the self and the world combine. Phenomenology asks us to live in that space of intertwining awareness, our questions in the world, our questions in ourselves, the world in us at once. This is a living in the circuit, perpetually making and being made. In my work, I begin by synthesizing the writing and thoughts of others engaging in the practice of movement meditation and writing, as seen in chapters 1 and 2. From there, in chapter 4 and 5, I engage my conversants as fellow teachers, fellow writers, and fellow practitioners engaged in moving meditation. I gather their words and thoughts as critical structures through which my understanding comes to light. When my understanding approaches wholeness, I bring it back to the conversation, allowing it to fragment, diffuse, and reform until we find the interpretation that illuminates most brightly the phenomenon of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing.

Van Manen (1997) emphasizes the work of the phenomenological human sciences researcher as continually in flux and as an act of creativity. The researcher must be prepared for transformation of others, environment, and self; for full engagement in the world; for an intertwining of research and writing, of living and researching. Done with care and awareness, phenomenological research moves toward wholeness.

Conversations Charged with Meaning: A Method for Research

While phenomenology is the study of essences (Merleau-Ponty, 2007b), and while the phenomenon I wish to explore is bodily based, the essence of that phenomenon must be communicated with language. Prior to Heidegger's concept of *Dasein*—"being there," philosophy organized the world into subjects and objects. The philosopher could bracket himself from the things in which he was interested, view them as objects outside

his own existence and separate from himself. Husserl, Heidegger's predecessor and teacher, approached meaning through the reduction, an intense examination that involves turning toward the things (ideas, objects, concepts) themselves, bracketing out one's own subjectivity, and reducing the real to essence. Husserl's conception of phenomenology, according to Moran (2007), expresses that there is a contrast between the psychological and the logical, the perceived and the real, and that careful thought distanced from natural attitudes can allow the thinker to transcend her own being to uncover the true, transcendent essence of the things she views; "a sweeping suspension of the natural attitude is now required to grasp the essential nature of knowledge" (p. 123). In this framework, the reduction, experience stripped of one's own biases and attitudes, will reveal ultimate truth.

Heidegger, however, believed that we are embedded, integrated into a contextual world from which we can not separate ourselves out, so "an interpretation of human existence cannot be neutral, dispassionate, theoretical contemplation, but must take into account the involvement of the enquirer him- or her-self in the undertaking" (Moran, 2007, p. 197). The world is shaped and perceived through our relationships with objects, others, our bodies, our selves; and we shape and perceive our world in a particular orientation grounded in the past, surfacing in the present, and moving toward the future. We can not transcend our own being in the world; we can not transcend what we already know, and we can not transcend our own understanding. I must see myself in my research, and my research in my self, since "my life presents itself in terms of the set of possibilities which I am" (Moran, p. 239).

Merleau-Ponty (1964) suggests that phenomenological interpretation is not

merely reductive, but is also inductive, and that, in hermeneutic interpretation, we must move from part to whole and whole to part. In this sense, reflective thought is circuitous, both an end and a beginning, both answer and question. Reflection “determines the meaning or essence, ends by possessing its object and enveloping it. But it is also true that essential insight always understands the concrete perception of experience as something here and now which precedes and therefore envelops it” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 68). Essence defines experience, and experience defines essence, in an eternal circle. This circle relates to the hermeneutic practice of phenomenology.

The Greek god Hermes, among other roles, was known as the protector of athletes and sports, of language, literature, and poetry, and messenger of the gods. Given that (for me) words and thoughts found in the practice of moving meditation so often feel as if they are divine messages, it seems apt to use a writing method named after Hermes to explore this phenomenon. Hermes is also renowned as a trickster, source of confusion. This seems to fit, too, since hermeneutic phenomenology involves uncovering the hidden, revealing what is concealed through questioning, conversation, reflection, and revision. Phenomenology depends on hermeneutics in order to uncover shared meanings and commonalities (intersubjectivity). Hermeneutics brings lived experience from the pre-conscious to the conscious (meaning-making) realm. Description of lived experience and interpretation of the meaning of lived experience is the goal of hermeneutics. The goal in hermeneutics is to understand how meaning is made, rather than to explain why or what something means.

Hermeneutic phenomenology has become “a process of articulation, a process of reflection which brings out the hidden logos implicit in the phenomenon by letting the

phenomenon show itself” (Levin, 1985, p.13). Through patient questioning, curious interaction with the world, others, and ourselves, what is hidden may be uncovered. Much of this interaction is based in language, since language is what we know of communication, so hermeneutics is “the classical discipline concerned with the art of understanding texts” (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 157). Although its original use was related to the understanding of religious, traditional, and cultural writing, Gadamer applies the hermeneutic method in his work to art, history, play, and the body. Gadamer discusses the aim of interpretive phenomenology as “to discover what is common to all modes of understanding and to show that understanding is never a subjective relation to a given 'object' but to the history of its effect; in other words, understanding belongs to the being of that which is understood” (p. xxviii).

My intention is to extend the meaning of “text” to include the phenomenon of moving meditation, conversations centered upon moving meditation, and thinking and writing produced through moving meditation. I return again to the question: *What is the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing?*

Selection and Engagement of Conversants

As a classroom English teacher, I often wrote with my students and shared my writing with them. My thinking practice of moving meditation, however, was separate from my classroom practice. Some of the emergent questions for this research, then, relate to wholeness and possibilities for overlap of these two realms. For this reason, I selected four conversants who are English language and literature teachers and who also teach writing in their classrooms; though at different levels, each teaches written composition. These conversants, who perhaps do not always self-identify as writers, are

open to regular writing sessions and are aware enough of themselves as writers to be comfortable discussing their writing process and sharing their writing with me. While they are not all regular practitioners of moving meditation, they are physically and mentally able to be open to participating in sessions of gentle, easy movement, such as scenic hikes and focused walks, which precede writing sessions and conversations. These conversants are introduced fully and described in more detail in chapter 4.

To find these conversants, I drew from my own experience as a classroom teacher in a small town in West Virginia. The district where I taught English had and still has a strong writing program, particularly at the high school level, where rhetoric is a focus, especially in honors and Advanced Placement courses. Written composition is part of state standardized tests, so there is a curricular investment in writing instruction across grade levels. My familiarity with the writing programs (some of which I helped to develop) provides me with a clear perspective of the classroom joys and challenges these particular teachers face in written language instruction. My familiarity with the teachers and my reputation as an effective teacher-leader in the district has helped to ensure teachers' willingness to trust me to coordinate movement sessions, to speak with me openly, and to share with me their reflective writing as lived experience text.

In addition to my familiarity and relationship with the programs and people, the town offers ample resources and spaces for interaction with nature and movement in wild places, places I frequented when I lived there. A wooded walking trail courses the ridge just behind the high school, and several local wildlife preserves, state parks, and national parks with walking and hiking trails are within a ten to fifteen minute drive from the center of town. These particular people, places, and situations are described in more

detail in chapter 4.

To engage participants, then, I drew from the community, people, and places I already knew. First, using the social network Facebook, I sent an informal personal message to several secondary teachers of writing in the school district, asking whether they would be interested in participating or whether they might refer someone else. Based on their inquiries or recommendations, I contacted potential participants with follow-up messages in order to determine their interest and availability during the time in which I expected to conduct conversations. Four participants were available and willing, and I then sent to them a formal letter of invitation introducing the study (see Appendix A: Letter of Invitation). I also asked them to complete an online poll with a list of possible meeting dates in order to schedule group conversations. We settled on four days throughout the late summer and fall of 2012 to walk, write, and talk together.

During the first minutes of the first of our four group meetings, I distributed and explained a consent form indicating participants' rights (see Appendix B: Informed Consent Form). I encouraged participants to ask questions, and after all questions were addressed, I collected signed forms and later supplied copies to participants.

During our first session, we engaged in a gentle walking meditation, quietly wrote written reflections, and engaged in discussion to open up the phenomenon. Three more sessions followed. Our meetings consisted of approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour of quiet and easy movement meditation walking in the woods followed by or including 30-45 minutes of silent, solo writing and then open-ended discussion. Although phenomenology does not rely on scripted interview, our initial and subsequent discussions centered around questions such as:

- Tell me about whether or not you have used movement to write or problem-solve before. What was it like to walk with the intention of writing?
- What were you thinking as you were walking?
- How was thinking or writing different for you today during the walk, as opposed to your normal way of thinking and writing?
- How did your thinking change when you had time to “walk it out” and think?
- What connections can you make to your classroom practice, given your experience in thinking and writing today?

Following the movement and writing sessions, we spent the rest of our time together in conversation defining and processing what happened during the sessions of movement and writing and possibilities for teaching and learning.

Gathering Texts

I used, as textual sources for interpretation, the spoken and written descriptions of conversants' lived experiences of work toward achieving flow through moving meditation. In the spirit of open conversation, I did not conduct interviews, which create a clear division between researcher and researched; in keeping with phenomenology, my conversants are not subjects, and the research is not object. We were and are co-learners, creating meaning together. We engaged together in informal, comfortable sessions of conversation rather than in structured interviews. These conversations happened in places that allowed us to practice moving meditation and writing and then process and discuss our experiences: local parks and forests.

While I did not structure the conversation, I did continue to dwell in questions—my own, and those that emerged in practice and from conversants' writing and sharing. Although phenomenological research does not base itself on a specific series of set scripted questions, but prefers instead to allow questions to generate naturally from conversation, I openly questioned and continued to orient myself toward the phenomenon and my research goals. However, a general range of questions surfaced from the work of

our conversations and my own writing. In tending to those questions, I asked my conversants, for example, questions in the tone and theme of the following:

- When do you feel difficulty in writing, or when do you feel “stuck” as a writer?
- Tell me about what you do to alleviate the sense of writer's block.
- What is it like when inspiration comes to you? How do you know when you need to write something?
- Tell me about a time when you felt inspired by an idea, a solution to a problem, or a flow of words when you were walking, running, biking, swimming, or moving in any other way.

After participating in a session of moving meditation and writing, we discussed writing process, thinking, and teaching, centering our discussions around questions like these:

- What was it like to take a walk with the intention of gathering ideas for thought or writing?
- Describe your thinking process while taking a walk.
- What was it like to write in your journal after you walked with intentionality of gathering ideas?
- What ideas do you have for future writing after writing in your journal today?
- How might the ideas and themes discussed today play out in your classroom?

During the first session, I provided each conversant with her own personal journal for reflection. They used these journals for writing their thoughts in each of our sessions, and I used their written reflections as texts for phenomenological rendering, in addition to the texts of our conversations. I, too, kept a journal, engaging in the same processes as participants. In the back of the journals, I pasted a list of possible writing prompts to help participants focus their thinking and writing as they walked (see Appendix C: Possible Writing Prompts). Conversants were free to use the prompts, or they might write whatever they liked, following the sparks of their own inspiration. So then, in addition to audio-recorded conversations, I used journals, which I collected during the last session; if conversants wrote something they do not wish to share, I asked them to indicate as such by folding the page closed. Although none did so, I would have honored the boundaries

of each participant, if she had.

Between sessions, I transcribed audio-recorded conversations and sought recurrent and resonant themes, wrote and re-read my own reflective writing, and interpreted, reinterpreted, and took notice of commonalities among the texts of conversants' thinking to uncover common understandings. I made these transcripts available to participants for review, in order to check their thinking, and, from time to time, I engaged them individually, in email or with specific questions in conversation, about themes or points of resonance arising in the transcripts. Using van Manen's (1997) suggestions for drawing out essential themes, I identified common essences and allowed questions to grow from those commonalities, shared themes, and intersubjective similarities. I allowed my interpretations to open new questions and topics for writing and talking in subsequent sessions, and, when all sessions were complete, I added the layer of conversants' written reflections to the thematic renderings I had already begun.

Surging Forward

To discover the being, or essence, of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing, I examine my own experience (as in chapter 1 and 2), through journal writing myself, history, literature, religious practices, etymology, and the written texts of others to reveal the phenomenon as it resides outside myself (as in chapter 2). In this chapter, I work with various philosophers and their words to articulate my position as researcher and budding phenomenologist, using phenomenological text to further ground my interpretation and methods for research. In chapters 4 and 5, I turn to conversation with teachers of writing as they practice moving meditation, seeking to reveal the essence of their lived experiences and to uncover underlying pedagogical implications. Just as

movement meditation represents a circuit of turning and returning to the world and the self, and just as written composition involves a turning and returning to the words and the world, phenomenological research, too, requires that we fully engage in the circuits of our own being, thinking, and writing in order to attempt to understand. So the framework of this study begins to come to light through the transformative engagement in questioning, listening, writing, reflecting, and revising. Through conversants' theory-less language, the phenomenon of moving meditation is uncovered, unfolding in text. Together, we address the question: *What is the lived experience of moving meditation for finding flow in thinking and writing?*

CHAPTER FOUR:
CONVERSATIONS IN THE CURRENT:
WALKING AND TALKING WITH TEACHERS OF WRITING

Wondering in the Wild

Horse prints
 spiderwebs on tree
 weightless
 spots where bugs are louder
 car noise—disrupting
 sun coming through trees like grandma's road

perfectly formed spider web
 one random leaf in trail
 cardinal
 synchronized steps (Holly's journal entry)

CaCapon Mountain is slowly rolling into autumn. The first leaves are beginning to turn, red and brown, and today is perfect, 65 degrees and breezy. The buzz of summer cicadas has begun to fade, and now crickets chirp in the dry grass all around. The sky is bright crystalline blue, and the clouds are moving quickly high above the tree tops, sailing steadily east. It is the autumnal equinox, the edge of time, a magical in-between space, a time of change. The summer is ending, and school is beginning. The four teachers with whom I am meeting are turning away from their summer lives, slipping back into their teacherly selves, revising their syllabi, reconnecting with one another, and building relationships with students and communities in their classrooms. This is the last of four sessions of walking, writing, and focused conversation exploring movement meditation for finding a flow in writing and thinking. We have made time, time out of time, to walk, to write, and to talk: each of us has connected with her writerly self, each of us has written poetry, each of us has talked about the teacher inside her, about writing,

about our students, about life.

As we have walked and have written, a flow has opened: poems and reflections have surfaced, spilling onto the page, and talk has taken over after our walking writing sessions. Our questions have guided us, and themes have found words in our conversations. All the while, our topics of conversation have evolved: with movement meditation as a catalyst for finding our flow, this exploration has moved toward teaching of writing, and teaching in general, and new themes have emerged. Meanwhile, our journals have taken on separate lives, pages spilling with reflections, observations, poems. In this chapter, I bring forth the intersecting threads of our experience together in the woods, myself and these women-writers-teachers whom I have invited to walk and write and talk with me.

In this chapter, I explore questions, thoughts, and themes or essences, both old and new. I document and interpret our collective and individual responses to questions relating to movement meditation, the teaching of writing, and relationships. Through these participants' words, I render a deeper description of lived experience in response to questions generated before and during our walks and talks together. We have wondered: in what ways might environment affect the writing process? What does it look like when students enter a writing flow? What do movement and exercise mean in our lives as teachers and as people? *What is—for these teachers of writing—the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing?*

Essence: Distillation of Experience

In chapter 1, I turn toward the phenomenon of movement meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing through self reflection, finding my own grounding in the

phenomenon as researcher, teacher, and embodied being. In chapter 2, I uncover themes from literary, research, and other texts. In chapter 3, I engage with the philosophers in order to ground this work in the phenomenological tradition. In this chapter, I introduce the conversants who have walked and talked with me, I share their written reflections and insights, and I tune into their words in order to further reveal essential themes that emerge in our participation in this phenomenon. Before I surge forward in this exploration, however, I must revisit the idea of essential themes.

Circling back, I return to the philosophy that guides me, remembering and restating the concepts at the center of this writing. I remind myself that engagement in thematic reflection is to identify and illuminate the elements that can not be removed from an experience without changing the meaning of that experience. Van Manen (1997) reminds me that that essential themes are a means by which I can “get at the notion” of the meaning of the experience of movement meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing; that themes can give shape to this phenomenon, even in its shapelessness; that thematizing “fixes or expresses the ineffable essence;” that themes “describe the content of the notion” of what is there in a phenomenon (p. 88). Through deep description and reflection upon my participants' words and thoughts, I can begin to discover, develop, and interpret the particular lived experience of this phenomenon.

I am reminded, also, that a theme is always a “reduction of a notion;” so no matter how profoundly my interpretations reflect back meaning, I am limited in my understanding and therefore in the possibilities for representation of this phenomenon (van Manen, 1997, p. 88). To dwell in questions is to receive and honor mystery; I can, through this interpretation, offer up the meaning of this phenomenon, but I can not,

however, ever fully address it in its entirety. While writing is lifework, it is no substitute for lived experience itself. I remind myself, again, that essence is contextual, shared, and created in meaning that reflects particular people in a particular place, time, and situation. Essence is intersubjective. Essence is distilled. As such, I approach the experiencing of this phenomenon with “attentiveness and wonder, [...] demand for awareness, [...] and will to seize the meaning of the world or of history as that meaning comes into being” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002, p. xxiv).

Throughout this writing, I draw from my own experience, from literature and research writing, and from phenomenological texts in order to render from these sources essential themes associated with the phenomenon of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing. In previous chapters, I have drawn from philosophers to provide a definition of essence, expressing that the essence of something is an element without which the thing can not remain unchanged. In this chapter, and in the chapters that follow, I engage deeply with the collective and individual experiences of four teachers of writing participating in movement meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing. Meaning has emerged over the course of four conversations and a series of journal entries with teachers of writing engaged in movement and writing activity. From this engagement emerge themes that we construct as a group—themes that reflect the collective lived experience of these particular people (including myself) in these particular places and moments, as illuminated through the words of my conversants.

In addition to these collective themes, I explore themes that emerge for conversants individually as reflected in their journal writing—their written thoughts, poems, and reflections also become theme-rich texts, evoking the essence of their

experiences. These themes include some previously addressed that have bloomed with richer insights: among these are nature, presence, and practice. New themes include: fear, care, and transcendence. In exploring these themes, I have opened myself to these writers, and they have opened their thinking to me in conversation and companionship, as well as in their open journals. And now, introductions are in order. Let us acquaint ourselves with the people and places through which these themes emerge.

Conversants in Context: A Description

Four women participated in my study, all teachers of English language arts at the same high school, a rural school in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia. Serving about 700 students in grades 9-12, this school is primarily white, with a moderately high low-income population. About 40% of students receive free or reduced meals at school. The faculty and staff work diligently to provide a range of opportunities for the young people they serve, however. Academic programs are strong, with a range of Advanced Placement courses offered. Likewise, this school offers active sports, theater, extracurricular, and vocational programs to complement academics. This is a school in which teachers care about students; the school is centered in a concerned and active community, as well.

Traci, Holly, Annalee, and Alyx (pseudonyms chosen by these teacher-conversants), work closely together as members of a successful English department. **Traci** teaches 10th grade English (both regular and honors), and yearbook and journalism. She walks for exercise and enjoys Zumba and other fitness classes. **Holly** teaches 11th grade English, Advanced Placement English language and composition, and creative writing. She coaches girls' volleyball. Holly walks regularly for exercise and participates

in fitness classes. She and Traci often walk together.

Annalee teaches 11th grade English, 12th grade English, and Advanced Placement English language and composition. She is the coach of the academic challenge team, who participate in quiz-bowl competitions. She runs, walks her dog, bikes, and works out at the gym, lifting weights. Annalee works out every day, either at the gym or outdoors.

Alyx teaches 12th grade English, Advanced Placement English literature, and is currently earning an administrative certificate. She splits half her time between classroom teaching and administrative duty as dean of students. Alyx, too, has a daily fitness practice. In addition, she gardens, and works outdoors for meditative time alone; she also uses creative energy to make cakes and other art projects.

Prior to our sessions, none of these teachers were regularly keeping a journal, though all of them express having done so in the past. They all write for their students and often with their students, providing models, making connections, and using their own writing as example for student learning, and, although they did not say so, I believe they all consider themselves writers. They enjoy writing for pleasure, for professional, and for pedagogical reasons: they write with their students in their classrooms, and they all teach writing—for both creative and evaluative purposes.

I have chosen this group for a number of reasons. They are part of a cohesive department that works together as a team in order to best meet the needs of their students: they team plan, co-teach, vertically align their curricula, and apply workshop approaches when they teach writing to their students. These teachers also spend time together outside the classroom: they socialize together, and, perhaps more significantly for the purposes of my work, they exercise together. Traci and Holly often take time to walk on the track

near the school where they teach. Alyx and Annalee run together and train together; both have committed themselves to fitness practice, and they use each other as motivation and support.

People and Place: Relationships and Rural Living

In addition to these factors, I know this school and community well because I was once a teacher there. Although Traci did not teach with me, she worked in the county during my time teaching; we were briefly acquainted. Holly and Alyx were members of the English department when I taught there; Alyx was my co-teacher. Together, we designed curricula, co-instructed courses, co-planned, and shared concerns about students and strategies. We also talked about exercise; the year I left, Alyx was beginning a running program and had suffered a related injury, so we talked often about movement and therapy.

Annalee was my student; she had been in my Advanced Placement English language and composition course during her junior year of high school, and we have kept in touch. I was a guest speaker in one of her college courses in teacher education, she observed my classroom for an assignment requirement, and when I left, she was hired to take my place. Relationships thread throughout the communities present here, and lives overlap.

Another important factor about these teachers connects to the environment in which they teach: in a rural area, the teachers and students are familiar with nature, with being outdoors, and with the rhythms of seasons and time. Proximity to wild spaces allows for a sense of connection with nature for both teachers and students; it is not uncommon for a group of deer to wander across the hillside behind the school, visible to

classrooms on the west side of the building or for the same territorial heron to regularly land in the stream that crosses the east side of campus. In both situations, students want to jump up and crowd around the windows, watching with fascination the animals on the other side of the glass. The commitment to students and the natural environment is evidenced in some of the projects happening at the school, as well. One of the science teachers, in conjunction with the vocational education department, has recently received a grant to improve the school greenhouse, and students regularly participate in tree plantings, stream surveys, and other environmental projects. Alyx herself has recently received a grant for an outdoor classroom space, and the whole school community has taken an interest in beginning to plan and develop it. The elements exist here for a strong sense of place-based education as outlined by Sobel (2005): “administrative support,” a “cadre of committed teachers,” and “active dialogue between school and community” (p. 50). This sense of being in place in the natural world makes transition into our walks and talks easy; we go places these teachers go regularly.

This awareness of and centeredness in the natural world leads into a primary theme, nature. Setting becomes a significant character in this story, and being immersed in a natural environment is discussed in participant journals and in our conversations. We explore thoughts and questions relating to this: What does environment contribute to thoughtfulness and mood? In what ways is being in the forest different from being outdoors elsewhere? What does it mean to move through trees, to write in the woods, and what does context mean in the lived experience of these writer-teachers?

Nature: Going Outward to Draw Inward

In previous chapters, I explore the theme of nature and its impact upon writers. I

wonder how wild words can come to us in moments in nature, how inspiration can be sparked by leaves swirling in the wind, a squirrel chattering in a tree, the croaking frog in the pond. Through the conversations and writing of teachers, the theme of nature deepens, leading me to the assertion that, for a writer, being in nature stirs something awake that stays asleep in other environments. Being outside makes a difference: the same words do not come, the same flow does not open in a classroom, at a desk, on a street (in spite of the movement of our feet as they carry us); the woods inspire a different awareness, one that opens a flow, one that makes us take notice. As Louv (2005) asserts, “Nature—the sublime, the harsh, and the beautiful—offers something that the street or gated community or computer game cannot;” it is “an environment where [people] can easily contemplate infinity and eternity,” one that encourages creativity, dreaming, wandering, exploring (p. 97).

The “Balming Effect” of Walking in the Woods

We move, life moves, and those movements make their way onto the page. I find this to be especially true of my meetings with these teacher-writer conversants. We have met in natural settings: twice along the C&O Canal towpath, the Potomac River churning along on one side of us, a slim band of forest closing in on the other. The other two times we have reunited atop CaCapon mountain in the first stirrings of fall, the trails crunchy with the first fallen leaves, crickets singing noisily and desperately at the end of the season, the start of school. We have walked in this natural environment, writing in our journals, responding to the world around us. And we have loved these meetings, expressing excitement at having scheduled walking time, time out of the daily responsibility. Holly writes, in her journal:

While I have determined that walking outside does calm me down and helps me relax, I definitely think the setting plays a role. Walking the track this morning doesn't seem to be quite as stimulating to me. Whether it's the repetitiveness or the presence of other people. We also talk the whole time, which does provide a sort of stress relief, but doesn't have the balming effect of walking in the woods.

The sights, sounds, smells, and senses of the woods create a space primed for meditation, for creative flow. This is Bachelard's "forest peace" (1994, p. 187).

We, my conversants and I, have found ourselves deeply affected by the natural context, environment, and one another as co-learners, as "learning involves interaction between the learner and [her] environment, and its effectiveness relates to the frequency, variety, and intensity of the interaction" (Leonard, 1968, p. 19). Immersion in the natural world, with journals in hand, has produced a flow of writing for these teachers and for me, one that manifests as poetry in their journals, and one that causes them to comment on their relationship with nature and its effect upon them.

Part of being there, for these women, involved being outside, in a natural setting. The woods and walking allow relaxation for myself and for these teachers. Just being in nature can reduce stress in general. According to Louv (2005), researchers have identified in the "findings of over one hundred studies [...] that one of the main benefits of spending time in nature is stress reduction" (p. 49). The natural setting, simply by reducing stress, helps us to open, to think, and to be. Several times we spoke of the differences between writing and working outside and writing and working indoors, even when in a state of deep concentration. Holly speaks and writes, eloquently and often, about the difference between being in nature and being indoors. She writes that just spending time outdoors makes a difference in her whole sense of being, that "Being out in the woods seems like such a simple thing, but I'm so much happier when I spend time

outside. Whether it's sitting around a fire with friends or by myself reading or just taking a walk, I always feel like I have more energy when I'm able to spend time outside.”

Going out means drawing in energy from the environment, which leaves Holly refreshed, her mood changed.

Being outside, and away, in nature, provides clarity and resonance, engages our ability to feel the hum of the world around us: “Nature offers all of us a chance to enter the crystalline state. To leave the disrhythmic city streets for some deserted wood or meadow or seashore is often enough to trigger a period of perfect rhythm” (Leonard, 2006, p. 112). This perfect rhythm, Leonard explains, places us in connection with the essence of being—our being and also universal being; he suggests that the “perfect rhythm is always present in our every action and relationship” (p. 118). As such, we can become aware of that connection by engaging more deeply in our selves and the world.

“Me time,” a Blanket in the Grass, Right Now

Being in nature can connect us more deeply with ourselves. Alyx speaks of time alone outdoors as time to herself, explaining, “I have an extensive garden at the house, and it's my 'me time.' I just get outside, yank a few weeds out, and not have someone screaming at me.”

Conversely, time away from the human world can deepen our connection with others. Alyx notices how time alone, in the woods, in her garden, or even in the gym can strengthen the ties that connect her to her own awareness and also to others in her life. She marvels at this irony, mentioning that “Being out here in nature, I feel more creative and I was able to write, but, I wrote about a relationship.” Being alone is also being with, and time for the self imbues time with others in intentionality. This is a kind of

intentionality, as Merleau-Ponty (1945/2002) suggests, that is deeply associated with space and time. Characterized as “the means whereby the position of things becomes possible,” this kind of intentional time and space is imbued with “the universal power enabling [things] to be connected” (Merleau-Ponty, pp. 283-284). Centering herself in her “me time” outdoors, Alyx engages more deeply in the ties that bind her to the world.

Just being outdoors makes a difference for Holly in her own creative space. In one of our conversations, she describes a time in which just going outside and working in the grass helped her become open, helped ideas to flow. She shares a story about a failed attempt to plan her courses as a first year teacher, when, bound by expectation, she sat wordless, unable to think, and so, she tells us:

I sat down at my parents' kitchen table to try to plan out the first week of school, to try and start doing lesson plans, and it was just not happening, at all. I got sick of it, and I was like, I am just going to go outside and sit in the yard and read for a little bit. I went outside and read for a little bit, and then I was like, well, maybe I will try again now this planning stuff, so I went inside, brought out all the textbooks, spread a blanket out on the grass, sat down, and was able to plan out stuff just sitting out in my parents' side yard.

A blanket in the grass makes a difference, enables thinking, opens up ideas. Holly, of the four teacher-writers, senses the most profound differences between being outdoors, in a very natural environment, and being indoors, or even in a city. She discusses it frequently and raises the issue in her writing. She expresses this in one of our conversations, stating, “It's always so relaxing to me to be outside and be walking. Just walking in the woods.” She elaborates, “Living where I live right now [...] I can't stand it because I don't have space to be outside or whatever, and so like even though we were talking about school and that's stressful and thinking about having to go back to work and everything all at once, it's still relaxing to me.”

In this forest relaxation, Holly is able to escape into her self, to lose track of time: “Yeah,” she says, “we're going back to school, but not right now. Right now I'm in the woods,” and in the woods, Holly becomes fully present, in the moment, engaging in only now, “Right now.” In the right now, Holly finds time slowing, she senses herself coming into the present, and in doing so, “a moment of time acquires that indestructible individuality, that 'once and for all' quality, which subsequently enables it to make its way through time and produce in us the illusion of eternity” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002, p. 492). The moment blooms, stretches out, pulses, and Holly's thoughts flow.

An outdoor setting can stir the writing impulse for professional writers, too. Bradbury (1994) describes a similar experience: “Ten years of doing everything wrong suddenly became the right idea, the right scene, the right characters, the right day, the right creative time. I wrote the story sitting outside, with my typewriter, on the lawn. At the end of an hour the story was finished, the hair on the back of my neck was standing up, and I was in tears. I knew I had written the first really good story of my life” (p. 62). Bradbury went outside. He engaged in the right now. He was moved. He felt it in his body. Creativity flowed; the moment crystallized, electrified. This is what it means to be present in the moment. What does presence have to do with writing and teaching writing? How does “being there” surface in this work, in our walks and talks? What is the power of nature and of being in natural space?

Being Present: Disconnecting to Connect

Being in nature sparks creativity, in part, because it encourages a heightened sense of awareness. Traci's journal entry reflects this sense-driven way of experiencing as it happened during one of our walks:

The sights and sounds and smells were much more obvious today. I took in more:
 chocolate bark on trees
 pea green leaves
 soft green grass
 sounds of swishing river
 chirp of birds
 obnoxious insects
 The silence of the walk was overwhelming at times, but it was simple overall.

The simple silence, with shining colors, seems an amplified way of viewing the world, and, yet, it is commonplace for writers to express this kind of astute, detailed, and distilled vision—profound noticing. The writer's mind comes predisposed to notice, since “one of the gifts of being a writer is that it gives you an excuse to do things, to go places and explore. Another is that writing motivates you to look closely at life, at life as it lurches by and tramps around” (Lamott, 1995, p. xii).

Noticing: Greener Greens, Synchronized Steps, and Subtle Sounds

Annalee, in her journal, gives poetic voice to the kind of noticing that moving through the forest can produce. She simply lists the sights and sounds around her as she walks:

Ripples on water surface.
 Creeper!
 White trunk
 Canadian geese
 Green filter through canopy
 Pea green
 Lizard green
 Deer—tan
 Red leaves
 White butterfly
 Purple weed

A catalogue of presences, of colors and movement, made obvious to her as she moves through the woods, emerges as poetry for Annalee. In this flow of poetry, “The poet calls all the brightness of the sights of the sky and every sound of its courses and breezes into

the singing word and there makes them shine and ring” (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 223).

The act of noticing allows a vivid image not just to be noticed and remembered, but also to be said or written as meaning comes into being. In our conversation, later, Annalee discusses the vividness with which the sights and sounds seem to present themselves, that she notices different things the second time she passes by on her out and back walk. “In one area,” she shares, “the greens were more green than in the other areas because of the way the sun was coming through the canopy. Or the deer that passed in front of us on the trail... The crunch of your feet on the rocks...”

Traci notices the sights and sounds, too, on this same walk and comments that every thing seems amplified and vivid, “even the noises. I mean you still hear the random cars and things like that, but you hear the birds, you hear the bugs, you hear all those things. [...] Out here you see the... the lily pads, and the way they’re arranged. [...] just stuff that you don't see elsewhere. Even though we passed it twice, it was still nice both times....” Traci observes colors, too, water lilies “pink, pink and purple, and bright like that.” Holly notices that “our steps ended up synchronized,” and she points out that “nature actually is quite loud—bugs, frogs, footsteps—it's never totally silent. It's almost like you don't notice the separate sounds until you really stop and listen, though.” The walk enables her to slow down and listen; to unravel the sounds, to differentiate the details, in synch with the world and others in it.

The mere state of attentive being, according to Abram (2011) is a kind of meaning-making, an alive interaction with the world around us. There is, states Abram, “a kind of sparkle and hum to awareness, an electric quality—as though it were charged with a kind of tension” (p. 124). Though we can tune ourselves out, ignore the world

around us, we can never fully separate from it, since “Awareness, or mind, is in this sense very much like a medium in which we're situated, and from which we are simply unable to extricate ourselves without ceasing to exist” (Abram, p. 125). When we fail to attend to the world, then, we also fail to attend to ourselves.

We must be observant, to notice what we notice, because doing so not only connects us with others and the wider world, but it cultivates the writer's mind, a sense of the ineffable and transcendent, and, according to Lamott,

There is ecstasy in paying attention. You can get into a kind of Wordsworthian openness to the world, where you see in everything the essences of holiness, a sign that God is implicit in all creation. Or maybe you are not predisposed to see the world sacramentally, to see everything as an outward and visible sign of inward, invisible grace. [...] Anyone who wants to can be surprised by the beauty or pain of the natural world, of the human mind and heart, and can try to capture just that—the details, the nuance, what is. If you start to look around, you will start to see. (1995, pp. 100-101)

During our walk, being outdoors and moving made Annalee, Traci, and Holly slow down to notice the world, one insect or plant or animal at a time. It brings them into the now, the present place and time, situated in awareness, creating a poetic world. They are not just being, they are *being there*, openly, actively observing, questioning, interpreting minute to minute, set in a particular place and time: being in the world. “Dasein,” or being in the world, as Heidegger (1962) expresses, “is inclined to fall back upon its world (the world in which it is) and to interpret itself in terms of that world by its reflected light” (p. 42). These teachers see, perceive, interpret, and reflect back what they see, hear, smell, taste, touch.

This intersection of the body as sensing field in a particular time and place echoes Merleau-Ponty's (1945/2002) conviction that the body is the mediator of our experience; our understandings are shaped by our perceptions, situated in space and time. We are

what we perceive—being is perceiving, and by noticing, understanding comes into being. That perception comes to life in poetry in these teachers' journals, in their writing. Indeed, much of writing relates to just being there, being alive, noticing what you notice: “We stuff ourselves with sounds, sights, smells, tastes, and textures of people, animals, landscapes, events, large and small. We stuff ourselves with these impressions and experiences and our reactions to them. Into our subconscious go not only factual data but reactive data, our movement toward or away from the sensed events” (Bradbury, 1994, p. 33). To live is to interpret, and to write is to share our interpretation. We notice what we notice, but when we communicate it to others, we create and connect.

Again, there seems to be a difference in focus and the tendency for this clearing effect in nature as opposed to other places. Holly mentions this: “There's a difference for me between walking silently in the woods versus walking silently when I take Sophie [her dog] on walks around town. Because when I walk her around town, I never escape the to-do list, all the thoughts, everything that's running through my mind. Out here, I mean, it happens really quickly.” Moving in the trees, it does not take long for the mind to quiet, the chatter to fade. “When I walk, whether I'm trying to figure anything out, or whether I'm just trying to use it as de-stressing or whatever, I just don't even think about the concept of time or what time it is,” Holly says. In the motion she is free to just be.

The Time Warp: Being Lost and Found

Being present also means we are able to tap into a sense of timelessness, a time-out-of-time, or, as van Manen (1997) describes, lived time as opposed to clock time. Alyx experiences this sense of timelessness almost every time she engages in a creative act. She expresses this in conversation, saying, “I think that when I can do something creative

is when I lose that concept of time. And I don't think I really get to do that very often.”

When she does get to immerse herself in creativity, however, she loses a sense of time. She tells us: “I spent a week over the summer—I hadn't realized I spent so much time on it—planning and creating a wedding cake. Seriously. It was just a cake, but I put so much time and effort into it, that now, when I think about how much time it actually was, it was close to a week of actually preparing that cake [...] I was creating something and I lost myself in it.” The act of creating a cake—a process both mental and physical—allows Alyx to lose time, to lose herself in the act of creativity. She astutely reminds us, however, “I think, I want to be clear that there's two different [senses of] 'losing yourself' at play here. There's losing yourself in the moment, and then losing yourself as a person, as an individual.” The creative loss of self consciousness Alyx describes is not the same as losing one's-self or one's value. Just as we disconnect from others to connect with others more deeply, we may lose ourselves to find ourselves. We are lost and found, disengaging to engage.

Holly expresses the sense of time loss in an anecdote about an evening walk with a friend along the wooded canal towpath. She relates: “One time Anna and I were walking out here. We would do that a lot when it's not the sports season and stuff, and we usually walk about a couple hours, maybe one hour out and one hour back. This one time we walked we felt like we were in a time warp. We walked for like 5 hours without even realizing it.” They were free from technological ties, from time keeping, and so, then, were able to focus only on the momentary movement, the walk and talk. We need this time, engaging in nature. As Louv (2005) describes, “It takes time—loose, unstructured dreamtime—to experience nature in a meaningful way” (p. 117). It takes time to write,

too. Movement meditation may provide that time; it undoubtedly does in our walks together, as is shown by the flow of poems and reflections into which these teachers tapped.

Disconnecting from technology: Connecting to one's senses. Louv (2005) writes extensively about the lost life of the senses, dulled in part by our constant connection to technology. According to Louv, even “the smallest direct experience of a rural setting” can have a restorative effect on the senses (p. 54). As we become continually connected to our wireless devices, operating on internet time, we begin to yearn for nature, and even seek to find it through technology—instead of merely going outside. Louv discusses the artificiality of Rainforest Cafes, relaxation recordings of natural sounds, constructed (and ironic) simulated nature settings in shopping malls and theme parks. Abram (2011) points out that “If we venture out of doors, it's commonly not to wander on foot; instead, we entrust ourselves to the fiery alchemy of the automobile, whose fevered cylinders and whirling tires loft us speedily to our destination without our needing to touch down on the intervening terrain” (pp. 28-29). Solnit (2001) addresses this too, in a discussion of Las Vegas, where people flock to man-made indoor rivers and forests seeking a kind of nature, but speed through an authentic natural setting to get there, hermetically enclosed in their cars. When we lose the connection to the earth, soles pressing into soil, we lose something of ourselves.

When we disconnect from the authentic natural setting, we also disconnect from one another, states Louv: “As we grow more separate from nature, we continue to separate from one another physically” (2005, p. 65). As we separate, our lives become disconnected, our relationships fragmented. Our senses and observation skills dull. We

cease to notice the fine details of the places in which we dwell and the people with whom we share them. Paradoxically, it is when we disconnect from technology that the busy chatter ceases, and we can begin to hear through the silence. Our eyes open. We hear our own inner voices and see our place in the world, intertwined with the lives of others.

Annalee, in her journal, writes about the silence of disconnect immersed in body motion, as well, stating that “One of the best things about my running is that I don't have to take my cell phone or planner with me. Usually the BIG issue will appear (or just keep nagging me so that I end up running better than expected) as I run, and I realize that as soon as I resolve that one issue the other ones are extremely easy to deal with.” In the silence of her moving self, free from the chatter of the daily planner, text messages, voicemails, duties, Annalee is able to just be a moving body, a thinking body. She writes: “When I run my thoughts become very direct and focused. Luckily one of the perks is that it's a break from the ADHD hyper messages from texts, Facebook, etc. My brain stops functioning like a message board and has time to consider and savor a thought.” She is able to silence the chatter, take a reprieve from responsibility, and recharge herself. Moving through space, changing pace and setting, we are able to change our thought flow, to escape what Traci calls “the tsunami of the to-do list.”

The tsunami of the to-do list: The chatter and the clutter. In the beginning of a session of movement, the cluttered catalogue, the chattering, what Buddhism refers to as “the monkey mind” can be overwhelming. For many of us, quiet motion can silence it, but it takes time—extended practice—for the mind to quiet. Traci expresses this well in a journal entry:

I found myself thinking about EVERYTHING I have to do before going back to school--

revamping syllabi
 photocopying
 room set up
 first week lesson plans
 unpacking the rest of those boxes...

I was more aware of the insects crawling around: black ones, green ones, little ones, big ones. This made me cautious and fearful of snakes. I kept my eyes peeled for anything slithering about.

Alone in the quiet, at the beginning of her walk, Traci's mind begins to race, jumping from thought to thought like a monkey swinging from tree to tree, and as she begins to feel overwhelmed, other, irrational fears and distractions bubble up: snakes, spiders. We all know this feeling of breathless panic, the crushing weight of responsibility, the racing mind and pounding heart.

In time, though, soothed by the movement and the quiet, Traci is able to focus. She shares, later, that she finally is able to find a thinking flow instead of panicking, to use the time to her advantage. She tells us, "I realized with the silence for long stretches, I found that it was a time I had to think about EVERYTHING I had to do before going back to work, and the new house, and things like that." Instead of being overwhelmed by the tsunami, Traci becomes able to ride the wave, flowing and using the time to think and plan, rather than to feel paralysis; the chatter becomes conversation, the clutter becomes clean. She loses her sense of self-consciousness, of panic and paralysis, and is able to flow. Movement helps her do this.

Self-consciousness, which is ever evolving and develops throughout our lives, states Coffey (2008), "is not fixed; it ebbs and flows from one moment to the next, as emotions shift and change. In fear, in rage, in ecstasy or during intense focus, self-consciousness, the Self, is forgotten. It can happen at parties, in church, while skiing or dancing or having sex—or while climbing a sheer cliff or running a wild river" (p. 55).

This loss of self is immersive, transcendent, and can open into “a sense of oneness, boundlessness, a connection to the whole world” (Coffey, p. 57). And, “When the self disappears, so does doubt and with it the fears and anxieties that limit human potential, both physical and mental. Letting go of the mind can open the way to the seemingly impossible...” (Coffey, p. 58). Coffey goes on to discuss research that shows a neurological basis for the loss of self that occurs in deep immersive activity; during sensory rich activity, researchers have found, the introspective parts of the brain become inactive, “silenced during intense sensory processing” (p. 62). With this loss of self comes a shift in the sense of the passage of time, as well, as “time itself is something in the mind,” created out of our memories and experiences (Coffey, p. 64). As focus becomes intense, what we perceive as the present expands, slows down, spreads its wings over us.

This is van Manen's (1997) concept of lived time. Coffey calls this “wild time,” which is “based in nature and immeasurable by any form of clock,” and “allows us to transcend ordinary temporal limitations” (p. 71). Immersing ourselves in the moment, in deep sensory activity, especially in nature, can allow us to break free of tamed time, and move into wild time, transcendence.

But being able to focus into mindful silence takes practice, and so does the writing process. Lamott (1995) advises writers to push aside the tsunami of the to-do list, to “sit down,” to “quiet your mind,” to “clear a space for the writing voice,” and to practice because writing is “a matter of persistence and faith and hard work” (pp. 6-7). The writer must “relax, and wool-gather, and get rid of the critics, and sit there in some sort of a self-hypnosis. And then you have to practice” (Lamott, p. 72). In what ways may

repeated practice create a space for flow in writing and in movement? And, conversely, what is it like when lack of practice stifles these processes? What does regular practice—or the lack of it—mean in the experiences of these four conversants?

Practice: Opening and Becoming

Annalee and Alyx, while making it clear that they exercise everyday, did discuss the element of practice that makes exercise easier or the mind and body more ready to engage in fitness practice. Annalee references the idea of body memory that can only come with practice in one of our conversations, saying, “What I was thinking about, about halfway up that one hill, was the phrase 'muscle memory.' I was able to go back and say 'I've done this before.'” Once she relaxed into the practice, revisiting a motion her body already knew, she felt freed, limitless, and did not want to stop. She expresses that “I was able to get into the hang of it and then it's 'Oh, my God, I've got to turn around and go back.' Once you get to that point, it's great.” With practice, even running up a steep trail in the forest, effort becomes ease.

Practice as Personal Priority: “I HAVE to Now”

Alyx discusses the necessity of daily fitness practice for her own well-being, both physical and mental, stating, “I've got to hit the gym every single day, and if I can't make it to the gym, I've got to make myself go do something. So I will run on my treadmill or my elliptical at home.” This has become part of the pattern of her life, so that, if she does miss her daily practice, Alyx feels incomplete. She says “I have gotten to the point where I *have* to now. If I don't have my workout time, then I don't feel OK.” Likewise, Annalee says that, for herself, it is “harder to think” without daily exercise.

While it takes practice to be good at something, one must also make practice a

priority. Alyx discusses this, explaining how excuses kept her from physical activity: “I kept going 'Oh, my time schedule's so booked up, and I'm not going to do it.' But I HAVE to.” Knowing that she had to make time to practice led Alyx to a solution. She tells us that “I had to schedule it. So if that means getting up a half an hour earlier, then by golly I'm going to do it. Or if that means trucking them [her children] to the gym and having them sit on the couch while I am on the elliptical, then they're going, and they can do their homework while I am doing that.” When Alyx made practice a priority in terms of physical exercise, she saw results, shedding a significant amount of weight and seeing drastic benefits in her health and overall well-being, as well as in her relationships. Making time for it every day, engaging in regular practice, changed her life.

Getting “Centered” to Write

This is the case with writing practice, too. Bradbury (1994) directly compares writing practice with body practice: “An athlete may run ten thousand miles in order to prepare for one hundred yards,” he states, and that “the athlete learns to conserve power and apply it now here, now there, how to utilize this muscle, rather than that. Is the writer different? I think not” (p. 144). Regular practice, cumulative practice, creates learning and makes the difficult easy. Bradbury elaborates: “Quantity gives experience. From experience alone can quality come. All arts, big and small, are the elimination of waste motion in favor of the concise declaration” (1994, p. 144). The effort becomes automatic and allows deeper focus for the writer, just as “with the athlete whose body at last is educated and becomes, of itself, a mind. By work, by quantitative experience, man [sic] releases himself from obligation to anything but the task at hand.” (Bradbury, 1994, p. 146).

Lamott, too, chronicles the shift in writers that comes with practice: “They’ll want to be really good right off, and they may not be, but they might be good someday if they just keep the faith and keep practicing. And they may even go from wanting to have written something to just wanting to be writing, wanting to be working on something, like they’d want to be playing the piano or tennis, because writing brings with it so much joy, so much challenge. It is work and play together” (1994, p. xxix).

As a thematic element, practice surfaced more in our discussion of writing than it did in our discussion of physical movement. This idea is reflected in conversants’ own practices for writing and thinking. Annalee speaks about a class she took, *Creativity in the Classroom*, which prompted her to keep a regular writing journal. She combined her writing sessions with her evening walk or bike ride, often writing after moving. Annalee found it beneficial to carry a journal with her “at all times,” because “It’s kind of like you put yourself in this mindset, and at one point it does become like your job or career because you can go to this area not just physically but mentally in your head where you are centered enough to write.” The physical journal—the weight of it in her hands, the embodied act of putting ink to paper—served as a device that allowed her mind to center, for the writerly self to emerge. Through regular practice writing in her journal, Annalee found the words coming more easily, more quickly, and in quantity, and writes:

by the end of the class it made more sense to me having this journal because at first I was like, no, I am not much of a journal writer, but then I could say anytime I had any idea, I could just jot it down real quick and then later I could go back and revisit it and I felt like I could think better, and get into that groove of writing better. So over the course of the journals you see like the first day in I wrote maybe like half a page, but then later on it was pages and pages at a time I would write.

The physical act of writing opens a flow, and regular practice makes that flow easier to

access. Holly connects this to classroom practice, knowing that, for her students, regular writing is necessary—daily practice produces flow. She indicates that, in her creative writing courses, students must write every day, and that in the past, “one of the things they do is, for a two week period, carry note cards and write down ideas for writing.”

This has been effective, Holly says, but in the future a journal seems more practical, more conducive to continued practice. In the course of our conversation, she said “I like the idea of having a journal. I think I'm going to work that in.” In her journal, Holly writes: “We also talked about carrying a journal with you at all times, which I think is something that I'm going to have my students in creative writing do this year.”

Practice as Teaching Priority: “I Will Not Accept Mediocre”

The effect of regular practice, for these teachers, has become visible in the work that they are doing in classrooms. Annalee writes in her journal that she feels she must be a practicing writer in order to teach writing well, “Getting into the groove of writing for me is a process that I think makes me a better teacher... When I get into the groove of writing it becomes easier to explain the techniques that I am trying to teach. My writing voice is more authentic, natural, and I feel that I have time to express myself and my thoughts more accurately.” The effect of practice is also visible in the work they see their students do. Alyx offers revision to her students as a kind of continual writing practice, conveying the message that all writing is practice, that papers turned in are resting, “for now drafts” as Annalee calls them. Alyx explains that, with continual revision and feedback practice, students “see that process, at least of revision and of making things better.” Alyx's students also learn that development is continual, and that goals take time. She explains, “I tell them, 'I will not accept mediocre. If you have the opportunity to

make it better, you will make it better.” Alyx's high expectations, combined with continued practice, guide her students in writerly development.

Over time, these teachers have begun to see the impact of practice across their curriculum. During one of our conversations, Alyx tells Holly, “I can see your creative writing class impacting my classes. [...] I had one boy tell me that he writes a journal every day, and I was kind of shocked with that. But then another of my students told me that he writes poetry. I've never had a boy flat out tell me that he writes poetry.” Regular writing practice in the classroom, for these students, has moved through one class, from one classroom into the next, and beyond, into their daily writing lives, cycling through, spiraling out. But what happens when we neglect our practice?

Entropy: The Suppression of Practice, Unspent Energy

As much as practice became a thread through our discussions, so, too, did its partner, entropy, a state of unavailable energy, in which no forward movement occurs. The Oxford English Dictionary specifies entropy of a system as being “the measure of the unavailability of its thermal energy for conversion into mechanical work” (Entropy, 2013). Entropy is considered “the most disordered state, in which the least amount of energy is available for useful work” (Entropy). Representing stored but unspent energy, entropy relates to the tendency to get stuck and stay stuck, patterns unbroken.

Traci talks of being “out of practice,” on one of our walks in the woods, one that required an initial hike up a steep trail. She mentions, “I have not done any form of physical activity or exercise since we went back to work, and walking illustrated how out of shape and out of practice I am with anything.” Once a pattern of practice is broken, it becomes difficult to reestablish; a body at rest tends to stay at rest, and a habit of entropy

can be hard to discharge.

Annalee discusses ways in which she is able to break the tendency toward entropy, setting small goals for herself. A component of consistent practice, Annalee feels, is goal setting. During exercise, Annalee does this by keeping a small, reachable destination in sight, “tricking herself” into going a little farther, a little harder. She explains, in her journal, that “I’ll say to myself that I’ll run to the next turn to the batch of flowers—it’s a more portionable amount of ‘food.’ If the weather is crappy, I will time myself to commit to a certain amount of time.” Once Annalee gets started, she often keeps going; a body in motion tends to stay in motion. She writes in her journal:

Most of the time if I get going, if I reach past that 30 minute mark, usually from then on I’m good. It’s like breaking past that wall. And with running, it’s the same. If I can break past that first barrier in running, I can just keep going. But it’s mentally, like, is your brain going to stop you? And hit that mental wall point of ‘oh, no you can’t run?’ So you trick yourself into running. I will just run one more minute. I will run to that next tree. I will run to where that shadow is. And you just keep doing that, and you trick yourself.

Getting started, becoming established, however, in any practice, is difficult. Traci writes about this in her journal, too, expressing, “Walking this morning on the trail illustrated just how out of shape I’ve become since school is back in session. I’m so busy! I’m so exhausted! I don’t really do anything except get up, go to work, come home, go to sleep. There’s no exercise in my routine, and it horrifies me. I’m too young to feel this old.... I know I need it, but I don’t have the energy or gumption to make myself do it.” Traci feels stuck, unable to get started, frozen before she can begin. Additionally, it is almost as if her teacherly self takes precedent, consumes her other priorities and saps her energy. With so much time devoted to her profession, she may feel other important pieces of her life slip away, diminish.

In our discussion, Traci ties her own feeling of entropy to her students' reluctance to write, saying, “I kept coming back to the idea that I think I lack the gumption to do anything once I get home from school. It's put on pajamas, lie on the couch, have something to eat, go to bed. That's it. And I keep tying it into the fact that I feel like I am in the same place sometimes with the kids. They don't have the gumption to do even the slightest of tasks.” This lack of “gumption,” Traci suggests, surfaces for students in the classroom, too, since “They don't want to practice things that will improve them—just like I don't want to get off the couch and go to Zumba. Human nature? I don't know.” It is easier to remain unproductive than it is to risk moving forward; in some cases, this may be motivated by fear, which became a touchpoint in our discussions, especially in terms of student resistance to writing. What happens when discomfort and fear dominate? What is it like when students are afraid to write? What effect does fear have on students and teachers of writing?

Fear: a Vicious Cycle

Annalee arrives at one of our early morning meetings in a palpable mood. She is visibly upset, shaken by a conversation with a parent and student just prior to the start of classes. Describing herself as annoyed, she vents her frustration about “hearing that another kid has dropped the class [her Advanced Placement course] because of this 'I can't' attitude.” She tried to persuade the student and parent, but “No matter what I did it was just this weird conversation, of you don't even want to try. And then the mom was like 'Oh, No, it's just too much.' Even though she was in honor's level classes, she just can't.”

Annalee is concerned about this student, one with academic potential, who is now

“in all remedial level classes for next year. So she's gone from being relatively higher ed to being all what we call C level classes.” Voice full of irony, Annalee exclaims, “I'm just thinking, *that's really going to help* this child when she gets to college.” Annalee cares about this student, and she sees the student choosing what is easy rather than choosing to move forward. The student is stopped by fear, unwilling to take a risk; Annalee is powerless, even in her desire to help the student. For these teachers, support of students ties into their own identity, their own sense of being. When they can not best meet student needs, these teachers find themselves discouraged and disempowered; sometimes they find themselves afraid.

Fear of Judgment: “Freaking Out”

Traci journals about being stuck and overwhelmed, being stymied by fear herself, but she also connects it to her students as writers and thinkers. She writes:

I think it's hard to shake the thoughts sometimes that make me or the kiddies afraid or overwhelmed, or whatever. It's easy to get lost in the shuffle and mediocre mind set. It's easy to stay there and accept where you are and what you have. I struggle so much with all that I HAVE to do with what I NEED to do for myself or other people or other things. My to-do list is so long some days it's totally exhausting that I don't want to go above and beyond. Right or wrong—I don't. I have this in common with students. I believe they are SO busy with activities and family obligations that they don't want or can't go above and beyond. I find comfort in scratching things off my to do list. I am still searching for ways to silence or calm the tsunami that is my to-do list.

I, too, remember having this experience in my own high school classroom; my students, paralyzed when it came to writing, would become so blocked that they felt they could not move forward, could not even begin to try. Their fear and resistance was palpable—like a force in the room. In turn, I became blocked, stuck, unable to move them or myself forward. This surfaced, especially, in the teaching of writing.

Holly expresses that her students feel the same kind of paralyzing fear about

writing, that they seem stuck, frozen, unable to begin. She discusses one writing assignment in particular, in which she asks students to complete a short creative piece beginning with the words “It was a dark and stormy night.” The requirements are loose: it has to be a story, but it need not be long. Upon hearing this assignment, Holly tells us, “At first they freak out. They're like 'I don't know what to write!' or 'There's no way I can tell a story.’”

Traci tells a similar story, in which one of her classes finished early, so she asked them to write a short—8 line—poem. She told her students, “I'm not asking you to get deep. Just try your hand at poetry.” But they felt intimidated, paralyzed. Traci explains “They went nuts. And in the 5 minutes that they were like, 'I don't know what to write!' I wrote 8 lines and shared it. And they were so afraid to put themselves out there, they weren't even willing to try.” Students have little trust in their ideas or their abilities; they are not willing to risk.

This unwillingness, Traci feels, comes from fear that students already have about schooling, expectations, and social pressure. Palmer (2007) reminds us that students are afraid: “of failing, of not understanding, of being drawn into issues they would rather avoid, of having their ignorance exposed or their prejudices challenged, of looking foolish in front of their peers” (p. 37). My conversants express that students are especially afraid of being singled out, of being forced to share their work or of forced critique. Traci elaborates in conversation:

I've never required—well, they have a couple of assignments where they have to get up and speak or share something, but they always know in advance. It seems like they are always in the mindset that what they write we're going to require them to read aloud. I don't understand where that comes from. I worked with a great deal of the teachers at the middle school, and I know that most of them don't function like that. I don't know where that comes from. I don't know if there's

someone at the intermediate level that makes them do that, it's instilled at that level, but it seems like across the board that's the notion when they get a writing assignment, that they're going to have to stand in front of the class and read it.

The students in Traci's and in Holly's classes are afraid of being judged by their classmates. They resist writing, their classmates resist writing, and so writing becomes more and more difficult. Stuck in a vicious and unproductive cycle of resistance, hesitation, and fear, entropy builds.

The Fear of Writing: Failure

The fear of standing apart from the crowd can be associated with death and Heidegger's concept of subsuming ones-self in social expectations, accepting the status quo, to avoid our own vulnerability; rather than stand out, we become a part of the herd, sink into the sameness. As Reid expresses, "Diversion from death by 'absorbing ourselves in the they' is nothing short of dangerous," so "we must face up to our mortality as individuals in order to be true to ourselves and achieve the good life" (2002, p. 106). In this sense, "denial of death [or failure as a kind of death] is tranquilizing; it lulls us into inaction" (Reid, p. 106). Avoiding "death," or death in the clothes of failure, then, also means avoiding both loss and gain. It is stasis, safety at the expense of success, unexpended energy, entropy. We avoid losing; we avoid life.

Graves (1994) discusses fear of moving forward in adolescents, stating some of the dilemmas that these teachers face. The fear of standing out can cause resistance or reluctance. Hunkered in their desks, students may try to hide, like deer in headlights.

Teachers may not understand that

our students usually do not come to us when they are confused. If they have poor learning histories or don't understand their work, they try to go unnoticed or disrupt to classroom. This is why teachers need to learn as much as they can about students' potential in order to help them expect more of themselves. This usually

means that both need to construct a shared vision of what students know and what and how they will carry out that vision. (Graves, 1994, p. 84)

When we are uncertain, we hide in the herd or create a diversion.

In order for students to be successful, to grow and learn, teachers must help them break the cycle of crowd following and passive acceptance, inform them and care for them in a safe space, and build confidence and creativity. One way to do this may be through time spent moving in nature, using all their senses, being able to learn by doing. Louv (2005) cites studies that show the kind of trial and error unstructured time that is possible through bodily play in nature helps us overcome fear, to build confidence, and to problem-solve in ways that involve “making and collecting meaning” (p. 87).

The notion of too much reliance on structure, with lack of access to free movement in open space, surfaces in our talks. Students are afraid to act of their own volition, to stand for themselves and move forward. These teachers become frustrated when students fixate on requirements of word and paragraph count rather than content and communication, and their exasperation, palpable, can exacerbate the cycle. Fear manifests physically when students, palms sweating, spindle crumpled pages and say “I can't.”

Courage in the Crowd

Traci explains in one discussion, “The thing that blows my mind is that they're so afraid to fail.” Yet encouragement is quick to work for them, and students' achievements can be highlighted, because, according to Traci, “When that slightest bit of accomplishment is there, they're so overcome with pride in themselves and it's just like, 'Why can't you realize that if you can do this, and feel this, then you can do this, and just imagine how you would feel then?’”

Inasmuch as writers are motivated by approval, they are also frozen by fear of rejection, especially in the classroom. Graves writes:

...A basic sentiment about writing that is universally felt by most students in this country: writing is a sweaty business. The act is so painful that most delay writing a class paper until pure terror takes over. We pile references on the table next to us and simultaneously read and write, hoping our references will impress our teachers. 'I hope this is what they want,' we say to ourselves. We write a few paragraphs, but the language doesn't sound like us. On the one hand we fear that if the language sounds like us the professor won't like it; on the other, we know how hard it is to actually make the stuff sound as though we are the confident person who is in charge of the material. In effect, we write looking back over our shoulder to see if there is an approving look on the face of the teacher. It is hard to walk straight ahead by looking back, and when we look back as we write, our voice is passive. (1994, pp. 31-32)

Writing itself, then, is an act of courage. To bring one's words to an audience is to expose one's truth, one's vulnerability. When we write our truth, we are exposing ourselves to our readers, an act of courage. According to Heidegger:

...the saying that is more fully saying happens only sometimes, because only the more venturesome are capable of it. For it is still hard. The hard thing is to accomplish existence. The hard thing consists not only in the difficulty of forming the work of language, but in the difficulty of going over from the saying work of the still covetous vision of things, from the work of the eyes, to the "work of the heart." (1971/2001, pp. 135-136)

If writing is, indeed, an act of speaking from the heart instead of the eyes, the truth one knows from the inside instead of the truth one sees on the outside, then it is no wonder students struggle with writing. Is it possible to offer a space for open, naked hearts? What does it mean to move into truth?

The dilemma, at least for these teachers, is spanning the void between "I can't" and "I can," instilling pride, providing an environment that fosters intellectual risk, of communicating investment in students, in creating a culture of care: a space in which the words of the heart are honored and are sacred. These teachers seek to "dare to move

through fear, to practice knowing as a form of love,” so that they “might abandon [the] illusion of control and enter a partnership with the otherness of the world” (Palmer, 2007, p. 57).

Care: A Force Against Fear

Care, in our discussions, takes on several different, spiraling meanings. Etymologically, the verb care takes on varied meanings, too. The Oxford English Dictionary connects care with both concern and anxiety, to be “troubled,” to be “cautious,” and also “to take thought for, look after, provide for,” as well as to “have fondness” (Care, 2013). In these conversations, care is more than fondness; it is a sense of responsibility for others, as well as a sense of being troubled (as Annalee's experience with the fearful student suggests). Thematically, care arises in several ways in our movement, writing, and thought sessions.

These teachers express that they care for students, academically and personally, and this seems an obvious connection to the profession. They also show, throughout our conversations and interactions, that they care for one another; they build relationships related to academics within their classrooms, and they socialize together outside school. They are friends and support one another. Care and relationships with teachers past surfaced as another aspect of this theme, as did care for the self. How do these different aspects of care affect one another? What does it mean to truly care for others? What does it mean to care for the self? In what ways does care become a power source for these teachers—professionally, interpersonally, and personally? And what does it look like when self-care lends energy to care for others and becomes transformative—centering the self, spiraling out?

Care for the Self: Setting the Spark

A recurrent theme in our conversations connected to both meditative fitness practice and also to teacher identity is care for oneself; these teachers see the importance of nurturing themselves in order to be able to care for others. Traci illustrates this well in a journal entry that illustrates the importance of being whole beyond being a teacher, of allowing herself to experience the moment, and also of the pressure of time:

The breeze is really blowing right now and it feels nice. I like the sound of it through the trees—like a roaring rush of water almost. It's really calming. I want to close my eyes and let it rush over me. I keep using the word rush this morning. I sometimes feel like I don't have enough time to do what I need. Housekeeping. Grading. Lesson Plans. Relationships. Exercise. Yearbook. Being out here and talking with Holly illustrates that further for me, too. Even the simple stuff like planning a Halloween costume is overwhelming. Finding time to see a friend I don't work with is tough.

In this entry, Tracy recognizes the need to care for herself, but she also acknowledges the pressure of the profession she has chosen; she struggles against being swallowed by her teacher self. She is, in some ways, stopped by her own fears of not completing her work, of failing.

The teacher self: “It's MY *thing*.” These teachers, like many others, struggle with a profession that becomes an identity; we do what we do because it is a calling.

Traci relates an anecdote that illustrates her investment in teacher identity well:

There was a situation—and I tell this story all the time—a situation a couple years ago which actually brought me to the high school, which now is one of the greatest things to happen to me professionally. My position at the middle school was being cut, and the assistant superintendent was the one who came to me to deliver the news, and I got, needless to say, really upset. And she, she said, “it's just a job.” I said “It's MY job!” This is MY *thing*, and now you're taking it. She said “It's just a job.” And it just, it always sticks with me that people on the inside who should see it that way, do view it that way. I don't show up here everyday just for the paycheck. That's not why I got into the gig.

The “authentic” call to teach, according to Palmer (2007) is one that comes from “the

voice of the teacher within, the voice that invites [us] to honor the nature of [the] true self” (p. 30). As such, we become more who we are by the work that we do, we embody our work, and it tends to define us; however, it can smother us, too. As Alyx expresses one morning, “Sometimes, though, when you're a teacher and you have these kids that you bond with, taking care of them, it becomes more important than taking care of yourself or the other obligations you have.” The teacher who lets teaching swallow her often finds herself stuck physically: out of shape, out of whack: this certainly happened to me, a first year teacher who gained weight, felt lost, did not recognize herself in the mirror.

These teachers found that they must take care of themselves while still acknowledging their teacher identities: a difficult balance. Teachers who believe in their work, who define themselves by their teaching, who see teaching as a practice and not just as a job, must struggle to care for themselves without becoming subsumed by their work. Annalee voices this, saying, “I feel better when I do take care of myself. And I do put myself forward, at certain times, first. But then I go back and I feel like I am a better teacher when I've had that mental break. That's why I don't mind taking those classes for recertification, because I feel like if I am a student, I am also a better teacher.” In sustaining herself, Annalee is better able to sustain her teaching practice. She seeks actively to find a balance because, as she writes, “I want a life beyond grading without compromising the quality of my work.” She wants to do well in her life practice and in her teaching practice. To do so, Annalee must take care of herself.

Being healthy: Mind, body, and soul. Self care extends to, or perhaps begins with, physical practice. Alyx repeatedly addresses this in her journal and in conversation.

She writes: “I believe that a person's mental health and intellectual capacity, to an extent, depend on or [are] influenced by a person's physical health. It's been my experience that I am in a much better mental state when I am physically caring for myself.” Before she became fit, Alyx writes, she was “agitated all the time. I was angry with myself.”

In her past, writes Alyx, “I was a cheerleader and a gymnast. I played softball for many years. I loved to dance and socialize.” Over time, however, between teaching, having a family, and being caught in day to day living, Alyx began to neglect herself: “Somehow, over the years, I had closed myself off. I rarely did anything physical, I gained weight, either from pregnancy or motherhood or just being lazy, and I was disgusted with myself. I felt like my husband didn't want me anymore. I also wanted a quick, easy fix, which doesn't exist.” Not only did Alyx feel disconnected from a self she once knew, she felt disconnected from others.

In addition, Alyx wanted an easy out, a formula, for which to remedy the situation. She did not find this. Instead, Alyx began a regular practice of self-improvement, setting goals, modifying her diet, exercising, and making herself a priority. She expresses:

I needed to change me. Not an easy feat to do. I was unhealthy, mind, body, and soul. My body was first. Fat was the only way to describe myself. Hate and self-loathing filled my mind. One step at a time became my mantra. Exercise—Step 1—running, going to the gym, weight lifting, Zumba, hiking, biking—all activities that I now fill my free time with rather than watching TV. There is no excuse to not exercise everyday. If I didn't exercise, my day just wouldn't feel complete.

Making life adjustments in the physical realm affected every aspect of Alyx's life. She writes: “How does physical health intersect with mental/emotional health? For me... I'm so much happier now. Everything has improved in my life. I took the time to focus on my

physical self, and everything else improved with that.” Not only has she lost a significant amount of weight, she has experienced a decline in migraines, lowered blood pressure and cholesterol, and no longer shows symptoms of diabetes.

Alyx, since making physical changes in diet and exercise, has experienced a spiraling effect in the rest of her life. She writes: “I’m happier with myself and others. I can handle more stressful situations without losing my cool. I can look at my faults and those of others and accept them, at least the ones I can’t change. My success has made me also have hope when I do see the potential for growth and change.” She is more open to the world, and she is more open to her own growth. Since beginning a fitness practice, Alyx reveals, “I got my master’s degree in educational leadership, and I make it a point to learn something new every day. When a person’s physical needs are being met, he or she can focus on other things, like education.”

Reflective practice: White noise. Although physical fitness practice is one way to care for the self, reflective practice is essential, too, and movement meditation can incorporate both fitness physicality and meditative reflection. Palmer (2007) tells us that “Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one’s inwardness, for better or for worse,” so that “Good teaching requires self-knowledge” (pp. 2-3). Reflective practice helps us to know ourselves. In our conversations, teachers consistently refer to this kind of personal, thoughtful, and meditative element of life as “me time,” and indicate that they feel incomplete and less able to function without it.

Alyx gardens in solitude, spending time alone to recharge, and she has set aside a special, intentional place in which to do so: “We have a pergola that I just put into my garden. I’m not finished yet, but my goal is to have it be my ‘me space,’ where I can go

out and chill.” Louv (2005) documents the calming effects of gardening as a kind of horticultural therapy that is beneficial movement practice, citing its ties to reduced stress, blood pressure, and heart rate; Alyx's gardening practice functions much in this way.

Annalee, in her journal, composed a poem about “me time,” addressing the body motion that brings her to solitude and focused concentration:

Run muscles
flex and stretch
Physically busy
breath pattern
focused--
fade away
like white noise
freedom to
think. Relieve
stress—relax

In this example, Annalee finds inner space by moving through space; by making her body busy, she opens her mind and is able to relax into herself. This is the kind of productive solitude described by Koch (1994) as engaged disengagement: a kind of gathering of energy in focused, meaningful time alone. Time alone, running, allows Annalee to recharge, become renewed, find relief. Through the movement of her body, the depth of her breath, Annalee awakens inspiration. Her “chest, rising and falling, knows that the strange verb 'to be' means more simply 'to breathe,’” as Abram expresses (2011, p. 49). Annalee finds her breath, moving fast, and she finds herself, hearing the “white noise” of her own being in the world.

The writer in the presence of the world. Traci indicates that spending time outside connects her to herself, opening up reflection and thoughtfulness, writing that “Being outside always makes me sentimental, too, for those days gone by, the times spent playing, throwing rocks in the river, lounging in the sun. It always makes me want to

write.” The urge to write in moments of solitude and self-care, for Traci, surfaced in one of our quiet walks, evidenced in a poem that surged into her journal. She writes:

serene
 quiet
 green
 stillwater runs deep
 to
 slow rush of the river
 crunch of the gravel
 burst of sun through
 the trees
 buzzing of the bee in my ear
 random
 voices
 Walden Pond...ha!

In this short example of sights and sounds gathered from a morning movement session, Traci illuminates her surroundings with sensory detail, the sights and sounds of the trail. She pays attention, and, as Abram states, “When we bring mindful awareness to the simple activity of perception, we may notice that what really draws our attention to things—what enables our senses to really engage and participate with them—is precisely the open and uncertain character of those things” (2011, p. 44). A sense of wonder overtakes us when we notice ourselves in the world through movement.

Traci notices, becomes an open vessel to channel the openness of the world around her. Additionally, however, she turns inward, referencing her own “stillwater,” the “voices” she hears—prompted by the hum of a bee—and then circles back to literary thinking, making a spiraling connection to Thoreau's walking time in his own writerly space. In this, I see a writer seeing herself as part of history, in the spiral of time, laughing at the connections. Traci's poem, spontaneously shaped on one of our walks, shows the kind of power and illumination that can come from a few moments of moving

“me time,” time alone. This kind of solitude is essential, since “Learning demands solitude” for reflection, connection, and awareness (Palmer, 2007, p. 79). If learning demands solitude, as Palmer suggests, then so too must effective teaching.

This moving meditation in which we participated allows us to disconnect, find time by ourselves, and yet it also connects us more deeply to others. Meditation itself is characterized as an act of disconnection, and yet we never fully disconnect. According to Heidegger:

I am never here only, as this encapsulated body; rather, I am there, that is, I already pervade the room, and only thus can I go through it. Even when mortals turn 'inward,' taking stock of themselves, they do not leave behind their belonging to the fourfold. When, as we say, we come to our senses and reflect on ourselves, we come back to ourselves from things without ever abandoning our stay among things. (1971/2001, p. 155)

As signified by Heidegger, we are not just our bodies, but we are our presences in space and time. We still exist within context, and that context is never disconnected from those around us.

We are connected by the value of our living language, too, as is shown in the reflective journaling and poetic thoughtfulness represented here. Inasmuch as we are connected simply through the substance of being, we are also connected to the world through the reflective practice of language-making, itself a product of our embodiment. Abram (2011) reminds, “Oral language gusts through us—our sounded phrases borne by the same air that nourishes the cedars and swells the cumulous clouds” (p. 11). These gusting breaths that allow us to create language, when placed upon the page, bring us closer to ourselves and one another. A way of “singing oneself into contact with others and with the cosmos,” reflective language enables us to “call ourselves into the vital presence of [the] world—and into deep and attentive presence with one another” (Abram,

p. 11). In this way, the words found in “me time,” walking in the woods or journaling in solitude, allow us to more deeply care for others.

Care for Others: Expanding Energy

Even though these teachers found that “me time” is important in maintaining a sense of self and wholeness, they also thrive by cultivating relationships with others.

Holly addresses alone time as a form of self-care in her journal. An introvert, she finds she needs time in “me time,” in solitude, in order to care fully for herself. However, she finds she must balance this solitude, time alone, with time spent in conjunction with others. To feel fully healthy, she must care for herself and experience caring for and from others. She writes:

While I know humans are social creatures and I love hanging out with friends and family, I'm also just as comfortable being by myself. For a while—then I need human interaction. For example, those two days off work for the hurricane have been incredibly nice—I got caught up on sleep, grading, organizing, cleaning, and I even got to spend some time reading and watching Netflix. I really feel I need time alone when I haven't had any for a while, or when I get overwhelmed with school, volleyball, or other obligations. Sometimes it's just nice to take a day to recharge. It's relaxing to me and helps me chill out and take a break from all of the responsibilities of life. It only turns lonely if it goes on too long, for example, sometimes I feel lonely during volleyball season because I don't have time to recharge either by myself or with friends.

Inasmuch as Holly needs to be alone, she also receives positive energy from her loving relationships with other people—friendships and care for others prevent loneliness and provide stimulation.

Personal power: “What's really important.” Movement meditation and physical activity can add to one's personal power, as well as to physical energy, especially if one finds the movement meaningful. The mental benefits of healthy fitness practice can connect us more deeply to others, can strengthen our relationships, and can

deepen our understanding of ourselves. In order to create sustainable fitness practice, we must find deeper meaning in it. “The fact is that few people will continue to exercise unless they find some meaning in their movement. To do that, we must engage the mind in movement...” states Reid, adding that we “should treasure our workouts as quality times with ourselves—a chance for the mind to get to know the body, or perhaps, to reveal their unity” (2002, p. 42). Alyx's fitness practice demonstrates this kind of meaning in motion—a practice that gives her power, that makes her whole, and that deepens her connections with others and ripples out into her relationships.

Even as much as Alyx discusses her goal-setting and personal success in changing her life for the better, she acknowledges that she does not do this alone. She gathers strength and energy not only from her own body, but also from her relationships with others—especially her family and her children—to guide her in her goals. She indicates in one of our discussions that her family, particularly her two daughters and her relationships with them, help her to struggle through difficulty, empower her to choose the more difficult route to healthfulness because of her care for them:

I was thinking about them [her daughters], and thinking about me, and walking a path. That's what I kind of started with, you know, in life I guess, pondering. You have the option to travel different paths and do whatever you want to do. I was kind of thinking about self reflection and... Was I traveling the path that I wanted to? I think maybe two years ago or so, I wasn't. [...] I think in life we have a tendency to travel the easiest way, to do what, you know, is... I don't know how to put it... Maybe we don't do things because it's difficult to do. I think that I had to look at my life and make changes because of that. I was kind of reflecting on that and where it took me. And what it did for them, in a way.

Alyx sees that making changes that allowed her to better care for herself were both prompted by her relationships and a way to enhance her relationships. By strengthening herself, she strengthened her ties to others. “I had to manage my life differently, if that

makes sense,” Alyx says. She goes on to express, “I had to start looking at all the things I was doing, and I had to start saying no to things, and to focus on what was really important to me rather than what was important to everyone else. [...]I had to look at them [her children] and say they're my first and foremost priority. But I have neglected myself, and if I neglect myself I won't be there for them.”

Alyx recognizes that self care and other care are a continual, spiraling cycle. As she becomes fitter, so do her relationships: with her family, and with others. Likewise, through the self reflection meditative motion provides, Alyx is better able to articulate her own needs, both verbally and in her writing. Self-care that leads to self-reflection, time alone in solitude, has allowed Alyx to write more frequently, even keeping twin journals for her young daughters, in which she writes to them of family experiences, her own perceptions, and the stories of their childhood.

Friendship: Self discovery together. When people work together and share experiences, “the deepest friendships evolve,” according to Louv, “especially in environments in which all the senses are enlightened” (p. 78). By sharing time together in nature, engaged in physical practice, the teachers in this study deepen their relationships and friendships. Alyx and Annalee frequently work together to support one another in health practice goals. Alyx discusses this, saying that “Annalee and I, I think we have a really good partnership when it comes to motivating each other with that kind of stuff.”

Recognizing the importance of health goals and growth, the two of them began to care for one another even as they renewed their commitments to themselves. Alyx explains:

We went on a self-discovery together. We've been using each other sort of like a push, I guess, because we... Everything I've looked at says when you have

someone else who shares a common goal with you, then it pushes you further, it makes you do better, and so, when I started looking at my health, working out and stuff, Annalee and I had a conversation where we're sharing some of the same frustrations with life, and that's sort of where we started. I said, 'Can you just be my partner in this, and I will be your partner, and we will motivate each other?' So I think that's where we both sort of had that mindset. It's because we've been living almost the last year doing that for each other, and sort of ingrained itself in a way, I guess. Yeah, we have to do that, have to sort of trick yourself into getting something done that maybe at first you really don't want to do or don't like doing.

Alyx and Annalee partner with one another in fitness goals, yet they also partner with one another—and with Holly and Traci—in terms of teaching, curricular, and classroom goals. Alyx expresses this, saying, “I think there's a core group of us [who] really do work well with each other, and listen to each other, and provide support for each other, and are friends with each other. And maybe it's because it's proximity.”

Spending time together draws these teachers together. So does sharing common goals, as Alyx indicates: “We all push our kids and have a high level of expectations for them, and we bond over that.” Sharing planning time, teaching style, and goals for kids brings these teachers together, allows them to care for one another professionally, to learn from and with one another. They embody what Graves (1994) asserts, that “...each day we work around people who possess valuable lore about teaching, whose experience and wisdom can contribute to our ongoing education. Their classrooms are some of the best contexts for a dialogue about teaching” (p. 362). Alyx, Annalee, Traci, and Holly are doing what Graves suggests, and writing and walking and talking together illuminated that. They are friends personally and professionally, supporting one another in the classroom and out.

Teacherly relationships: The ripple effect. The theme of care, for these teachers, manifests in their support of one another, and carries in it the echoes of their

experience of relationships with their own teachers and mentors past. This is particularly resonant with me, as I am a part of these past relationships for both Alyx and Annalee. Alyx and I taught together, co-planning the eleventh grade English curriculum in the two years before I left the public school classroom. In our conversations, she speaks of assignments and practices we developed together that she has now expanded; I can see my teacherly life resonating beyond my tenure at the school where I once worked. My relationship with Annalee is this way, too: once a student in my Advanced Placement English and composition class, she now teaches the course herself, and I feel the echoes of my presence in her classroom practice.

Both Traci and Holly address directly their relationships with their own teachers and mentors as a component of their own teaching practice, specifically in the assignments they incorporate and methods they choose, cycling and re-cycling, re-creating successful teaching drawn from the inspiration of their own successful learning experiences. This may be a reflection of the conception of relational ethic described by Noddings (1988), which is tied to lived experience, since “all its deliberations focus on the human beings involved in the situation under consideration and their relations to each other” (p. 218). These teachers, invested in one another's lives and growth, participate in various “series of encounters in which the involved parties feel something toward each other” (Noddings, p. 218). These women feel responsibility for one another as teachers and friends and respond accordingly, as “motive energy flows in the direction of the other's needs and projects,” for one another and for shared and common goals (Noddings, p. 220). This care ripples out, into the climate of their lives and community.

In one of our conversations, Alyx brings up the kind of ripple effect a particularly

effective lesson can have. Holly's tenth grade students, having matriculated to Alyx's eleventh grade English course, regularly cite one particular activity, a poetry assignment called "The Mask," from Holly's course as being particularly influential in students' writing lives. Holly tells us the story of this lesson, saying, "This poem [Paul Lawrence Dunbar's *We Wear The Mask*]: my senior English teacher when I was in school made us read it, and then she had us re-write the poem. I thought it was really cool, so I do it in creative writing. Basically, they have to re-write it as 'I wear the mask' or 'We wear the mask,' and the 'we' can be anything, any group."

In this activity, students practice writing skill and reading skill, and yet, on another level, they address and establish their identities as part of a group, expanding their awareness of their own being. It is challenging and rewarding, as Holly explains, because "they're emulating the poet's style and the theme and everything, and it's really difficult for them, but every year I make them enter this poetry contest [...] they can choose any poem that they want to submit. It doesn't have to be one that we wrote in class, but a lot of them end up being the 'Mask' poems. And a lot of them end up being selected to be published." As Holly's own teacher influenced her through this activity, she is influencing her own students as thinkers, as writers, as poets, as persons; her students then carry this influence beyond her classroom, just as she has done with her own learning.

Writing: Passion and power. And the spiraling influence extends beyond teacherly relationships and into relationships with writers, too. By emulating a writer's style, one can access another's writerly thinking, learn technique, and in a certain way pay homage to a tradition of expression. It is a kind of writerly apprenticeship, a kind of

modeling and coaching. This reconnects to Rosenblatt's (1988) notion of writing as a circular and relational transaction between reader/writer and text, and adds the element of mentorship to the circuit. A multi-way, spiraling interaction of learning allows writers (student and teacher) to act, transact, and react in response to what they have read, discussed, and written.

Traci references influential assignments, teacherly legacies, and writerly relationships. One of our walks and writing sessions reminded her of one specific resonant classroom experience, of which she writes in her journal:

I was studying the Romantics in a lit class and we were charged with channeling the greats—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Yeats, and the rest. I spent a lot of time at Ritter Park in Huntington doing what we did today. Listening, observing, walking, reflecting. I assembled a nice portfolio of nature poems that I was proud of and the professor kept them to print in his course packet. I used this when I was student teaching at Huntington High, too. The school's cross country course lended itself nicely to my kids' tasks regarding a nature journal. The kids liked being outdoors and moving about for inspiration. Those creative AP kids came up with some wonderful things—poems, diary entries, short stories. They—those journals—remain one of the most favorite tasks I've graded. [...] It seems creative juices really flowed for me and those HHS seniors out and about.

In this anecdote, Traci shows how a teacher influenced her to establish a relationship with writers, which in turn led to a spiraling relationship of writerly connections with her own students.

An additional layer of meaning is added to this story, considering that, at the time, Traci was a student teacher. Influenced by her supervising teacher, she was empowered to channel her own creativity, which, in turn, spiraled out to her students. This was a defining moment in her teacherly life. Traci writes, “I look back on that now and am still so proud. I was eager as a student teacher to see how those would go, and they didn't let me down. I was grateful to see a group of young people react to a project that I was

passionate about.” This speaks to the aspect of care for self, for other teachers, for writers—and especially for students. Sensing Traci's passion and enthusiasm, her students responded, in turn caring for her.

Traci's use of the word “passionate” is particularly telling. The Oxford English dictionary traces the meaning of passion as connecting to a range of “strong, overpowering feelings or emotions,” including “suffering,” “pain or affliction,” “rage,” “love,” “desire,” “enthusiasm,” and “zeal” (Passion, 2013). This work, while engaging and engrossing, encompasses a range of feelings, many of which are not easy. Writing (and the teaching of writing) requires fortitude and strength, physical and mental capacity to withstand the tumultuous force of making meaning. Good writing taps into passion, with all its range of emotions. We are energized, as Bradbury (1994) frames: “And what, you ask, does writing teach us? First and foremost, it reminds us that we are alive and that it is a gift and privilege, not a right. [...] Secondly, writing is survival. Any art, any *good* work, of course, is that” (p. xii). The good work of writing—and of teaching writing—is an embodied reminder of life.

Meaningful teaching, according to Calkins, involves “real eye contact, a moment of person-to-person interaction,” in which “everything clicks,” and students and teachers “emerge during this interaction. All of a sudden the curriculum and manuals and kits and workbooks and programs recede, and what comes forward is the relationship between one child and another child, between a child and her teacher” (1986/1994, pp. 18-19). In these moments, embodied human moments, we rely not on writing prompts or writing assessments, but rather on human energy and physical presence to spark inspiration. This is what philosophy calls “intercorporeality.” We are always “with” one another in a

bodily way, so that “between the seeing and the seen, between touching and the touched, between one eye and the other, between hand and hand, a blending of some sort takes place—when the spark is lit between sensing and sensible...” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 163).

These inter-corporeal interactions are evident in the relationships built among these teachers, with mentors, with colleagues, and with their own students. What happens when teachers care for students? What does care look like in terms of fostering student writing and thinking?

Care for Students: Living Within the Call to Teach

Throughout the course of our conversations, it becomes increasingly clear that when these teachers prioritize self care and meaningfully connect with others personally and professionally, they also are better capable of providing genuine care for their students: on academic and personal levels. They see their profession as a calling, as part of their deep, inner identities, regardless of how they became teachers. As a governing part of their identities, this “calling” to teach, as van Manen (1991) suggests, creates deeper significance, since “...our lives with children will only be pedagogically meaningful when we feel animated or inspired by education as a calling” (p. 25).

Teaching is something these teachers physically do, but it is also a way of being that they physically are: they live their lives as teachers. Yet, these are teachers continually becoming, growing within the living of the call to teach.

Holly discusses growing into her teacher self as related to “the concept of process.” She knew that she would be a teacher from the time she could think about a role for herself. She explains, “A lot of people stumble into teaching later on. But then, like

me, I wanted to be a teacher from the time I was in 2nd grade or something. I used to make my little brother play school before he went to school, stuff like that. It's interesting to me how you can come from all these original stations in life, and then end up in the same spot.” This spot, the center of understanding for these teachers, is rooted in a caring community; together, they nurture and guide students. Graves (1994) emphasizes “getting to know” students academically in order to understand what they need in order to learn best. In this way, our students become our teachers, showing us what they need: “Our research data show that entire years—or even school careers—can be wasted if we don't let our students teach us” (1994, p. 16). This cyclical process of teaching to learn, learning to teach manifests in the working lives of these four teachers.

Care for students as writers: Writers teaching writing. Holly, Traci, Annalee, and Alyx nurture students academically and as writers, and they do so consciously, even when there is not much time for writing in the curriculum. Between all the standards to be met, writing is only one, and yet these teachers prioritize writing as much as they can because they recognize its value in students' lives.

Expectation and conversation. Just as Alyx sets high expectations for herself physically, personally, and professionally, she also sets very high expectations for her students, often challenging them to rise above the expectations they have for themselves. She discusses the gap between student expectations and teacher expectation as a kind of care, saying “I don't think I've given a 100 for AP for any type of essay. Yet they get so angry because all this time they've thought that they've been fabulous writers. [...] I'm not trying to discourage them, I'm trying to instill that fight in them for something more.” Alyx sees setting high expectations as a driving force to help students succeed

academically and to become better writers, even if it means they become angry with her. This does not mean, however, that students are left to fend for themselves; not only do these teachers set high expectations, they also care for young writers by providing tools and support to help students meet those expectations.

These teachers communicate openly with students about their work and their expectations. Traci emphasizes in one of our discussions the importance of bodily-based communication, of being actively in conversation with students, stating that “The talking to them and the conferencing and things like that, even if it's when they're doing the West Virginia Writes, if you're over their shoulder and you're talking to them about it, it seems that it helps them along more because of that support system.” Shared meaning is developed through conversation, and student writers “begin to understand the meaning of words through their place in a context of action, and by taking part in a communal life” since “language conveys its own teaching and carries its meaning into the listener's mind” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002, p. 208). By physically being with students “over their shoulder,” engaged in conversation, by “talking to them about it,” shared meaning develops.

Annalee also describes the slow process of nurturing students into writers in her journal, reflecting that “It takes me a while to help students find their voice. I, like many others, am more likely to keep moving forward if I don't immediately know that there is a problem.” She needs her students to communicate with her, and she relies on them to do so in order to be able to best meet their needs. The idea of finding voice—a physical concept translated to page—is a kind of flow opening, too: “It is as if the right words, the true words, are already inside them, and they just want help to get them out” (Lamott,

1995, p. xxxi). Helping students to unlock their voices can feel akin to physical force, opening and being.

Through writing conferences, especially, Traci, Holly, Annalee, and Alyx communicate with their students, discussing writing directly while indirectly providing a space to address student needs. Graves (2003) touts the power of writing conferences for learning writing, since “When the child talks, we learn [...] When the child talks, the child learns...” and “When the child talks, the teacher can help” (pp. 137-138). This kind of physical being-with, engaged in conversation about writing, helps students to find voice, presence, and thought. Atwell (1998) asserts that writing conferences have the possibility of building on student accomplishments and confidence, as well as meeting student needs both as writers and as persons. Conferences become an embodied connection between two writers: eye contact, hushed voices, leaning in over the work of writing. Conferences themselves are physical practice, different from marginal comments on paper pages; rather, they represent two bodies together in shared space over shared goals. And like physical practice, halting starts can lead to fluent results—it takes time for students and teachers to become comfortable, but once regular practice is established, flow comes easily.

This kind of individual care has changed the classroom dynamic and has built students into more confident and competent writers: as a practice, conferencing comes easily, and both students and teachers benefit from the connection. Holly explains, “We do a lot of conferences in 11th grade. And the kids love them and the kids want to conference on every single paper [...] They've all said that it helps them, and with me, I think it does too because you're able to do the general problems, but you're able to sit

down with each kid.” In this model, individual needs are addressed individually, and common needs are addressed communally. “Because it's more direct, and it's more personal than writing comments on the paper,” Annalee explains, conferencing is effective, and “It makes sense to them. Because you say 'I see here that you're...um...you know...your coherence is wrong or something,' and you sit with them and say, 'Now, you go back and read this paragraph out loud.' They're not going to do that if you've just given them written directions. Your sheer presence is forcing them to revisit.”

One on one contact, lived relationship, brings revision practice to the student directly, in a way that is effective, immediate, and individualized—an exchange between two learners, both active and engaged. Through “the practical language of the body,” in conference, these teachers engage in “immediate involvement in situations where [they] must instantaneously respond as a whole person to unexpected and unpredictable situations” (van Manen, 1991, p. 122). Likewise, and in conjunction with responding as whole people, these teachers are responding to whole people—the writers they teach. When teachers live in wholeness (connecting back to self-care and meditative physical practice) they are better able to respond in wholeness.

Mentorship: Baring one's self. In order for this exchange of ideas in wholeness to occur, students and teachers together must create a sense of trust as well as a sense of expertise—the relationship of mentorship and apprentice. To do this, these teachers present themselves to their students as fellow writers, as writers with more experience, but with the same processes for finding and developing writing. This kind of mentorship, Palmer expresses, “is the dance of spiraling generations, in which the old empower the young with their experience, and the young empower the old with new life, reweaving the

fabric of the human community as they touch and turn” (2007, p. 26).

Atwell (1998) suggests that she, in her classroom teaching practice with young writers, has “gone from acting as a mirror, someone who reflects back what I hear in the writing and gives a neutral response, to trying to act as a mentor for young writers. When what I know of writing and the writer will help a student learn something or meet his or her intentions, the conference becomes an occasion for student and teacher to collaborate on the writing” (p. 230). Like Atwell, whose writerly awareness guides her teaching, Alyx frames her teaching of writing with her own writerly awareness, her own understanding as a more experienced writer, stating:

...I kind of emphasize to them that getting to that writing happens in different ways for different people, and so what works for me... I show them different ways that I process, I guess. So one of my ways might work for them, or they might have to find another way that gets their creativity flowing for themselves. I just try to bare myself in the classroom so they can see the different ways that I get to a certain point.

Alyx's embodied language of “baring” one's self illuminates the underlying idea that we must be vulnerable to teach, vulnerable to learn. We must expose what we don't know in order to move forward, and we must practice in order to grow. Like movement practice, writing takes practice, as does mentoring less experienced writers.

The concept of writerly mentorship of students becomes important in our conversations, just as it is in these teachers' classrooms. All four teachers write for and with their students, allowing their writerly selves and their teacherly selves to merge.

Modeling: “Watch me!” Holly and Traci both use their own writing as a model for student writing assignments; both related anecdotes about composing a poem or other piece of writing at the spur of the moment in order to build confidence in their students and offer an example for student use. Tapping into a spontaneous source of words, they

compose on the spot: “Like this,” they might say, or “Of course you can. Watch me!” Standing at the front of the room, facing her confused and perhaps stuck writers, Holly will compose a poem, writing as she thinks, projecting her work onto a screen for all her young writers to see.

Traci does this too. She explains, “Especially with the kids that I have because they say they can't do it. I'll say 'Give me a topic. Give me a topic and we will write a poem together right now,' and that gets them going.” By becoming the example, but allowing their writerly selves to come into the classroom, these teachers light a spark for student writers and ease the fear they may experience.

Alyx discusses modeling, as well. She explains that students need to see how writers work in real time: “...when I'm in front of them asking them to brainstorm, I will sit and I'll brainstorm again in front of them.” So, students are able to see writing in action, inspiration as it appears. Alyx does this for every class, because “Even though I may have already done it in 3rd period, I will do it in 4th period, because I want them to see my process, too. So despite the fact that I've already had it running around and around in my brain, just for them to see me do it, too.” As the words are “running around in [Alyx's] brain,” her students are able to see and respond to her as writer and mentor, seated in front of the classroom. Circling back to the rarely used definition of running as rhythmic verse, the flow of words mimics the movement of the body. Alyx's hand moves across the page, her words move visibly, writing becomes a visible body act for her students; and then they, too, are able to move—their words become un-stuck.

Annalee uses her own high school papers as models for students in the course she teaches, one similar to the courses she took in high school—with me as her teacher.

Annalee explains, “I have so many samples of my own writing from high school and from college, and when I share that with my kids, they're like, 'What were you thinking?' and I'm like 'I don't know! I'm showing you guys that sometimes you do have that shitty first draft...’” Annalee places herself (albeit a different version of herself) in a space of writerly consciousness, of critique, and of example. In addition to this positionality, Annalee also, by using her own high school work, shows her students an image of process change, of a writer becoming, engaged in the continual activity of moving through life and of being in the world. Alyx shows herself in process to students, as well. She tells us that “Any time I'm working on something for my own classes, I take it in and I'll be like, 'OK, guys, someone look at my writing!’” In doing so, Alyx shows herself as both teacher and learner, engaged in growth.

Alyx works to offer assignments that have real-world validity and meaning, that have authenticity of purpose for her students and in her classroom. She explains:

...anytime that I ask my kids to write for me, I do the same assignment. And they think I'm crazy because I do the same assignment as them, but at the end of it, I hand in my work, too, so when they're peer editing, mine's in the mix. Or if I want them to share, I share mine first. I think they look at you as a teacher in a different manner. I always say “I wouldn't ask you guys to do something I wouldn't do myself.”

For these teachers, then, writing is a kind of care, for self and for others, since writing is something that helps us to grow and “...allows us to transcend ourselves in space and time” (Graves, 1994, p. 273). For young writers who are stuck, then, may see “little connection between their writing and their 'becoming' as persons,” because “There is nothing they want to understand about themselves much less do it through writing. Writing will only document what they can't do” (Graves, 1994, pp. 273-274). For these writers, then, the writing teacher must be come the voice of “I can,” helping others

become writers, learners, and mature people.

If, as Solnit asserts, “To write is to carve a new path through the terrain of the imagination, or to point out new features on a familiar route,” and “To read is to travel through that terrain with the author as a guide—a guide one may not always agree with or trust, but who can at least be counted upon to take one somewhere” (2001, p. 171), then these teachers are guides through writing, walking their students out of fear and into care, helping them become un-stuck, through care and relationships. One way these teachers demonstrate capability is by caring for themselves as bodies and writers, setting an example for their students. Alyx, Annalee, Traci, and Holly help students believe in themselves by opening up their own writerly selves, being vulnerable, and caring for students as fellow writers—and not merely as minds in their charge with tasks to be mastered. Rather, these teachers seek to make meaning, being writers in front of and with their students; however, in order for teaching to be wholly effective, these teachers must also show themselves to their students as people and must see and care for their students as people, too.

The presence inside the writer: Care for students as people. These teachers have found that, in order to best serve students, they must also nurture them personally: not just as writers, but also as people. To do this, students and teachers must see one another as human beings, engaged in lives outside the day to day work of the classroom. For teachers, self-care becomes a necessary part of caring for students. They must know when to step back, when to engage, and when to walk away.

The ultimate goal for learning, of course, is for students to become fully independent as writers, thinkers, learners, and people. Heidegger discusses this concept

of care as “authentic care—that is, it pertains to the existence of the other, and not to a what which it takes care of—helps the other to become transparent to himself in his care and free for it” (Heidegger, 1927/2010, p. 119). In exhibiting authentic care, Traci, Holly, Annalee, and Alyx enable students to be who they are, seeing themselves fully, independent of their teachers.

Nurturing the person: To impact on a deeper level. To care for students and to be their best teacherly selves, Alyx, Annalee, Holly, and Traci have to care for themselves, too. Alyx discusses this poignantly in her journal, connecting care for herself directly to care for others, especially her students. When Alyx began to care for herself, to become whole, the effects spiraled out into the rest of her life. As this happened, she also began to see students as more than just students, but as individuals with needs beyond the classroom, and with families and relationships beyond themselves. Thus, caring for students becomes caring for the community as a whole. Alyx writes:

As a teacher, I feel that self care has improved my craft. Caring for me has morphed into the need to care about the well-being of others. I already did that before, but now I want to impact my kids (students) on a deeper level. It's my goal to help them lead successful lives, not just teach them English. I urge my kids to be active, I include them in my journey, I make my learning activities relevant to their lives and future. I make sure that their needs are met, and if I can't personally do that, I find someone who can. In the past year, I've given food, clothes, money, yearbooks, senior pictures, grad stuff, worked on FAFSAs and scholarships, got up and went to work early, stayed hours late, drove 2 hours to be by one of my students in her final hours, late-night phone calls, attending sporting events and non-school events, babysat, invited Santa to school, built an outdoor classroom, and some other things I can't write about. I've called parents and supported them with things like discipline, fighting, frustrating future plans for their kids, and even a drug bust. These aren't things that are a part of my job description, but when my kids have me as a teacher, they know that I'm one of their largest advocates, and I'll push to make sure their needs are being met in and out of the classroom.

These teachers speak not only of teaching subjects, of skills and writing

development, of being proud of their students as writers, but also they speak of teaching students—people with lives and relationships beyond the reach of the classroom. They also indicate that they genuinely care for students as people who are growing in their own right, and in this way, as Noddings suggests, “Teacher and student [have] become partners in fostering the student's growth” (1988, p. 224). Multiple times in our conversations, the word “love” surfaces in discussion of individual students; extending beyond care, these teachers are invested in the lives of their “kids,” academically and emotionally.

Teaching as an act of love. When we invest in students' lives, teaching becomes an act of wholeness, of deep meaning and connection with other people, an act of love. As such, teaching is a work of the heart and of passion, and is an act of healing for teachers and students. Palmer (2007) discusses the pain associated with the fragmented self so often promoted in teaching, stating that teachers are often “disconnected from our own truth, from the passions that took us into teaching, from the heart that is the source of all good work” (p. 21). Reconnecting and remembering who we are helps us care for students and helps students better care for themselves, so that teaching “can come from the depths of [our] own truth—and the truth that is within [our students] has a chance to respond in kind” (Palmer, p. 34). Meditative practice brings us back to ourselves, helps us remember who we are, and allows us to better care for others.

These teachers see students as individuals with families and interests and lived lives. Sometimes relationships with students build around shared interests, such as enthusiasm for writing or dedication to learning. Holly speaks candidly about one student in our discussions, saying:

He's one of the ones that became like the ones you really care about. His mom had run into me like three times last summer around town, and she just kept talking about how excited he was that he was going to be with me in creative writing 2, because he likes to write and everything, but he's a 17 year old boy. She was very excited for him to start writing, and he does. He comes into the classroom multiple times throughout the day, and he is one of my favorites because he tries really hard [...] He tries, and that's awesome.

Holly feels an affinity for this student, who tries his best and who has the support of his family in doing so. He likes writing, and he seeks out her guidance. In this instance, a student chose Holly as mentor, and she acknowledges this, saying that “a lot of times the kids also really decide on who they're going to be close to.” Students choose teachers; this kind of relationship makes it easy to reciprocate care, to participate in an exchange. In this way, Alyx, Annalee, Traci, and Holly “treat students with respect and consideration and encourage them to treat each other in a similar fashion. They use teaching moments as caring occasions” (Noddings, 1988, p. 223).

Difficulty comes, however, in caring deeply for students who seem as if they do not want to reciprocate, who do not care about school, or writing, or much of anything that is directly discernible. Still, these teachers feel the need to connect with and nurture those students, too—perhaps more urgently than the students who choose to seek them out. Graves discusses the same kinds of issues and relationship building that these teachers suggest are important, that “when teachers speak about memorable mentors they always say 'They knew me outside of class.' Relationship was an important factor. When students feel 'known,' then they learn more easily. This is especially true if they feel that the teacher knows them beyond the subject at hand” (1994, p. 7). To seek to connect with students, then, becomes equally important with being available to students when sought.

Writing as connection building. Interestingly, one way these teachers make and

build connections with their students is through writing—and, in doing so, the academic becomes personal, the exercise of writing becomes a means of relating. These teachers speak of students writing to them, or of assigning writing that asked students to reflect upon their lives, circumstances, and ideas. As such, writing takes on authentic purpose, becomes a communication, a way of building relationship. Holly describes this kind of assignment in one of our conversations: “During the first week of creative writing, one of the things they have to do is write and respond to the prompt 'What does writing mean to me?' and basically they have to tell me why do they write, why they're taking the class, what they hope to get out of it.” This assignment in particular, Holly goes on to explain, allows her access into the lives of her students beyond what normally might be revealed in regular classroom interaction. She continues:

I had this one girl who, I don't know her name—she's one of the ones I don't know her name yet—I am pretty sure she's only a freshman or sophomore, she's young—and her response to the prompt has stuck with me since Tuesday, which is when they did it, is all about how she has a lot of anger problems, and she doesn't really know how to handle her anger. What she has learned is that writing about it keeps her from going out and getting in a fight or going out and doing something stupid. It was very redundant, her writing is not good, but I was looking at what she was saying, and it's very interesting that as a 15, 16 year old she's realized that writing is a way to cope with all the issues she's been dealing with, and she's able to do it in a positive manner.

Even though Holly did not yet know this student, through the channel of writing, she already knew something about her, had some foundation on which to build both academic skill and relationship, as well as an idea for how writing can function in this student's life. Through writing as an outlet for authentic expression, Holly can begin to see this student academically and personally—to relate and to connect.

The risk of caring: “It might hurt.” Sometimes, however, these teachers struggle with the level of personal investment it takes to be effective teachers of authentic writing.

Showing students one's self in wholeness can be frightening as well as nurturing; opening ones self to relationship also means opening one's self to the possibility of being hurt.

Holly speaks candidly about one student whom she has watched struggle, through both successes and setbacks:

They surprise you. [...] I've always been very close to him, and he worried me. He's done that a couple times, over the last year or so, he's stopped by my classroom and said things that have either made me cry, or sent me Facebook messages that made me cry, about how I was the only person in that school who cared about him. And that makes me sad on multiple levels. But he actually just sent me another message last week updating me on his life, and he's taking some college classes, like he's taking German online, and he's doing all this stuff. He's going to go into the service, and he's thanking me again and again. I thought that kid was going to die two years ago. He was in a coma because he mixed so many drugs together. I found out about it and at the time, I was like "Why did I let myself get so close to a student like that?" Not close in a bad way, just close in that I'm looking out and watching out for him and worrying.

Caring takes risk; caring takes high expectations. It also requires that teachers sometimes must face fear, disappointment, or pain when their expectations are not met. Movement meditation, by bringing us into reflective practice, by allowing us deeper contact with our innermost selves, enables us to withstand these occasions of fear, disappointment, and pain, so that "The views of the world are likewise expressive of the world and of each other" (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/2003, p. 40). We can see the world clearly, and in doing so, we see ourselves and one another.

Alyx discusses this in one of our conversations, expressing that "Sometimes they're not open to the differences we may present them with, in a way. I think, I've struggled with this for the last couple of years, where I kind of had that feeling. I wanted to be open and on a closer level with my kids." Alyx has chosen to become vulnerable, opening herself to students, in spite of the pain it might cause.

Even so, students may reject the relationship, or, as Holly found, dabble in drugs,

or go to jail, or, in the case of a student with whom Alyx became close, may even die.

Alyx relates, “I think I've been guarded more for the past two years, and it stems, I think from [the student who died].... I think allowing myself to be friendlier with her, and sharing what she went through, and hearing about her life for the 5 years of...since she was in 7th and 8th grade... knowing all of the issues she was up against, and allowing myself to feel that personal level with her, and then, her dying.”

Faced with the possible pain of losing a student, teachers must choose to be vulnerable anyway, to risk anyway, to be whole and human anyway. Alyx explains, “I've struggled because I want to be on a better personal level with the kids, but then I keep going... It might hurt. But I know that. It doesn't stop me.” When students begin to become more who they are, when a mutual, shared goal of student success comes to fruition, the risk becomes worth it. Alyx describes this kind of success vividly, offering the example of one relationship with one student, the spark of one week's worth of class already beginning to grow: “...after having them a week, by the end of class she had discussed with me some issues that were going on in her life, and I felt like that's an amazing kind of step to take, for a week of being in my presence, she's sharing her life with me. That's one of the amazing things about being a teacher.”

When “things fall into place.” Being a teacher, for these women, means seeing students in wholeness, being themselves in wholeness, and looking at the world in wholeness; all of this circles back to caring for the self. Each of these teachers is, as Abram so beautifully expresses a “grown woman [who] know[s] in her bones that she inhabits a breathing cosmos, that her life is embedded in a wild community of dynamically intertwined and yet weirdly different lives” (2011, p. 42). Their journals

reveal the poetic noticing that shows this connection-making, and the journals are a product of the movement made in reflective practice. Movement meditation is one way to take care of one's self, to become silent and centered and whole in a busy and chaotic world; the "me time" of body practice connects us to ourselves and enables us to care for others. Alyx expressed this well, saying:

... So we take grammar out of instruction, and we look at the writer holistically and look at all the kid is doing. [...] Physical health versus mental health, and you as a teacher, you as a person. I think it's all interconnected and we need to pull back and look at the big picture and sort of go from there. So for me, getting myself to a level of physical health, even though I'm not where I want to be. [...] So first we have to take care of our physical self, and after that I think things just kind of fall in place.

Alyx takes care of herself to take care of others; she teaches grammar in context to better teach writing. She steps back, looks around. She addresses the world as a whole, students in wholeness, cares for herself in mind-body wholeness in order to better care for others. She stops teaching lessons and starts teaching students. She educates.

True education, Leonard (1974/2001) explains, is a balance of power, a movement toward wholeness, and "provides not just cognitive meaning but a way of walking, sitting, standing, and relating to the world," a "guidance in being, rather than merely doing" (p. 249). Likewise, "learning isn't something we can do for (or to) our students. Learning requires an act of initiative on their part. We can only create conditions in which learning can happen. Writing can help those conditions by encouraging students to ask questions, to notice and wonder and connect and inspire," and also "to stay wide awake in life" (Calkins, 1986/1994, p. 484).

Writing is a kind of thinking, one that allows us to discover what we know and who we are. In the same vein, intentional movement practice is also a kind of thinking,

one that more deeply connects us to who we are, so that we are more fully able to see our place in space and meditate our relationships with others: family, colleagues, students, teachers. As Alyx suggests, taking care of one's physical self better enables all other kinds of care. When things “fall into place” and teaching becomes “guidance in being,” as well as “condition creating,” then we experience a sense of wholeness and alertness—of person and of practice. This wholeness, perhaps, can give way to transcendence.

Transcendence and illumination: Rising Above and Being Lit from Within

Palmer (2007) offers a sense of the transcendent as a “great thing” in the room, and tells us that “When a great thing is in their midst, students have direct access to the energy of learning and of life” (p. 122). “Great things,” according to Palmer, are rooted in passion for learning and for the subjects themselves, as well as for the students, and they arise from shared meaning-making and authenticity.

Leonard (1974/2001) describes transcendent learning as an “act of illumination [that] involves not going out and finding what isn't there, but simply shining the light of consciousness on what is” (p. 147). Transcendent moments allow us to see more deeply, think more deeply, and to begin to “reconcile the seeming opposites out of which is woven the ultimate harmony of the universe” (Leonard, p. 147).

Merleau-Ponty (1945/2002) discusses the transcendent as that which “awakens within me a primordial knowledge of all things, and to my finite and determinate perceptions' being partial manifestations of a power of knowing which is coextensive with the world and infolds it in its full extent and depth” (p. 430). A glimpse of the transcendent allows us to acknowledge what we know as well as what we do not; as characterized by Merleau-Ponty; it also allows us to connect more deeply in the world.

For the purposes of this study, we can think of transcendence as golden moments of flow, during which some other power seems to overtake us, and words just seem to come of their own volition.

“It's a Sacred Experience!”

The writer-teachers in this study speak of transcendent experiences in their own writing lives as well as in their classrooms; each of them have experienced the magic of complete immersion, of creative flow, what Traci describes in one of our discussions as “almost sacred! It's a sacred experience!” Alyx finds this sacred transcendence in designing and creating a cake, as previously described, or she finds it working out, or in her garden. Holly finds and embraces transcendent experience while walking in the woods, a “realm of timelessness,” finding herself in “almost a surreal, out-of-body experience when you finally realize how long you've been gone, but not in a scary way, more of an impressed, 'hey, that was awesome.'”

Annalee finds transcendence in running, describing it as a “clearing process in my head.” She describes the type of transcendent flow that running can produce in our conversation, saying, “When I was running, a word or phrase would pop up, and I would just write that and then keep on going, keep on going. So that's me brainstorming, and later on I'll go back and just take a breather and formulate the thoughts from that.” This experience is powerful, intense, and shocking for Annalee, and when she enters a flow state as a writer, “distractions fade away into the background and the sound [...] will dull. Time begins to fly and my thoughts are more direct.” When inspiration comes, Annalee confesses, “It's almost like getting shot in the head with an arrow all of a sudden while you're on the path and you're like OK, gotta write down that word.”

This experience is sudden and direct—words surge into being. It happens organically during moments of creativity. The guiding question, however, for me and for this study, relates to whether this can be cultivated, whether it can happen for writers in classrooms. Can we help students to find such flow in writing through the moments of their lived lives? Can the conditions be made for students to move, think, and write fluently?

When words flow: “The greatest stuff.” Traci has experienced a meditative flow as a student writer herself, in one of her own classes. She retells the story during one of our conversations:

...one of the classes that we took, we studied the Romantics, and we had to...we had a poetry portfolio assignment where we had to channel the Romantics. And I went and sat in Ritter Park and just did what you've been asking us to do, just took it [the surroundings] in and made notes. I had to write something like eight poems, and those were some of the things that just poured out of me, that I was really proud of, and got a really nice grade on them, but it just... There was something about just sitting at a picnic table and watching and listening, and it really worked. I haven't had that experience EVER before then and since. It was like that... you know... from Aquarius, all the Moon's aligned with Mars? It just worked.

For Traci, in this moment, something sparked. She was inspired, and words flowed, like a switch flipped, consciousness flooded.

Coffey (2008) discusses flow experience as a kind of transcendence, particularly as it is attained by extreme sports athletes, such as snowboarders, surfers, skiers, and climbers, those who immerse themselves in the natural world, and in doing so, find a deeper sense of self. Through physical practice, she writes, we can find spiritual wholeness, attend to “thin moments,” that enable us to “break through to a different reality” (p. 27).

Traci was able to move into this kind of flow simply by working with a writing

task in a natural setting, transacting with the work of other poets. She, then, moved further into the spiral when she translated this experience from her own writing life into an assignment for her students. She describes this re-cycling as follows:

The poetry assignment I talked about, I tried it when I was student teaching, too, because the woman I was with at H— High had me doing the Romantics, while I was there with her AP kids, and I tried that. They had a pretty nice cross country course, and I was doing it in the spring. I had them go out on the cross country course, and I had them doing some of the same stuff that I found worked really well when I was at Ritter Park those days. And they came up with some really good things. Nice pieces. And I didn't ask them necessarily to write poetry. I gave them the freedom to do it as a journal entry, they could do a short story if they were so inspired, however they wanted to do it. And I had a lot of fun reading what they wrote, and to this day, those are probably my most favorite things that I have ever had to grade, because they just came up with the greatest, the greatest stuff.

Traci creates conditions for students to move to find flow; spiraling out, she shares what she knows. She still remembers this kind of learning as a formative experience in both her education and in her teaching.

Fearlessness and trust. Traci was excited about the work, and her students were excited too. She reflects in her journal, “The instructor's enthusiasm about a task, project, lesson, etc. Maybe they buy in more. But watching them create and have those ideas pour out of them the way they poured out of me ... MAGICAL. It far surpassed all expectations.” By having expectations and enthusiasm for her students, by placing them in time and space, Traci channeled a flow for her young writers. When she did, she and her students felt rewarded, and this feeling continues: “It was amazing! It's those moments that make me glad that I am doing what I'm doing, that I am a teacher. Too often, students do the minimum and that's all. when someone goes above and beyond because something is pouring out of them. I become almost giddy. I try and think about how on earth to motivate them all that way, but it comes back to FEARLESSNESS and

TRUST.” Traci creates a safe space, in which flow can be felt, and students rise to the occasion, inspired and on fire. This is transcendent for students and teacher alike.

As Calkins (1986/1994) suggests, teachers of writing create conditions for writing to happen. Graves (2003) establishes that teachers must make individual contact and validate student ideas to diminish fear, by “setting a quick tone in the room: what you say is worthwhile, your words come through, and you know something about your subject” (p. 14). In creating conditions for open writing and speaking, teachers are creating a space, building a place in which they and students may dwell, as Heidegger (1971/2001) suggests. “Cultivating and caring,” Heidegger tells us, “are a kind of building” (p. 215). A space of care is one of trust and fearlessness, in which we can “bare” ourselves, as Alyx expresses. In creating a space of care and cultivation, writers are able to grow and perhaps to transcend.

In this safe space of transcendence, we are open to others and to the world. Perception is a question, and “open-ended relationship,” that Abram describes as a “tension between the apparent and hidden dimensions of each being” (2011, p. 45). Transcendence means we are unafraid to live in the open question, always asking, every moment teachable.

Leonard (1968) describes teachable moments as being transcendent: “Something happens. A delicate warmth slides into parts of your being you didn't even realize were cold. The marrow of your bones begins to thaw. You feel a little lurch as your own consciousness, the teacher's voice, the entire web of sound and silence that holds the class together, the room itself, the very flow of time all shift to a different level” (p. 8). In these moments of flow in teaching and learning, continues Leonard, “you find yourself

trembling slightly with the terror and joy of knowledge, the immensity of existence and pattern and change. And when it ends and you must go, you reel from the room with flushed face, knowing you will never again be quite the same. You have learned” (1968, p. 9). This is a physical response—the climate of the room shifts, and it is palpable. Heart rates increase. Breathing quickens. Temperatures rise—much like the effects of physical exercise. All learning should be like this—embodied, whole.

In the classroom: “I received a gift or had a door open.” Perhaps it has nothing to do with us, these moments of transcendence; perhaps all we can do is offer conditions in which transcendent flow can occur, if possible: to teach students to live in the question. And then, we just sit back and wait.

During one of our conversations, Alyx shared a written message from a former student that perfectly describes a flow state experience, one that had occurred in Alyx's classroom. Until the student called it to her attention, this was an experience of which Alyx was unaware. Although she does not methodically create meditative space in her room, Alyx shows a sense of unaware awareness in the way she creates intentionality. As she sees it, she merely asks her students to immerse themselves in writing practice. However, Alyx physically shows students how writing happens, and so perhaps then it happens for them. In this particular instance, Alyx did not know the depth of the student's experience; and yet the student transcended, remembered, was transformed, and felt the urge, years later, to describe the experience—still moved, still in motion. Alyx reads the message to us:

Some people may think it's weird to send a former teacher a Facebook message to say nice things, but I don't care. Before you begin reading this, please remember to have mercy on me if I make any grammatical errors, LOL. I am just going to talk these words onto my paper and not worry about that right now. I'm not

writing this to sound like a cliché “Thank you for impacting my life message,” but rather to give you a glimpse of how you inspired and influenced me. You've done far more than teach me how to improve my skills in reading and writing. You helped me grow as a thinker, a creator, and even a believer. Any time I sit down to write a paper for class, a poem to vent, or to read literature, I go to this picture in my mind. (This actually happens). It's one of me sitting in the corner of your class, in front of your desk, quietly thinking with a pencil in my hand and paper in front of me. The blinds were open and the sun was shining in through the windows. I want to say this is when we were studying poetry. Everyone else is there, but the picture I have is one of me alone. I don't know how to explain that. It's as if externally the presence of people existed, but internally I was on an adventure in my mind, somewhere else, alone. That memory in my mind, that very spot in my head, brings me to thoughts of hope and never ending creativity. I don't know where it came from, but I know that in your class, I received a gift or had a door open. It's one that removes doubt, sends encouragement, and tells me to just keep thinking, keep writing, and pursuing whatever it is that I am dreaming of or envisioning. Thank you. I hope all is well, and now I must get back to studying.

The lived experience of this young writer, who found transcendent flow in the safe setting of Alyx's sun-lit classroom, may speak to what students—what writers—hold within them regardless of teacher influence or awareness. Alyx allowed him to be, provided a space for writing, and made time for her students to do what Bradbury advises all writers should do: “...stand aside, forget targets, let the characters, your fingers, body, blood, and heart do” (1994, p. 152). Perhaps this is the channel for teaching for finding flow, the unrecognized movement meditation practice that writing itself is.

Calkins (1986/1994) argues that we should not try to “stimulate” student writing, but rather we should “tap the energy” students already have in order to inspire them to write. She writes: “When we teachers have known the power of writing for ourselves, when we've fashioned our own poems and stories and letters and memoirs, then we can look at the resistance in our students' faces and clenched hands and know it is there not because writing is inherently a dreaded activity, but because writing has been taught in ways that make it so” (p. 13). By thinking about teaching writing in ways that are

authentic, related to relationships, students in wholeness, and to genuine experience, “We will tap into an enormous energy source” (Calkins, 1986/1994, p. 173). If we offer students these conditions, flow may open for all of us—teachers and students alike. But what does this look like? What does this mean? What might we do to encourage students to be whole, to write wholly, to move and write and be?

Channeling Flow in the Classroom: From Being to Doing

As this chapter draws to a close, I find myself reeling, transformed by the transcription, translation, and interpretation of conversations, from discussed words in a rush, and jumbled thoughts in journals, to threads of sense made and lined up on the page. The emergent themes and words of these teachers align for me to provide a sense of wholeness—and wholeness as an arcing theme radiates throughout.

These teachers, whether articulating so or not, seek wholeness. They try heartily to nurture themselves as whole beings—with lives, families, loves, interests, and selves outside the classroom. They see intertwined throughout these whole lives their teacher identities, identities that define and sometimes constrain. They are trying to live what Palmer (2007) calls “an undivided life,” one in which personal and professional identities merge. They see a world around them that is one in wholeness, as well—the calming effect of nature, the support of a strong community, the voices of parents, administrators, students, and policymakers. They seek wholeness in their instruction, to provide authenticity in assignments, to offer students work that has meaning. And maybe most importantly, they strive to see their students in wholeness, as people with talents and skills, needs and struggles, with lives outside the classroom door, with bodies and minds and needs.

To provide these students—each of them a physical world unto himself or herself—with the most meaningful writing experiences, ones that could lead to transcendence, seems a daunting, if not impossible task. And yet these teachers, on their best days and in their finest moments, are offering students a glimpse of possibility, the churning current of insight. “How do they do this?” I wonder. I also wonder whether they would have come to the ideas, insights, and thinking that they shared with me if we first had not taken time to become aware of our wholeness, moving, thinking, writing, and talking. It is clear that, through our focused movement, thoughts, poetry, and conversation flowed, that there was an igniting sense of wholeness in this experience. Movement meditation, while a component of our conversation, also made our conversation possible. I continue my wondering. In what ways does wholeness—or even transcendence—manifest in the classroom? What are the intertwining strands of understanding, these intersecting themes, in the lives of these teachers? I turn back to my original question, too, framing and reframing in the context of teaching and learning, looking through the lens of student experience, of teacher expertise, asking, *What is the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing?*

In the next, final chapter of this work, I suggest pedagogical implications uncovered through these conversations. I seek evolving meaning from the themes addressed here, combined with foundational research in teaching writing, theories of embodiment, and effective work from these teachers in their classrooms. In chapter 5, I examine movement meditation for teaching and learning, in classrooms and elsewhere, for making meaning in the world. I seek to unfold further the phenomenon of the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing.

CHAPTER FIVE:
TEACHING AND TRANSCENDENCE:
PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Learning to Climb: Ascending, Getting Stuck, and Moving Beyond

You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves
(Oliver, 2002)

Sugarloaf Mountain is awake with the sounds of singing birds, buzzing cicadas, and human conversation. It is a humid day, late July. Unsure of myself, I spend five minutes making the same figure eight knot, tying into my harness. I am dripping sweat and my limbs are trembling as I begin to scale the thirty foot face of rock, Cub Scout Cracks, a beginner's route. Vultures soar overhead, and there is a brief, fleeting breeze in the treetops. The rock is cool, rough, and dry against my hot, wet hands.

Stephan (a pseudonym) is teaching me to climb, and this is our first outing. I am roped into a system of supports, with two anchors above me, a huge boulder and an old sturdy tree. One end of the rope is knotted to my harness, which is double-back fastened securely around my waist. Below me, Stephan is supporting me using a belay device locked to his own harness. I trust my teacher implicitly. I also trust the system of equipment. I know that if I fall, he will catch me. This is a kind of movement that is decidedly not meditative for me—in fact, it produces fear, anxiety, and sometimes paralysis. Like a novice writer, I get wholly and totally stuck. But for my teacher, Stephan, it is meditative. He makes it look so easy. In contrast, I feel apprehensive, uncertain of the rock, unsure what move to make, insecure about my own abilities.

Still, I go up—I make myself. Slowly. I look for places to put my hands. I look for

places to put my feet. I stop, wait, look up, look down. I see a hold I like, but I can not figure out how to get to it—it is beyond my reach. I do not know where or how to go. I look twenty feet down at Stephan, rope in his hands. He looks up at me. An expert, he would have been to the top of this route in a matter of minutes. He is patient with me as I fumble my way along at a snail's pace—a beginner's pace. “I'm stuck,” I say.

Stephan sighs. “You're not stuck,” he tells me, “just turn off that PhD brain and be your body. You already know what to do.” And the parallel becomes clear: like the student writer, stymied by the rigid desk and blank page, I'm stuck on the face of a rock I must read, challenged to create a path to a point, but I do not yet know how. I lack practice, I lack models, I lack time. But I can learn.

Like a novice writer, facing a daunting blank page, I cannot see how to get from one place to the next. I may have a point I want to make, a place I want to go, but I can not see how to achieve it, and I can not just jump to it—I must move one step at a time. But I get stuck, cling to the rock face, shake my head as my body shakes from the strain. By saying “I can't,” I freeze, turn myself to stone, but if I stop to breathe, look beyond what I easily see, find a different route, listen to the guidance of my teacher, I become free to move.

A few weeks later, Stephan and I are climbing again, this time at Seneca Rocks. We work through the first pitch of Skyline Traverse. I have been reading books Stephan has lent me on climbing skills, knots, and technique. I have been practicing knots and remember better how to tie in to the rope today. I can recall the steps involved in equipment safety checks. I am nervous, but I tell myself I will not be stuck. I will move backward, sideways, in reverse if necessary. I will look down and behind me; I will use

my legs, which are strong, to lift me instead of using my arms to pull me up. I am trembling, still, but this is easier today. I feel confident climbing up, removing anchors, and rappelling down. I trust the equipment more, having a better understanding of how it works and why. I trust Stephan to keep me safe, to continue to teach me, to provide feedback when I need it, to be patient with me, and to listen to my needs even as I am still learning to articulate them. I trust Stephan as students must trust teachers in learning to write; I trust the equipment to catch me from falling, just as young writers must trust the structure of writing and teaching, the classroom environment, their peer and mentor readers; I trust myself too, to understand and communicate my own needs, to take responsibility for my own learning.

Over the course of Fall and Winter, I continue to climb with Stephan as my guide. I move from that first climb, at the Boy Scout Ledges on Sugarloaf Mountain, rated 5.3 (a beginner rating) to, in late January, climbing my first 5.9 at the climbing gym, a simulated environment that mimics the feel and positioning of rock. I have been practicing each week for several hours, working out on a moving rock wall, and completing strength conditioning to allow me more easily to make the moves climbing requires. I see progress in this practice, in skill-building. All the while, Stephan has been giving me feedback, supporting me physically with rope and body weight—and also with commentary and instruction. When I get stuck, he might make suggestions, or he might show me, “Watch me!” he says.

Sometimes I give up, abandoning a route, and he lowers me down. When this happens, I almost always rest a while and then try again, and when I do, I find my way through. Though this movement meditation is difficult, different, and not always

conducive to the kind of flow I find in running, I persevere, practice, and create, and as I do, the practice becomes process, sometimes fluid. Like the stuck writer, moving forward in fits and starts, supported and in care, I find my way. Can writers find flow in spite of being blocked? What does it mean to move in space with support and trust, struggling to find a flow in thinking and writing?

Letting Go and Learning Trust

My failure allows success, if I can learn from it, if I refuse to quit or try again when I do. I breathe, try to stay relaxed; I do not give up. “Tenseness comes from not knowing or giving up trying to know. Work, giving us experience, results in new confidence and eventually in relaxation” (Bradbury, 1994, p. 147) the type of which is automatic—flow—in which the writing becomes automatic, nearly effortless. The writer does not have to struggle, “nor does the athlete advise his body. Suddenly, a natural rhythm is achieved. The body thinks for itself. [...] For if one works, one finally relaxes and stops thinking. True creation occurs then and only then” (Bradbury, p. 147). I strive for automatic movement, trust my body to know, or, as Stephan instructed that very first climb, to turn off my thinking mind and just let my body be. I keep practicing, but I am not yet there.

The parallels between myself as a novice climber and students as novice writers seem clear to me. Both practices involve courage and risk and also trust. “Transcending normal human fears, the rock climber enters unaccustomed realms of being,” and yet, with proper equipment and technique, “the climber, seeking the most difficult route up the wall of rock, realizes ultimate reality by prevailing in the face of self-imposed dangers” (Leonard, 1974/2001, p. 217). My teacher, Stephan, knows this: I must trust the

devices and equipment, I must trust my feet, I must trust him, as my teacher and partner. As he teaches me, as I do learn to trust him and the equipment, my harness, and the rope, he orders me to fall. “Let go!” he says, and I do. There is a momentary panic as my hands release the holds, my feet fly into space; the rope jerks against my harness, and I swing, mid-air. “I’ve got you,” he says. I find my footing and handholds again and advance a few more feet before he instructs me to do it again. “Fall,” he orders, “just let go.” We spend part of an afternoon in this pattern, and, switching places, he practices falling on me, as I catch him. In this way, we build a relationship of mutual consideration, of practice and of community, of habit and of care. So, too, do Traci, Holly, Annalee, and Alyx with their students, fostering them as people and as writers—through modeling, through transparent thinking, by setting examples, and by being present.

Coffey (2008) discusses body being and practice that create a kind of automaticity, what she calls a “knowing without knowing” that develops in extreme sports athletes, because “their survival depends upon their maintain a constant focus and paying attention to all the forces of nature, becoming hyperaware of the slightest breeze, a change in temperature, the way snow feels under their boots or rock on their fingers” (p. xii). When necessary, these athletes must “throw together past experience with what is happening in the present, and react,” by “finding patterns in situations and behavior based on very narrow segments of experience” (Coffey, p. xiii). This knowing without knowing, a product of repeated practice and deep immersive experience, Coffey argues, leads to intuitive response and spiritual awareness. Furthermore, she states that “The hardest, most challenging experiences of our lives can enrich our existence, revealing our true identity, awakening us to a greater awareness of our own potential, and opening us to

the infinite beauty of the universe” (p. xiv).

Climbing is like nothing I have ever done, and in its worst moments, my unathletic, pudgy, bookish, under-confident self protests, screaming. In my best moments, though, I swing away from a wall and see a route so clearly the rock looks lit from within; in those moments, I feel the same as I do when a writing flow opens, as if the whole world is alive, as if everything is clear, and as if words pour out of me. I feel transformed by these moments, stuck and unstuck on the rock. Climbing, like work of this study—occurring simultaneously—has been a transformative experience.

Transformation: Engagement in the Cycle

Transformation. For me, I must admit, this work has been transformative. At the same time I have been learning to climb with Stephan, I have been engaging deeply in conversations with four dynamic and interesting writer-teachers and also working to channel their ideas into this text. I have been attempting, through writing and rewriting, through balancing part and whole, through turning and returning, to address the question: *What is the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing?*

I have been immersed, and, surrendering to this process, my thinking has been transformed throughout the course of this writing. Though running has been the outlet through which I channel the electric coursing current of inspiration, I think now that it is not so for every person; even though my conversants found words while walking, in fact, running sparks clear thinking for only one of the teachers in this study, Annalee. It seems serendipitous that, just as I become sure of my own process in writing and motion and in exploring the way in which it might work for others, I encounter a meditative practice in

which I become wholly and totally stuck. My climbing shoes allow me to try on the shoes of stuck writers.

Although Stephan expresses clearly that climbing is meditative for him, in my frustration and fear, I am not in a meditative state, could not possibly be able to achieve a flow in thinking or writing, or anything else—even in my body, which is the flow I most need in order to move up the rock, to climb. Ironically, though, it is this experience of being frozen in motion, unable to move, that allows me to largely live inside the emotions of stuck student writers, whose words are blocked like my body is blocked as I hang from a rope, searching for a route I can not seem to see. This perspective re-orientes me toward the deepest meaning in this research: pedagogy. I am researcher, writer, runner, now climber, but I came to this work in the skin of a teacher, and despite the transformations I have undergone, teacher is still a skin I am in. So what does this mean for teaching and learning? What pedagogical implications reside within the *lived experience of movement meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing*?

Teacherly Thinking: Implications for Pedagogy

As I reflect upon the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing, particularly as it applies to the lives of my teacher-conversants, I begin to see connections, a web of meaning extending forward into their classrooms, deep into their personal lives, manifesting in their teacherly and writerly ways of knowing, and cycling within me, too. What must also be considered are those whom they teach—their students, whose lives are deeply affected—academically and personally—by these people in the classroom. In previous chapters, I have described the phenomenon of moving meditation as it has called to me, as it appears in the writing and thinking of other

writers, as it connects to phenomenological philosophy, and as it appeared in conversation and reflective writing for the teachers of composition who walked and talked and wrote with me. In this final chapter, then, I turn toward a teacherly understanding, even within my researcher skin, and consider the pedagogical implications for moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing.

What is Pedagogy?

The Oxford English Dictionary traces three meanings of the word pedagogy. It is (or has been) used to mean first, in a now obscure meaning, a “place of instruction;” second, as currently used, “instruction, training” or “guidance” in a system of learning, and third, “the art, occupation, or practice of teaching” (Pedagogy, 2013). In this way, pedagogy is context, text, and practice. It is the environment in which we learn, the act of learning or material to be learned, and the practice of teaching that text. In an authentic learning situation, one might expect these threads of meaning to intersect—the transcendent combination becoming the right environment, the right system or method, and the right guide or guides.

Van Manen (1991) provides another meaning of pedagogy as originating in the Utrecht School in the Netherlands, one that involves being sensitive to the life-stories of those we teach, that preserves a space in which to teach, one that is “an ongoing project of renewal in a world that is constantly changing around us and that is continually being changed by us” (p. 3). This concept also involves mindful orientation and reflective action as a part of being with learners, and revolves around the principle idea that learners must become independent of teachers—empowered to become “agent[s] of their own destiny” (van Manen, 1991, p. 3) According to van Manen, teachers must demonstrate

thoughtful tact in a range of areas in order to be with learners in a meaningful way.

Van Manen (1997) also reminds us that researchers must maintain a strong and oriented relation to the pedagogical implications of one's research. We must remember that "Pedagogy is an embodied practice and that pedagogical research and theorizing, too, are pedagogic forms of life" (van Manen, p. 139). Likewise, "Abstract theorizing should not detract us from seeing the real flesh and blood child"--or, in the case of this research, the flesh and blood teacher and researcher, either (van Manen, p. 139). In doing so, in seeing real people engaged in pedagogic ways of living, we must recognize the ineffable, van Manen says; there is something about the whole teaching and learning situation that we know without knowing, that can not be articulated, that manifests in doing and living and defies explanation.

Pedagogical consideration is more than, than practical suggestion, more than a set of effective practices. It is a profound description of a way of being that turns toward learning and meaning, that describes vividly and deeply; it is, "has to be" even, "theory of the unique, of the particular case" (van Manen, 1997, p. 150). In this final chapter, then, I offer pedagogical implications for the particular situations in which these teachers, their students, and I, myself thrive. I elaborate upon ways in which these teachers seem to harness pedagogical energy that ripples out into the writerly lives of their students, which cycles back into their own lives. This is not to say that these suggestions and situations will or will not also be meaningful in other cases, places, and classrooms; but here, in the space of this research, common practices and themes come to light. In this chapter, I describe these commonalities: pedagogy as embodied by this context (a small high school in a town in the Appalachian hills), by the texts used (the methods which are chosen by

the teachers in this study), and by these guides and their practices (four dynamic and committed teachers of writing creating community in their classrooms).

It is worth mentioning, as well, that these situations, in their particular ways of being, have been articulated and have come to light through the practice of movement meditation—an embodied way of knowing. All ways of knowing are necessarily embodied, since, as Merleau-Ponty claims, the body is the origin of all our awareness and intentionality, and “movement” is a way of understanding, since it “actively assumes” being and temporality and “takes them up in their basic significance” (1945/2002, p. 117). In other words, the body in the circuit of space and time creates all meaning, actively—ever bringing awareness to light. Likewise, as van Manen (1991) asserts, pedagogical tact suggests itself in a bodily way: seeing and being bodily present to those one teaches. Teaching, then, is itself an embodied act of thoughtful movement—as is learning—and teachers and students being together in space happens in an inter-corporeal way. As such, the pedagogical implications here also connect to the sense of embodiment that cycles through this work, since teachers and I have found a writing flow through movement, since movement has framed our conversations and made our conversations possible. We are always oriented to the question: *what is the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing?*

Harnessing Energy: Controlled Falling

I have heard downhill running can be more difficult and more trying on the muscles and joints than running uphill. I have heard downhill running called “controlled falling.” However, Leonard (1974/2001) asserts that

all running is falling. To run, we commit ourselves to spring from the earth and fall back down again and again, neither fearing or opposing gravity, but giving

ourselves over to its care. We receive in return a lovely kind of nurture. Our passionate movements across the earth ascribe perfect arcs in space. We rise from the earth and return. We are offered a firm foothold for our strength and will. We are allowed to run. (p. 170)

Rock climbing, too, requires this kind of controlled falling—when we rappel down the face of a rock, when we belay. Climbing up, we both fight gravity and utilize gravity to our advantage, since the law of gravity always tries to pull us down to the lowest point at which we can be. While our hands and ever-upward motion defy it, it is also gravity that holds us to the rock. Even the tiniest outcropping can be a good place for feet, since gravity helps us stick and stay where we rest. As in writing, we are both grounded and reaching; we are centered in what we know, and we extend into not knowing by continuing to write, to revise, to develop a wider range of skills. With a support system in place, we step into the void, but we do not fall.

It strikes me that writing, too, is a kind of controlled falling, a letting go of constraints and stepping into the void, but with supports in place. So, too, is the teaching of writing—we create conditions, fumble around, offer supports, formulas, and mini-lessons, conferences, modeling, and focused response. We take risks, we face fears, and we find ourselves. We must allow our students to fall in order to become writers. We must provide a safe space, we must offer opportunity for practice, we must face our own fears as we become models for student writing; perhaps most importantly, we must be unafraid to present ourselves in vulnerability, humanness, and wholeness to our students because, when we do, they and we are transformed. These are the pedagogical lessons of this work; I have learned these lessons through movement meditation in walking, writing, and talking with these teachers, and the literature of composition instruction supports the meaning that has come forward in our conversations.

Creating Safe Space: a Circle of Conversation

I stop by the school one afternoon at lunchtime to pick up Annalee's journal. I sign in at the main office, turn into a corridor, and walk up the staircase to the English wing on the second floor. Since the students are mostly in the cafeteria, the hallway is empty. It is early October, the floors are freshly polished, and midday sunlight streams in through the large windows at the end of the hallway, illuminating the shiny linoleum and pale blue lockers. I pass by Holly's classroom, where she and Traci are having lunch, and we wave at one another. I reach Annalee's classroom and enter. Three students occupy a long table at the side of the room, and two more are seated in front row desks. They are eating lunch, getting help with classwork, and talking. Annalee, their teacher (and my former student), is seated at her desk. I enter, ease myself into a student desk, and join in the casual conversation. Laughter bounces around the room—these kids are comfortable here, and so am I. This is a welcoming space—one where people are able to be together bodily, relaxing, eating, working, talking. Holly's room has students in it, too. I hear Traci laughing across the hall. These teachers are people in this place—they are not just doing jobs; rather, they are being themselves in relationships with others. They are building a community that acknowledges whole people, body and mind.

Listening and learning. The ideal teaching relationship, according to Graves (1994) is one in which teachers listen to and learn from students. He argues that “the notion that children teach teachers has been misunderstood. Children do indeed know things that we do not, in the knowledge or experience sense, and we have to discover their conceptual constructs through their own demonstrations in order to know how to teach them—in short, through their attempts to teach us” (1994, p. 18). Like Traci, Holly,

Alyx, and Annalee, “some teachers seem to invite children's conversation. Children speak to them constantly; they try something and almost immediately tell their teacher about it” (Graves, p. 18). What makes these teachers close to their students, argues Graves, “is a kind of philosophical stance, which children intuit in the teacher, that inspires their confidence and invites their reactions to their work” (p. 18). The best teachers, according to Graves, are listeners; they are inspired by, challenged by, and learn from children—in short, they are not “informants,” but rather, they are conversants.

A cyclical notion manifests here, in this point, insofar as this work has come into meaning. These teachers are indeed conversants. They take a learning role with their students. They listen, they interact, they adapt their teaching to what their students need. They take part in student lives beyond the subject of English, the situation of the school day. They do not merely inform. They participate in learning in their own classrooms and community. Likewise, they do not inform me, nor I them; together, we converse, create, build an understanding of the lived experience of this study through conversation. We also build a space of trust and safety through movement in the woods, through writing in our journals, through shared conversation. In being bodily together, moving through light and shadow, writing in our journals, meaning is made.

The same kind of space-making happens in the classrooms of effective teachers of writing. These teachers create a context in which young people can create texts, test out experiences, fall without falling. Leonard (2006) describes experience as “context rather than a content,” but specifies that “a context is not a container. The word comes from the Latin terms *con* and *texere*, meaning 'to weave together.' Context, then, is a process of relating, of weaving together. The context that is an individual human being manifests

itself as body, mind, soul, history, works, and the like” (p. 125). Context is a process of relationality to others, self, words, and world; context is a wave in part of the larger current of being. When we create an environment that fosters learning, writing, and transcendence, we place students in a particular context that makes them into writers.

Defusing fear for student writers: Gumption and fearlessness. All the conversants in this work see fear with student writers, but Traci, especially, finds that her students are afraid. They are afraid of writing, of failure; they are afraid to share their work. They fear that they may stand out from their peers because their work is inadequate; they fear they may stand out from their peers because their work is excellent.

These young writers are afraid of being alone, afraid of a challenge that can draw them out from themselves in front of others. Aloneness surfaces in the moment of the challenge, insofar as “at the moment of challenge we are isolated, stripped by uncertainty from prediction and pretension and extracted by responsibility from the masses surrounding us” (Reid, 2002, p. 25). When we are challenged, “we discover ourselves as unique and to do this we must feel alone” (Reid, p. 25). In this aloneness “is the real possibility of failure and the acute sense of responsibility that accompanies it” (Reid, p. 27). This possibility can allow us to see ourselves as we really are; we have an opportunity to “welcome this isolation and responsibility because it opens the door at last to the experiences of truly being ourselves. By isolating us from the herd we live in, the moment of challenge strips away obstacles to self-knowledge” (Reid, p. 27). Pressing against the unknown, we are in “a place where our senses are heightened: our sense of aloneness, of embodiment, and of freedom. The uncertainty in the moment of challenge imbues it with a palpable air of possibility” (Reid, p. 59). The weight of this possibility

can cause us to move ahead, or it can cause us to freeze, to get stuck.

This movement through self-consciousness, past being stuck, “the ability to get past our social personas” according to Reid (2002), is “an important component of flow—the mental state associated with peak athletic performance. By liberating ourselves from concern about what others expect of us, we are better able to focus on what we are actually doing, and to be who we 'really are'” (p. 29). Not only is a flow state associated with peak athletic performance, but also it manifests in moments of peak creativity, as Csikszentmihalyi (1996) shows. We can choose to move through the frozenness of fear, to breathe into the paralysis, and, if we do, we may find ourselves becoming who we are, transcending barriers, popping open like a touch-me-not, jewelweed, turning inside out, or like a spring bud breaking open in the sunlight.

This seems particularly important for adolescents, whose lives are shaped by social expectations, by their own becoming, as they discover, uncover, and create who they really are. And yet, movement toward authenticity takes courage, since “it's easy to hide from yourself, to become so absorbed in what you are expected to be or what you are trying to be on the outside that you forget who you really are on the inside” (Reid, 2002, p. 31). Young writers may want to hide from themselves by blending in, but to move forward, to learn, they must have what Traci calls “gumption,” “BOLDNESS,” or “the drive.” Traci is also speaking about momentum, of the way that one step leads to another; entropy is easy, though, because, as Traci expresses, “It's so much easier to do nothing than to force myself or to have the desire to do it. I know what I need to do. I know what I should do. But the “oomph” isn't there.”

Fear allows students to blend in, to maintain the status quo, to fade into the crowd,

and yet, “in order to jump, you must risk falling,” and “in order to know the truth, you must be willing to sacrifice your most comforting illusions” (Reid, 2002, p. 101). In a classroom that is safe space, students are able to face the fear of writing so to become writers themselves, to become more of who they are. Teachers of writing must encourage risk taking, in spite of the very human tendency toward entropy when doing nothing and avoiding failure is easier than taking risk and finding success. In doing, we become. In the doing is the expansion of being, so in the project is the projection of self, the becoming of self. So, too, is student writing... Students may be helped to expand their understanding of writing as practice, even when writing involves stuck-ness, false starts, and shoddy drafts, as well as success. Traci, Annalee, Alyx, and Holly try to foster students' coming into being even through the risk of failure and anxiety.

In order to write well, students must learn to be bodily, to embrace who they already are in spite of themselves, and teachers can help them by creating a space of safety and trust. Traci describes the effects of doing so in her classroom in this anecdote from her journal. She took her students outside, she instructed them to channel the Romantic poets, she instilled in them a sense that they were safe and supported and then, Traci explains:

We set out on the cross country course. I observed them as they observed their surroundings, taking notes, etc. They separated in silence, walked, wrote, a few came back and asked questions. They were into it. There's no other way to put it. We walked the track the next day. We circled it. They didn't like it as much...Though they wrote some good stuff. The last of our trips involved sitting at the outdoor cafeteria area—picnic tables. It rained that day. Thank goodness the tables were under an awning. My favorites were the poems they wrote about the rain. They were super good with personification and metaphor. They seemed fearless with that assignment—truly unafraid to fail. They put themselves out there for the work and for me. They put their best feet forward at every turn that semester, but they really did it for that task. I think that's why it was so good. THEY WERE FEARLESS about the writing. They knew I was going to grade

it—but not judge them... if that makes sense. I had faith in them and they trusted me. I think that makes a difference, too. There needs to be faith and trust.

Traci, in this scenario, created a space of trust and safety, a foundation of understanding among her students, her writerly, teacherly self, and the writers who came before them. In that safe space, Traci's students, armed with notebooks, clear expectations, and literary understanding, produced meaningful writing—and they did so outside.

Being There Outside: The Space of the Woods

These teachers, walking and talking with me, found solace and words in a natural environment. They spoke and wrote of the sights and sounds, the shifting sense of time, of being able to walk for hours without feeling the kind of anxiety generated by the “tsunami of the to-do list.” Holly feels happy out of doors, in the “relaxing,” “balming” space of the woods. She finds herself “happy right now, just sitting outside.” Holly finds that if she makes time to walk outside, her stress is reduced, and her creativity flows. She expresses that “sometimes the change in light is our only indication that we've been walking for a while and should head back. I think there's definitely a connection between the relaxing, calming effect that walking has on me and losing time.” In the space of nature, Holly gets lost to find herself, transcends time to unwind words to make meaning. Annalee, too, finds herself more creative in forest space, expressing that in an indoor or created setting, like at the gym, she tends to “zone out rather than focus in” like she does when running outdoors.

Found poetry: Unconcealing what is. The impact of time spent outdoors can be one of intensified imagination and creativity, according to Louv (2005), who provides a long list of highly creative people who heard their calling in nature, among whom are Joan of Arc, Jane Goodall, John Muir, Mark Twain, T.S. Eliot, E.O. Wilson, Thomas

Edison, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Beatrix Potter (pp. 91-92). Focusing while in the space of the outdoors, these teachers agree that they are able to notice more, to relax into movement and meaning-making, to write and observe. In doing so, each of them wrote poetry. For these teachers, like the transcendentalist walking poets, the movement of the body “makes composing poetry into physical labor” (Solnit, 2001, p. 272). Louv (2005) calls nature a “playground for poets” inspired by creativity, whose “metaphors [are] shaped by sublime and natural forces, whose rhythms [are] so often set by the cycles of nature” (pp. 96).

Holly, for example, reflects on a toad in the leaves, wondering whether he

...is simply
content
to sit in the cool shade
of the autumn leaves and
enjoy life.

Annalee and Traci, as well, wrote “found poems” in which they noticed the vibrant colors, sights, and sounds of the woods. A found poem arises from collections of words, images, or impressions to create a cohesive, poetic impression of a moment or event. Alyx, too, writes this kind of poetry, describing the colors of a relationship inspired by the natural world, describing:

Our moments, memories,
shine bright pinks,
vivid blues,
exuberant oranges...
like beams of light
they call to me.

The world called, and these writers wrote notions of what they observed, responding in poetry.

Poetry, according to Heidegger, speaks the future and sets a course, projects us

more deeply into our surroundings and connects us with others. As such, “Projective saying is poetry: the saying of the world and earth, the saying of the arena of their conflict and thus of the place of all nearness and remoteness of the gods. Poetry is the saying of the unconcealment of what is” (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 71). Poems, for these teachers, revealed the world in a different way, in authenticity and creativity, in simplicity and shared truth. However, they thought and wrote about teaching, too, considering the implications for learning were they to take their students outside.

Finding teaching with nature as inspiration. Teacherly thinking, inspired by the setting of walks and talks in the woods becomes a kind of practice for these teachers, rehearsing teaching ideas, writing about them in their journals. Holly begins from her own experience, when, as she walked, she recalled other forests from her childhood, marveling that “the way that the sunlight was coming down through the trees reminded me of the road my grandmother lives on at home.” The dappling of the sunshine took Holly into her past, but then it centered her in her classroom, as she began “thinking about how images and sounds and stuff can bring back memories,” which would be “an interesting thing to explore with students in writing. I would have them write something about an image or a song or whatever and have them write everything it reminds them of.” Sense, memory, space, and time merge here, in a way that, according to Holly, “would be an interesting paper assignment—getting students to exploit their connections with their senses and memories.” An experience in sunlight connects directly to the classroom as she practices teacherly thinking.

These teachers talk explicitly about taking their students outside, too. Holly elaborates that, for her, taking students outside has the potential to

...open the gateway for creativity. If nothing else, it would provide a change in setting to inspire new ideas for writing. You can also find the inspiration from the things (objects, animals, sounds, view) around you, sort of like when I wrote the poem about the toad I saw at CaCapon. I think it would be interesting to have students do a piece of writing after walking through the woods, but before leaving the classroom, have them jot down their opinions and ideas about creativity/writing and nature to see what attitudes they're coming into the activity with. Then I think it'd be interesting to ask them about the experience afterward and see what they thought. It would also be interesting to see if the topics they chose to write about had themes/imagery related to nature.

Inherent in Holly's thinking here is the element of nature as inspiration; more evident is the teacherly thinking inspired by her own experience as a walking writer. Holly uses her writerly experience to generate writing activities for her students to inspire similar work. Seeing herself as writer, model, and teacher, Holly's lived experience ripples out, spirals into her teaching life, into the work and writing of her students.

Past experiences taking students outdoors have been successful for Traci, as described previously, and for Holly, as well. During one of our conversations, Holly relates a story about taking students outdoors to write:

One day, in the spring, when we had had no days off, it was a beautiful day. Creative writing... By seventh period, I was sick of being in the classroom. So I was like, "we're going outside, and I'm going to make this up as we go." So we walked downstairs. I made them bring a notebook and a writing utensil, and of course, first they're excited to go out, but then they're like "We have to write?" and I'm like "Yes! It's creative writing. We are still going to." We came downstairs, we went out the main doors, to the little quad area there, and I said "Stop! Stand where you're standing, sit if you want, I don't care. And shut your eyes." I made them shut their eyes for two minutes, and just observe, think, whatever. Then they had to write. [...] I had some really good poems from that, and all I did was stop and make them listen and observe. And then we proceeded to go on a nature walk through campus, and then went over to the baseball field and sat and they wrote another poem or short story. It had to have something to do with nature, but I totally made it up as I was going. It turned into something that I really liked reading—the poems that they came up with. They thought it was interesting.

Holly, choosing the space of a beautiful spring day rather than the space of a confining

classroom, enters a teaching flow, takes a risk, and leads her students to do the same. When she does, her students create something meaningful—poetry they want to write, poetry Holly wants to read. A shared investment in safe, creative space generates good work. Holly finds her students respond to being outside, that “even just a change of scenery would help inspire them...” to write more fluidly, to find their voices.

A sense of place: Outdoor classroom. The campus on which these teachers and students learn is one that lends itself well to nature; its setting is rural, flanked to the west by Warm Springs Ridge, where deer sometimes wander through clearings in the winter and early spring. Warm Springs Run flows past the cafeteria, and a small footbridge connects the two sections of campus split by the stream. Tiny fish flash in the water, and a heron sometimes lands in the run. Neighbors near the school keep chickens, which can sometimes be heard through open classroom windows. Teachers take students outside, down the street to walk the track or to walk the wooded trails behind the neighboring elementary school for physical education. During field days at the end of the school year, students gather on the football field and lounge under trees. Nature is an asset here, an additional space in which students can learn.

Context seems relevant in the work of this research, since students and teachers are situated in a place that allows for time outdoors and in a certain kind of community—one that values nature and relationships among people and the natural environment. Each week in spring, summer, and fall, the town hosts a local farmer's market in which some of the students work. A seasonal autumn celebration brings the community together around the county's history of apple production, and state and local parks abound within walking distance or a short drive. Many of the students hunt, fish, hike, or otherwise participate in

the local setting. A sense of natural place connects students more deeply to “home,” and this sense can be used to find meaningful writing. Likewise, a sense of natural setting can help students more deeply connect to themselves, since, as Casey explains “My body continually takes me into place. It is at once agent and vehicle, articulator and witness of being in place. [...] Our living-moving bodies serve to structure and configure entire scenarios of space” (2009, p. 48). A sense of place helps writers more deeply know, do, and be.

Brooke (2003) asserts that “Learning and writing and citizenship are richer when they are tied to and flow from local culture. Local communities, regions, and histories are the places where we shape our individual lives...” (p. 4). These lives are worth exploration; cultivating a sense of place in the classroom can help students find both “a sense of worth” and “a sense of connection” as well as “a sense of belonging” (Brooke, pp. 11-12). Connected to the world and to one another, students who are enabled to cultivate a sense of place become “active learners” who may gain “a deep understanding of local place, spiraling outward to include more distant knowledge in all areas of the curriculum” (Brooke, p. 13). Learners in the world, students see connections everywhere but also know who they are and from where they themselves come.

Alyx recently received a grant for an outdoor classroom project, one that will allow students to construct a natural space in which learning can flourish, centered in and springing from the local community. She tells me that “The outdoor classroom funds came from a grant as part of a Lowe's Toolbox for education grant. I got \$3500.00 to create the space.” As we talk, I find that all four teachers are thinking about this space and how they can use it to engage students in creative and literacy activities. Holly writes

that “Maybe once the outdoor classroom is built, that would be a good place to have kids walk and take a break before asking them to write.” Holly envisions that “During first period, when they're still asleep, and don't want to do anything, we can be like, 'OK, we're going to go outside and walk around a little bit before we write.' To go to the outdoor classroom would be so much better...” Walking in the outdoor classroom could serve to shift the intentionality of the work, from indoor time to writing time.

In this sense, outdoor space becomes safe space, writing space, with access to the sights, sounds, and senses of inspiration, the spark of nature, and the familiarity of home: the world is a classroom, full of opportunity, observation, and tools at hand for everyday practice in the being and doing of writing. It is space that allows creative work, what Heidegger expresses as “work-being,” possible only in “the setting up of a world” (1971/2001, p. 44). This is a space filled with intentionality, a world for which purpose has been established, work and being together.

This outdoor classroom, centered between Warm Springs Ridge rising above the school and town, and Warm Springs Run flowing through the center of the community, can be a place of homecoming and body-being for students, fuel for writing. Powerful insight can come from this sense of home, since “Places in our lives [...] need to be rediscovered by the writer. Their landscapes offer us solid footing from which to write passionately. We know them well and can become more aware of the impression they make on us when we reflect on them in writing” (Ross, 2003, p. 59). When we write from where we know, with intentionality, we further reveal who we are.

Daily Practice: Running Fast and Standing Still

Bradbury (1994) advises writers to “run fast, stand still” to relish the stops and

starts of writing, to gather thoughts, to “lie with the dust, rest in the rainwater” (pp. 12-13). He advises us that, for writers, both starts and stops are necessary. We must blurt out our thoughts as they come to us in a flow and also dwell in being stuck, allowing energy to cycle. These moments of movement and stillness are part of the practice of writing, like the daily body cycles of motion and rest. An implication for pedagogy inherent here is that teachers must allow students to find comfort and pattern in being who they are as writers: in moving forward as well as in being stuck. Practice allows students to find that comfort and rhythm.

Much research (Atwell, 1998; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Carnegie, 2010; Graham & Perin, 2007; Murray, 1998) tells us that in order to create fluent readers and writers in classrooms, learners should read and write every day. In daily practice, engaging in literacy work becomes easier, just as in body practice, daily practice transforms effort into ease.

Annalee finds this to be true in her classes, particularly in respect to a sustained silent reading program. She describes in detail the change in student attitude with practice, saying that “The first day we did silent sustained reading, I heard a lot of whining: 'Oh my God, Reading is stupid!' 'I can't believe this!' 'This is English 12, what the....?' 'I just want to quit,' 'School's Stupid.'” The new and unfamiliar—unpracticed activity of sustained reading is met, at first, with a chorus of complaints. Just as in the beginning of learning a new body practice, there is protest. Students grumble, muscles ache. Eventually, however, practice leads to process—the act becomes pattern.

Pattern comes out of Annalee's persistence, or as van Manen (1991) names it, her “situational confidence,” in working with her students in reading (p. 157). Even though

she is met with resistance from students unused to practice, Annalee does not give up, continues to lead quietly, and so finds that, now, “on the 5th or 6th time of Silent Sustained reading, and as soon as I crack my book open and I hit the timer, it is dead silence.” With repeated practice and pattern, Annalee's students have begun to be comfortable in literacy work, creating meaningful experience for themselves, and for her, too, so much so that they do not want to stop when the designated time for the work has passed.

This is rewarding for both students and teacher, the room charged with energy. Annalee expresses her own joy and engagement, saying that “for that 5-20 minutes, I enjoy teaching so much more because later on, afterwards, it's 'Do I have to stop?' or 'Guess what I just read? Isn't this fascinating?' And I'm like OK. Don't have to worry about lesson plans, it's just this moment of 'I'm used to this now.' What else do I have to read?” In practice, Annalee and her students find shared purpose, familiar pattern, and fuel for future conversation, reading together. They aren't just reading; they are becoming readers, transformed by the familiar energy of practice.

We must make time to write, slow down in order to practice, because “the writing process requires a radically different pace than we are used to in schools and society” (Calkins, 1986/1994, p. 185). Annalee, Alyx, Holly, and Traci provide students with writing practice in order to practice being writers themselves, as Graves (2003) suggests they should. If students see teachers write, Graves explains, “they will see the middle of the process, the hidden ground,” and so both students and teacher will find themselves “learning together as both seek to find meaning in writing” (p. 43). Holly writes along with her students, practices with them. She expresses that she can feel when she is “out of practice,” and so she knows what it must feel like for less experienced writers.

Meaningful Writing Experiences: “Not Desk Work But Lifework”

Another component of effective classroom practice, for these teachers, includes providing students with meaningful work. Alyx expresses, incredulously, that “Too often, students are given tasks in the classroom that are meaningless. Teachers use writing as punishment!” To do so, Alyx implies, is to create inauthentic experiences, to cultivate a sense of writing as a school-bound task, rather than as a process for meaning making.

Alyx understands that “authorship does not begin in the struggle to put something big into print; rather, it begins in living with a sense of awareness [...]. Writing does not begin with desk work but with lifework” (Calkins, 1986/1994, p. 3). Students must write about what they know in order to invest and create meaning in themselves and in their work. We must see the true function of writing as a generator of both transcendence and connection, understanding that “...writing transcends a situation and a relationship, that writing can define [...] feelings and connect” people to one another (Graves, 1994, p. 35). We can ensure students understand this through “constant provision of authentic opportunities to write in school” (Graves, p. 35). Along with authentic opportunities for writing also comes opportunity for revision, refinement, and continual process.

Alyx offers students unlimited revision as a regular practice in her classroom, and students address their work again and again, making their writing and re-making themselves. Alyx tells me: “They come back and fix their paper. But I am really anal about it because I tell them 'I want your old, and I want your new.' They will get so upset with me, especially with their senior projects, because they'll turn in a one page document that ends up being seven or eight pages because they keep fixing it.” Alyx shows students that growth is possible, that making meaning is continual, in spite of their frustration with

her. She mentions that, in multiple revision sessions, “they'll go 'How in the world did you not tell me to fix this thing the first time that I turned it in?' And I'll go, 'Well, maybe I didn't see it the first time around. Maybe I was focusing on something else the first time around. But I see something now, and you can fix it.’” In this practice of revision, students and teacher are growing as writers and learners together.

Annalee indicates that teachers of writing must write, but the regular practice is difficult to maintain, so much that perhaps it is not fully addressed in teacher preparation programs. Tellingly, Annalee writes in her journal:

So what does it mean to be a teacher of writing? Nothing college taught me. A recent professor of mine wrote on Facebook that she was taking over the 'teaching composition' class and wanted to know how this class prepared us to teach writing. Everyone who replied said the class gave them unrealistic expectations. How can we start with assigning a 5-7 page paper when students don't even know how to start? To some extent, each writer goes through “The Writing Process” that we see glossed on a poster for a steal price of \$19.99. However, I feel that very few of us allow our students (or even ourselves) to become immersed in this process.

Immersion in the process—practice—takes time but creates fluency. Annalee recognizes this and works to transfer it to classroom life. In this way, practice and process become part of the classroom environs, a natural extension of expectation, routine as environment. Graves suggests that it is not method but expectation that encourages writing from students, that “certain conditions” can “encourage good writing” (1994, p. 103). Among these are time for regular and sustained writing practice, choice in topics to encourage interest and authenticity, clear and focused response from other writers (peers and teachers), demonstration from other writers (teachers, peers, and professionals, clear and high expectations, a room structure conducive to writing, and an understood method of evaluation (Graves, 1994). The practices become ritual, and students and teacher settle

into a flow.

Living as Practice: Doing and Being in the Current

Beyond the space of the classroom, however, these teachers show that living itself is practice. Young people writing, with practice, become writers. More experienced learners who write with their students, in practice, become teachers. What we repeatedly do, we become. In running, for example, I am not just completing a session of running, I am becoming a runner. This run is just one along a continuum of sessions of running which make me who I am. In the process of learning to climb, I slowly become a climber. Likewise, this piece of writing is not just one piece of writing I am bringing forth, developing, nurturing through the process of writing. It is one piece along a continuum of pieces, of moments of writing that make me become a writer and a researcher. And again, likewise, one hour's worth of teaching, one golden moment of classroom insight is just one session of teaching that creates the teacher. One class, one day, is one encounter along a continuum of a teacher becoming herself. It is all practice. It is all practice, and it is all process.

Even more so, I am not just a runner, writer, researcher, teacher—I am all of these; one part is not separable from the others. And the teachers with whom I converse are not just teacher, coach, friend, colleague, Zumba-dancer, bike rider, runner, cake-baker, wife, girlfriend, mother, writer—they are all of these, and all of these becoming. In the cyclical pattern of doing and being, we are always in process, in progress. As Heidegger expresses, “The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other” (1971/2001, p. 17). In the process of creation we are created, and we continue to create, spiraling out.

There is no end point, only, as Annalee expresses, “the 'for now' draft,” the resting place before the world whirls us into the next moments of life. In those moments, we move toward wholeness—becoming more who we are—and transcendence—seeing more clearly our places in the world—the continual circuit of growing, doing, creating, and being created. To do is to be, or, as Bradbury writes, process and person come together in practice:

Doing is being.
 To have done's not enough;
 To stuff yourself with doing—*that's* the game.
 To name yourself each hour by what's done,
 To tabulate your time at sunset's gun
 And find yourself in acts
 You could not know before the facts
 You wooed from secret self, which much needs wooing,
 So doing brings it out,
 Kills doubt by simply jumping, rushing, running
 Forth to be
 The now-discovered me.
 To *not* do is to die,
 Or lie about and lie about the things
 You just might do some day.
 Away with that!
 Tomorrow empty stays
 If no man plays it into being
 With his motioned way of seeing.
 Let your body lead your mind—
 Blood the guide dog to the blind;
 So then practice and rehearse
 To find heart-soul's universe,
 Knowing that by moving/seeing
 Proves for all time: Doing's being! (Bradbury, 1994, pp. 171-172)

As exemplified here in Bradbury's poem, applicable to student writers and those who lead and learn with them, “doing” has the capacity to bring out one's “secret self,” and so reveals who we really are (Bradbury, p. 172). “Practice and rehears[al]” can help to reveal the “heart-soul's universe,” uncovering authenticity, wholeness of process and

person, as the “body lead[s the] mind” (Bradbury, 1994, p. 172). In movement practice, sinking into the rhythm of our bodies in space and time, moving to stillness, the body can lead the mind, and insights and identities can be born of that motion. Indeed, insight grows out of body practice simply through the shared walking, writing, and talking in which Alyx, Annalee, Holly, Traci, and I have engaged together.

When we engage in practice, we grow, and the teachers in this study show that we must challenge students to practice, to do, in order for them to grow. Likewise, we must do the same as teachers ourselves; we become who we are through thoughtful, intentional practice—writing practice, teaching practice, life practice, body practice. In becoming who we are, however, we are bound to encounter fear and vulnerability, to get stuck ourselves. Students may benefit from seeing this, too, as sharing common experience creates solidarity; when students see their teachers encountering the same struggles, these struggles, too, become a part of the practice.

Teachers Transcending Fear: Modeling, Conferencing, and Lighting the Way

All our heart's courage is
the echoing response to the
first call of Being which
gathers our thinking into the
play of the world.

In thinking all things
become solitary and slow.

Patience nurtures magnanimity.

He who thinks greatly must
err greatly. (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 9)

Heidegger's concept of thinking-being, as expressed here, connects deeply to the notion that, in order to be wholly and fully ourselves, we must be courageous, respond to

the world's call with strength. We must take time alone, in solitude, nurturing ourselves; we must slow down in reflective awareness in order to know and find who we are so we are better able to teach others. We must be patient in order to be great, and we must open ourselves to the possibility of failure in order to find success. The teachers in this study—and I myself as well—have benefitted from the kind of patient self-care Heidegger details here. Relatedly, as van Manen (1991) suggests, these teachers show a “mindfulness oriented toward” those they teach, a pedagogical tact that surfaces in a bodily way, “the body work of thoughtfulness” (p. 206).

The teachers in this study, by example, model bodily the way writers practice and process their craft, how to be readers and writers rather than how to do writing and reading. Alyx, Annalee, Traci, and Holly repeatedly circle back to the notion that they must take the risk of physically and mindfully being writers themselves in order to teach writers authentically. As Calkins states, these teachers know

...what a powerful thing it is within these communities when we model what it means for reading and writing to be at the heart of our lives! Children listen when we talk about the reading clubs we have with our friends. They look when we bring our notebooks with us to the classroom and, turning the pages, show them what we wrote while at a concert or a horse show. They notice when we cross out sections in our drafts. (Calkins, 1986/1994, p. 147)

These teachers model not only how to write, but also how to lead a writerly life. Annalee recognizes that the kind of modeling students need requires that she be a writer herself, deeply understanding of the snags and snares of the process.

Annalee tells me that “A teacher who honestly is a 'teacher of writing' won't skip steps and will take time to revise [her] own teaching and writing. That same person also writes and shares that with his/her students. If the teacher realizes that he/she is having an issue with something, then [she'll] see what their students will have problems with.”

Annalee's writing practice spirals out into her teaching practice, and her students are able to follow her example because she has the courage and mindfulness to show herself to them.

Modeling: “I show them.” Modeling is essential for student understanding; this notion is overwhelmingly present in our conversations. Holly tells me that she does “a lot of modeling in creative writing, especially when we do the poems at the beginning of the year because some of the poems are kind of complicated to explain, but then I will show them a sample that I wrote 3 or 4 years ago when I started teaching. But others I will write up on the projector as we do them, so it's mostly modeling.” In using her work to connect with students, to help foster their writerly expression, Holly establishes herself as a writer in practice and in process—she shows students her prior work, and also she composes in real-time, bringing her writerly self into the classroom, stripping away the protection of polish and privacy, composing a draft on the spot.

Modeling, in addition to providing notions of how to do something, can also help to assuage student confusion and fear because it can “confirm the commonality of all writers” (Graves, 2003, p. 50). Traci knows this, as she shows in an anecdote about her students struggling with a poetry assignment: “I asked my class to write an eight line poem about [the] Titanic on Wednesday after we finished reading. They were dumbfounded—like I'd asked them to become Wordsworth or Frost or Dickinson. I pounded out eight lines in five minutes to show them how simple it would be—and some of them realized after I'd shared mine that it wasn't really that hard.”

Traci is leading the way for her students, making a seemingly daunting task into something do-able, simply by showing her own process; her students see her physically

making the work of drafting. When Traci shows her working process first, she finds her students are emboldened. She indicates, “When I shared those eight simple lines, they were like 'Oh. I can do what you're asking.' And they came up with so much. Some of them came up with some really good stuff. Some of it was funny. Some of it was serious. And just their approaches: everybody approached it differently, which I loved.” When given a safe space, when shown a direction in initial draft writing, Traci's students' creativity sparked and caught alight.

Annalee opens herself to her students—not just her writing process, but her thinking process, too, especially in critical reading activities. She may display a draft or a prompt, projected for students to see, and then practice marking to show her thinking. Students see her physically doing the work of writing; she is bodily present with her students and with the work in which they are all engaged. Annalee describes this process, saying, “I show them: How did I annotate? How did I write? Did I go back and scratch something out? Why did I do that?” In doing this, she displays her thinking, makes the invisible visible, showing how and why, not just the end product.

Conference: Listening closely. Alyx, too, offers students more than just a product by constantly reinforcing the idea that writing is a process and a conversation, and also that writers are the deciding factor of what happens in their writing. Alyx tells me that “Once they have a product, I read and mark their draft. I never fix their mistakes. Instead, I mark at the end of each line what type of mistake they have, and they must find it and fix it.” In this way, Alyx's young writers are offered ownership and understanding; asked to account for their own errors, they enter the process of editing as their own editors. However, the conversation does not stop there, because Alyx engages writers in

conversation about their work, explaining that “Next, we conference and discuss my comments, their writing, and the errors. I give suggestions to what they can do to make their writing better. Then they revise. When they turn in their writing, they turn in their old drafts and the new, so I can see their progress. I may not help every kid, but the ones I do help make me happy to be a teacher.”

Alyx sees her students as individual writers with something important to say; she helps them to say it by providing consistent and detailed feedback, both written and verbal, that encourages ownership and initiative. As van Manen (1991) suggests, Alyx displays pedagogical tact through both listening thoughtfully and speaking intentionally with young writers. Doing so offers meaning to students, and in this process, Alyx finds meaning, too; helping her students “make[s her] happy.” She becomes more her teacherly self in working with students; likewise, her students become writers. In Alyx's classroom, writing conference is a conversation in which she connects deeply with her students as writers, listening closely. In conference, “It is listening that creates a magnetic force between writer and audience. The force of listening will draw words out. Writers will find themselves saying things they didn't know they knew” (Calkins, 1986/1994, p. 232). In the close conversation of conference, students and teacher make deeper meaning. Eye to eye, bent over the paper, the embodied act of writing conference exemplifies thoughtful pedagogy.

Creating writers: Showing the path. Consistently, teachers' practices of modeling and conferencing with writers as writers not only show young writers how to write, but also these practices help them establish a writerly identity. Maymind (2007), for example, expresses that she writes with first graders in writing workshop, and she

uses herself and her writing as a model. Maymind sees her position as a writer as helpful to her students in their continued writerly practice because, she says:

Showing children that you write outside of school also motivates them to do the same [...] I make the biggest deal if a child brought in writing to share, not because it was homework, but because they wanted to write. [...] Students need to understand that writing is not just doing an assignment at school, but taking down your thoughts, fears, ideas, and experiences and getting them on paper. It is not just words on a page, but a way to tell your personal story. I don't want the students to have my voice; I want to inspire them to have their own. As each student develops ownership and their unique style of writing, I know they are on their way to living the writer's life. (2007, p. 41)

In this way, teachers of writing (writers themselves) are creating writers, not just pieces of writing composed by students, or students able to tackle only the technical aspects of writing.

But this baring of writerly self takes courage, and teachers struggle with the same kinds of insecurities and stopped thinking their students face. Traci expresses this, stating, "I'm often embarrassed by the things that come out on paper. I wind up shredding it anyway to spare myself the almost humiliation. I can relate to kids in that aspect, but maybe it's easier with the right motivation." The bodily experience of shame and embarrassment makes it difficult for teachers to stand in front of their students in the vulnerable skin of a writer or fellow learner. Palms sweaty, we may shake, stammer, lose our fluid thinking. We may pace the room to clear our thinking.

Traci experiences fear, hesitation, the same as her students; as with her students, this hesitation may be countered by authentic work, safe space, and also by the freedom to move. Addressing this commonality of shared fear and hesitation with students seems to help, too, as Holly indicates when she discusses her own methods for getting writing to flow during bouts of writer's block. Holly writes that "When I wrote papers in college

and got stuck, I would get up and walk around my dorm room for a little bit, and then I'd be able to continue. With my students, I usually have them do a free association activity, listen to music, or I'll even choose a random topic for them, but I think taking them outside would definitely work." By modeling ways of moving into new flow during times of stuck thinking, Holly makes her process even more visible to students, and may help them see a clearer path for themselves as writers.

Process Made Visible: Baring the Self

Alyx reflects extensively in her journal about making her writerly practices visible to her students, as doing so seems to "make the process easier." She indicates that she is willing to "write and share every assignment with them." It is important to Alyx that her students see her mid process, fumbling and getting stuck. She writes: "I 'bare' myself to them." Fully exposed as a drafting writer, Alyx is vulnerable and authentic, and she feels this bodily; she is working alongside her students in inter-corporeal awareness. She is, as Palmer notes, practicing teaching as "a daily exercise in vulnerability," and feels "naked in front of a class" (2007, p. 17).

In this situation of vulnerability, Alyx's human and writerly errors show. She tells her students, "I am sure when I look through this I will probably have some errors. That wasn't my focus at all, worrying about how I was spelling things or whatever. I can always clean up later." She emphasizes process over product, explaining to her students, "I don't care what it looks like now. Get it out of your brain, first. Then we can go back in and we can clean the stuff up. Once you know what you need to look for, then we can fix." In this way, her students' writing emphasis is encouraged to shift from correction to communication, from product to process.

Alyx does not stop at telling students what her expectations are. In order to be fully clear, she shows them her process, writes as a writer among writers, with thinking and doing made visible. Alyx describes her process in the classroom, of baring her process and building student understanding, in detail:

First, if I have novice writers, we review, in depth, the components of good writing and continuously work on grammar reviews. Next, I go over the assignment details with students, and we write an example as a group (most of the time). I share examples with them. Then, we all write. I sit down and model my writing process in front of them. I talk out loud, I pace around the room, I get on the floor, I toss my papers around or in the trash, I write under the Elmo so they can see me scratch things out and move paragraphs around, and sometimes I pull my hair. I don't put on a show; rather, I let them see me creating and doing whatever it takes to get "there." The best part is when they ask me what the heck I'm doing. Then I explain about processing and that I can't just be tied to a chair to create.

Alyx makes her writerly self visible, shows students her bodily process of creation, and writes alongside them, writers working in shared space. Particularly telling is Alyx's assertion that she does not act out of character or "put on a show;" rather, she is fully herself as writer, visible in process. It takes courage to be whole in front of students; it is an act of embodiment, of fearlessness and surrender. It also goes against the myth that writing comes easily to experienced writers, bound to desks, churning out novels with ease.

In this act of wholeness, Alyx acknowledges students as whole beings, too, embodied and in need of more than a blank page and tiny desk in order to compose writing. She models bodily for her students, and yet she emphasizes that there is no one way to be a writer, no one way to write. She winds them up, and then Alyx sets her students loose. Alyx describes in detail the way this looks in her classroom as she acknowledges her students as writers in the world:

I then encourage them to find their own way. Sometimes they plug in music, they move, they mimic me, they get drinks and walk around, they talk, they drift off into space. I've had kids sitting backwards and under seats, laying on the floor, propped up on the wall, and laying in the grass! Whatever it takes, as long as they aren't breaking any school rules and they adhere to the parameters of the assignment (sometimes I even allow them some poetic license.) I know they are “there” when their pens are all dancing across the papers, and I see a look on their faces of satisfaction. I act as a guide through their process.

Alyx honors the writerly processes of her students, values their creative processes, and makes a safe space in which students may practice writing bodily—with herself as a model for success. Importantly, as well, Alyx honors her students' embodiment, recognizing their need to move, to transcend the confines of desks, to practice writing as community. She sees her students as some others are beginning to see young writers: as whole beings, in need of space, room to think, room to move.

Voelker, for example, a middle school language arts teacher, sees her students as embodied beings in need of space that honors that embodiment: “Middle school students are creatures of comfort. Their bones grow before their muscles, and they are always twisting and stretching at their desks, trying to get their muscles to match their bones. A few upholstered chairs and floor cushions scattered about will certainly address this need” (2007, p. 12). A way of teaching and learning writing that incorporates the embodied understanding of students acknowledges that

Movement portrays the personality in a way that verbal abstraction does not. You are as you move. The understanding of the triad of humanity—the integration of body-mind-soul is the link that we must help people forge for themselves in all that they do. There is certainly no excuse in this day and age for intelligent people to speak of mind and body as things apart. (Ulrich, 1976, p. 168)

Allowing student writers to write from their bodies defies the duality so prevalent in past educational settings, bringing forth authentic being.

When young writers are offered authentic work, provided models of authentic

writing and examples of writers in practice, and presented a place in which they can safely be the writers they are, perhaps they can then come to see themselves as more than just students of writing. It may allow them a sense of wholeness of purpose, of task, as functioning in the world. Under these conditions, “the children see writing as a tool to transcend themselves and to affect other people, an act that redefines writing as a political tool. Indeed, it brings writing closer to what I feel is one of the major functions of writing: to transcend oneself in space and time” (Graves, 1994, p. 34). Real writing offers wholeness and transcendence, and yet, in schools as the teachers in this study discuss, the approach to writing instruction is increasingly fragmented.

The Formula: Fragmentation as Opposed to Wholeness

Leonard (1968) asserts that “To learn is to change. Education is a process that changes the learner” (p. 7). However, he argues, traditional public education has not sought to fundamentally change the learner, but rather to keep him or her in line, unquestioning, since “preventing the new generation from changing in any deep or significant way is precisely what most societies require of their educators” (Leonard, p. 7). Jardine (2008) discusses the formulaic approach of “urban sprawl curriculum integration,” which “is premised on the metaphysical belief that each curricular fragment is what it is independently of everything else, independently of any sustaining relations” (p. 145). As such, writing is writing for the sake of writing, disconnected from reading, grammar, or any other subject matter or skills. In this concept, nothing connects to anything, and everything stands alone, fragmented.

Fragmentation in education, as opposed to movement toward wholeness, is present in such values as “Right answers,’ specialization, standardization, narrow

competition, eager acquisition, aggression, detachment from the self” (Leonard, 1968, p. 124). According to Leonard, these types of priorities historically meant continuation of productive “social machinery” (p. 124). Palmer (2007) also discusses fragmentation in education, arguing that we “Separate head from heart;” we “separate facts from feelings;” we “separate theory from practice,” and we “separate teaching from learning,” when in fact, true education requires that we “think things together [to] reclaim the life of the world, in our students, in ourselves” (pp. 68-69).

Leonard, nearly 40 years ago, called for a revolution in education—one that could move teachers and students as learners toward wholeness, to “return man [sic] to himself; to encourage rather than stifle awareness; to educate the emotions, the senses, the so-called autonomic systems; to help people become truly responsive and therefore truly responsible” (1968, p. 127). To truly educate, in this concept, means honoring all that we are: mind, heart, soul, body. Education means wholeness rather than fragmentation—teaching writers, not teaching writing.

Process rather than product. In our conversations and in their writing, Holly, Annalee, Traci, and Alyx repeatedly voice frustration toward the formulaic approach to writing on which so many teachers rely, and on which students seem to want to depend. Their students want clear guidelines, examples, and frequent reassurance, the comfort of contact from guides in the classroom; when possible, they also want to be told how to manufacture the product writing rather than actually doing the work of process.

A recurrent frustration for these teachers relates to students' reliance on product over process, of students' desire to have a one-size-fits-all formula that will assure them a grade of A, whether or not they find meaning or learning in their work. Traci understands

this, and refers to the formulaic approach as something students think they need and become dependent upon. She expresses, “They're so afraid of failure, of not knowing what is expected, they always need that crutch;” for these teachers, the “crutch” of the formulaic essay has been a point of interference in the writing process, just as it was for me as a classroom teacher.

These teachers do see the benefits of formula for troubled writers—it can build confidence and provide some security for struggling writers. As Traci indicates, “The formula just makes them feel better. It's a little bit of a notion of that spoon feeding they've grown so accustomed to. Again, I don't know where that starts either, though.” Still, these teachers see the formula as something students already rely heavily upon and that, at some point, must be let go, unlearned; like the runner who transitions from the treadmill to the trail, the climber who goes out of the gym and onto the rock, the writer must transcend the formula in order to enter the world fully. Annalee suggests that the formula is a temporary structure that must be transcended eventually, saying, “I imagine that the formulas are like little floaters or training wheels, and that at some point you just need to shove them in the pool without those floaters on. They need to use what they learned from the floaters and swim.”

Our conversations seem to support the notion that students used to relying on the formulaic approach to writing are also more concerned with convention, correction, and structure than the actual authentic meaning of the words they create, as Brannon, Courtney, Urbanski, Woodward, Reynolds, Iannone, Haag, Mach, Manship, & Kendrick (2008) assert. Annalee expresses this frustration well when she confesses in her journal that sometimes she finds herself thinking, “I hate teaching writing to my students. It's

something that comes pretty easily to me, and I don't understand why some (most) students have to have their hand held through the entire process. I'm sick of all the questions: 'How do I spell this...?' When the problem is that the writing is so vague that it has holes in it the size of the grand canyon.” Annalee's students have become attuned to issues of editing, rather than the communicative and creative aspects of writing, and, Annalee asserts, some of this misunderstanding of writing from students' perspectives has to do with the way writing is evaluated in schools.

Teaching rather than testing. When we replace testing writing with teaching writing, we emphasize correctness and product instead of meaning making and process. According to Graves,

In the United States, we expend more effort checking children's educational efforts through external measures than actually teaching them. We send their work out of town for normative assessments but then receive data we cannot use to help children improve. Worse, the types of standardized assessments given to students rarely resemble the actual writing tasks they practice in the classroom. (1994, p. 168)

Annalee expresses frustration with this reliance on testing and its effect on her student writing. She argues that the formulaic instruction and assessment of writing is a sticking point of inauthentic expression, saying, “That's one of the things I hate the most about the writing assessment. It's that, the kids get the prompt over the computer, and they're sitting in front of the computer, and they're still expected to do the writing process, in this little tiny spot. [...] I just don't see how it is at all an accurate look at writing in our students.”

According to Annalee, the writers in her classroom are able to argue, are able to support their arguments, and are able to logically express those arguments in conversation—they can make significant meaning in an environment that fosters communication and meaning-making. Annalee knows from conversations and class

discussions that her students “can have an educated argument where they cite their sources, present evidence, and evaluate the evidence based on who said it and when they said it.” When it comes to translating into writing, however, especially for testing purposes, her students can become paralyzed.

Annalee relates, “Once I asked them to write either about their experience or a defense on their side of the argument, it was back to 'how do I spell opinion?’” This tendency toward correctness rather than communication is common in novice writers, and as McGarrell and Verbeem (2007) assert, is reinforced by institutional feedback that emphasizes grades, instructional priorities, and skills, rather than the real purpose of writing, the conveyance of ideas that students think are important and want to share.

Mayher (1990) suggests that teaching the test rather than teaching leads to fragmentation in multiple senses. First, he argues, standardized tests “can only ask questions which have a right answer” (Mayher, p. 256). This one right answer style of testing implies fragmentation because “in a transactional process of meaning making, questions about what someone has understood do not have universal right answers and must be asked in an open-ended [...] format” (Mayher, p. 257). Isolated from a community of learning, students face tests alone—understanding can not be built within the community for standardized testing purposes.

In terms of writing assessment, right answers often mean reliance on a particular structure, or a particular format, or a time-bound exam. This demonstrates fragmented understanding since meaning-making, particularly in writing, is, first, not a one shot deal and is, second, more about communicative expression than right answers. With no distinguishable audience besides the anonymous grader—which, in the case of Annalee,

Alyx, Holly, and Traci's students, is a computer program—students are sending writing into the void. The teachers in this study discuss often how to teach their students to write—and distinguish that kind of instruction from teaching them to pass the state writing assessment test.

Mayher also discusses the fragmented sense of purpose found in teaching for testing. He argues, “The principal flaw in standardized tests in reading and writing is that they almost completely ignore the fact that both processes are individually meaning centered. We don't write to write or read to read, and yet that is exactly what students are asked to do on reading and writing tests” (1990, p. 257). With no sense of purpose for reading or writing (besides passing the test, that is), understanding is left in fragments.

Authenticity: Learning as purpose. In their reliance on correctness rather than composition of thought, it is as if these young writers are disconnected from their “selves” in terms of the school work. When students are treated as if they are products of schooling, as brains in chairs, when we fail to treat them as human bodies, when student writing is limited to product and exercise rather than meaning-making, perhaps students want to separate themselves out from it as well. Not only is the writing instruction fragmented, the writing fragmented, the writers' conceptions of themselves are fragmented, too.

To create real world writers, we must move toward wholeness—wholeness in authentic writing assignments, in feedback, and in purpose and audience. McGarrell and Verbeem (2007) suggest that teachers of writing can do this through emphasis on process rather than product, through modeling, and through conferencing, all strategies that Annalee, Alyx, Holly, and Traci have come to know and use. Furthermore, movement

toward wholeness involves “lifelong learning, lifelong creative change,” which Leonard calls “an exhilarating and dangerous endeavor that will require far more human intensity and courage than the old modes” of skill and drill, rote behavior, and will require that we acknowledge our participation in a “highly responsive, richly interconnected world” (1968, p. 131). Students in this realm are people, with lives and needs, and the teachers in this study strive to see them as they are.

Leonard describes a Utopian, futuristic school, in which “educators are always on hand to counsel learners about the all important relationship between the body—its posture, tension, movements, and coordination—and everything else in life and learning” (1968, p. 161). Although these teachers may not meet exactly the vision Leonard had planned, they may be meeting his standards in a new way, one that, while lacking the science fiction edge his description describes, does indeed encourage us to “learn heightened awareness and control of emotional, sensory and body states,” and “to learn how to learn” (1968, pp. 132-133). After all, “Learning itself is life's ultimate purpose” (Leonard, 1968, p. 216). Traci, Holly, Alyx, and Annalee move their students toward wholeness and away from fragmentation; yet, ultimately, they strive to be whole themselves, learners in the world, working toward unity of mind, body, and purpose.

To Strive Toward Wholeness: To Let Learn

All four of these teachers work toward integrating a sense of wholeness in their lives. They engage fully in mind and body. They read books, write, work out, spend time with partners, families, and pets. They have hobbies, homes, and lives outside of school; yet, they are incorporated very much into the circuit of the school community. They are yearbook advisors, sports team and academic team coaches, mentors for other teachers,

and part of a culture. They attend school dances and functions. They have impromptu conferences with parents in grocery stores and restaurants. They are individuals playing many roles within the community, balancing part and whole daily.

Alyx offers the most complex example of a teacher-learner-writer-woman working toward wholeness, as she spoke and wrote candidly about her transformation from fragmented, unhealthy living toward a healthful, integrated whole. In an excerpt from her journal, Alyx ponders her transformation toward wholeness, the difficulty of making change, and the spiraling effect that change has had on her life, her relationships, and her teaching:

The path of least resistance or the one with boulders in the way? Which one to choose? I must admit, like a mathematical equation, I've often traveled from point A to point B in a straight line never straying off course, never climbing, and never pushing myself. Easy. Easy street. Never again. I took the easy path because I was lazy, because I allowed myself; I was weak. I was scared. It's sad, really, to realize how much time is wasted in fear. Never again. Change is essential! Necessary. I couldn't keep traveling that easy A to B path because it was leading me to a place I didn't want to be. I had become a woman unrecognizable to myself. How did that happen? I felt powerless to change the image before me, but I knew things couldn't remain the same. I had to be the change. After all, I'm a role model.

Alyx underwent her own transformation toward wholeness, embraced her own creativity, began a routine of healthful living, and learned to prioritize the most important things in her life. When she did, Alyx emerged, a person in process and moving toward herself. She tells me, "I'm getting there, I'm getting there, yeah...."

Alyx is a woman becoming, a poem in draft, a life in the current, charged with energy; and so are Annalee, Traci, and Holly. This continual learning, movement toward wholeness, is perhaps the most important pedagogical implication of this work, since it has the capacity to show students not just how to write, but also how to live. Graves

(2001) stresses the importance of being whole in the classroom as a model for student wholeness, telling teachers:

It is the quality of our own lives as we engage with the world that is one of the major sources of energy for our students. It is the questions you ask aloud about the world, your curiosity, the books you read, and your personal use of writing that teach far more than any methodological course you've ever taken. Yes, there are approaches to teaching that we need to know but they take second place to the conditions for learning. You, the teacher, are the most important condition in the room. (p. 35)

Our conversations created an image of these teachers as whole people engaged in whole lives, cultivating relationships with one another, with their loved ones and families, and with their students. They experienced joy, inspiration, frustration, doubt, and love. They see themselves as models, sometimes as writers, sometimes fumbling along for the right words or acts. They move toward wholeness and integration in their personal lives and classrooms; they reach toward transcendence in their teaching and living. And sometimes, in the rarest moments, they find it.

Van Manen (1991) draws an image of the teacher as one engaged in pedagogical tact toward students. This tact, van Manen expresses, includes seeing a child in wholeness by helping her or him work toward independence. This involves allowing for multiple perspectives and subjectivity, and engenders the flexibility to improvise—to act in wholeness—to meet student needs when things do not go as planned. Connecting most deeply to this work is the sense of wholeness in person, curriculum, and process, as van Manen's concept of tact “makes whole what is broken” (p. 166). Teachers with pedagogical tact, van Manen states, “intuitively understand that for all students their education is a life project” (p. 166). Traci, Holly, Annalee, and Alyx, while working to make themselves whole—body and mind—also look for ways to make whole the lives

and experiences of their students.

Heidegger (1977/1993) writes that “Teaching is more difficult than learning because teaching calls for this: to let learn,” and that this task is most challenging because a teacher must relate to her students in such a way that she “has to learn to let them learn,” teaching rather than telling, allowing rather than lecturing, doing and being (p. 380). This calls for a “relation between the teacher and learners that is genuine,” in which “there is never a place in it for authority of the know-it-all of the authoritative sway of the official” (Heidegger, p. 380). This genuine relation between teacher and learners as fellow learners, can be transcendent, making it “an exalted matter, then, to become a teacher,” a practice and project of enlightenment (Heidegger, p. 380). To teach—to let learn—is to transcend.

Transcendence: Surrender in The Spiral

Transcendence—sensing our place in the universe—Leonard (1974/2001) refers to as dancing Cosmos—taking part in the harmonious whole. In these rare experiences of wholeness, “there are undeniable moments of perfect flow and reconciliation which exist as the highest function of literature—mowing hay in perfect rhythm during a brief summer shower, standing on the deck of a sailing ship and sensing a perfect oneness with the sea, lying on the hillside that day of the apple tree, the singing and the gold with your first love;” these are moments in which there is “no separation between the dancer and the dance” (pp. 239-240).

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word transcend as “To pass over or go beyond (a physical obstacle or limit); to climb or get over the top of (a wall, mountain, etc.)” (Transcend, 2013). To transcend is also “To pass or extend beyond or above (a

non-physical limit); to go beyond the limits of (something immaterial); to exceed” (Transcend). As such, the act of pressing one's body to excel is transcendent (in climbing, in running, in any physical capacity that allows one to move beyond limits). To move beyond a mental block—the stuck-ness of writer's block, for example—is also transcendent. Additionally, those moments in which we feel connections to others in the world—the electric and golden moments of flow—are also transcendent.

Philosophically, transcendence relates to the notion of what we can only glimpse, the magical edge of understanding of who and what we are and our possibilities. Merleau-Ponty discusses transcendence as the “process whereby the hitherto meaningless takes on meaning,” exemplified as an “act in which existence takes up, to its own account, and transforms such a situation” (1945/2002, p. 196). In this conception, transcendence is the flow of understanding that comes out of confusion, the transformative act of flow experience. This is what happens in movement meditation; this is what happens, albeit sometimes slowly and laboriously, in the writing process.

Transcendence also involves close feelings of connection to self and universe, in a spiritual sense. Coffey (2008) cites neurological research that used brain image scanning of Buddhist monks and Franciscan nuns during meditation “before and at the peak of their transcendent feelings. During that peak, the imaging showed that the pre-frontal cortex—the part of the brain dealing with positive emotions—was seething with activity” (p. 42). However, while one part of the brain became very active,

there was a substantial decline in neural activity in the parietal lobes. These lobes are associated with two functions: the orientation of the body in space and the perception of space. The left superior parietal lobe creates the perception of the body's physical boundaries, and the right superior parietal lobe creates the perception of physical space outside the body. (Coffey, p. 42)

Based on this information, researchers conclude “without sensory stimulus to delineate the border between self and the world [...] the brain has no choice but to perceive the self as endless and intimately woven with everyone and everything the mind senses” (Coffey, p. 42). These moments are true intersubjectivity, then; in them, neurons firing, we sense understanding of self and others, connectedness and expansion of understanding. These moments are fuel for personal meaning, for the process of learning, for embodied awareness—and for writing.

The “Rhythm of Writing Time”

Transcendence is part of the writing process. Graves (1994) expresses that the writing process can take us somewhere else, an interior place apart from the confines of the classroom. Writing is “an act of self-hypnosis: I leave the external world in order to visit an interior world of memory, where I search through various caves of experience and recollection. Sleep is also an act of self-hypnosis; for many people, conditions have to be predictable or they can't leave the external world of consciousness for the world of sleep” (p. 120). For Graves, and, he argues, for student writers, there must be a “rhythm of writing time” to generate that transcendence into process space (Graves, p. 120).

To reach this sense of transcendence, however, requires both courage and surrender. These teachers of writing give over control to their students, offer students ownership of their own writing, of their own ways of knowing. They move from correction to communication, from product to process. Leonard discusses “focused surrender,” a loss of self in the doing of something, a “paradox” of “intense effort that becomes effective only through total surrender, the unlikely marriage of trying with not trying, during which intentionality can alter structure” (2006, p. 130).

Indeed, Merleau-Ponty urges us to “understand motility as basic intentionality” (1945/2002, pp. 158-159). On a physical level, we move toward the objects in space we want to see more clearly, and on a metaphorical level, we move toward deeper understanding. Consciousness, then, is intentional, born of our lived experiences, encompassing our past, present, and future, our “being” situated in and among the people, places, things, ideas, and emotions that make us who we are. The rhythm of time, in this sense, offers a means for understanding the movement of our lives; writing helps fix that understanding in a legible place, revealing what we know in a single moment's record.

Surrender: The Vulnerable Made Visible

These moments of focused surrender allow us to embrace challenges, to focus our efforts, and, ultimately, to rise above and go beyond our own expectations. This is especially pertinent in moments of difficulty, and teaching and writing—like movement practice—are hard work. Challenge and difficulty (like learning) transform us, so much that “you might not even recognize the self you meet at the moment of challenge because you are removed from the social context that tries to define you from without” (Reid, 2002, p. 6). Likewise, challenge brings us back into our bodies, since

within the moment of challenge, you experience yourself as embodied whole; you are forced to bridge the mind-body gap instead of identifying with one or the other as we humans are so wont to do. Most strikingly you realize that you are terrifyingly free—free to fail as the limited, imperfect, mortal that you are. And free to succeed, even to transcend your apparent limits. (Reid, p. 6)

In this transcendent state, we are defined not by those outside us, but by ourselves, without fear of judgment or reprisal, through a total immersion in activity—be it teaching, writing, running, climbing, or anything else in which we immerse our efforts.

Wholeness in practice, Reid argues, can allow us to see and define the self “from the inside out,” rather than from “as others see us—reflected through such mirrors as race, gender, and social status. These mirrors can distort our vision of ourselves, giving us only a view from the outside in” (2002, p. 14). We can see ourselves as we are; we can become more ourselves.

In this surrender, we are made visible and vulnerable. This is particularly pertinent for teachers of writing, baring themselves in the classroom, since “...above all, we write to hold our lives in our hands and to make something of them. There is no plotline in the bewildering complexity of our lives but that which we make for ourselves. Writing allows us to turn the chaos into something beautiful, to frame selected moments, to uncover and celebrate the organizing patterns of our existence” (Calkins, 1986/1994, p. 8). Just as we move to create ourselves, we write to create ourselves, and in baring our selves in process to others, we enhance their lives and learning.

Caring for others is caring for ourselves, since “If we can begin to imagine how much our teaching matters, then perhaps we will begin to take more responsibility for nourishing ourselves as teachers and as people. In the end, what we bring to our classrooms is ourselves. Because our teaching matters so very much, we have a responsibility to take care of ourselves as learners and hoppers and dreamers” writes Calkins (1986/1994, p. 517). I would add to this: as Alyx, Annalee, Holly, and Traci do, we must nurture ourselves in all our wholeness as writers, teachers, and thinkers; as lovers, friends, parents, and children; and as bodies, moving, living, and being in the world.

Movement Meditation: Metaphor, Method, Medium

From the experience of running meditatively
I learn that potentially my entire life
can be lived meditatively.
And it seems to me I should learn to live it so.
To me this means that I will be
calmly, courageously, alertly, intelligently, energetically
present for each moment of my living
until life is done with this body.

So one aspect of running meditation
is the sheer joy right now of this running.
Another aspect
is the learning process
which uses this running as a metaphor
for all the rest of my life. (Rohe, 1978, p. 50)

I have spent late summer and time well into fall walking and talking and writing with these teacher-conversants, and they, teachers of writing, writers and beings embodied in their own ways, showed me that they do find meaning in movement. We certainly tapped into a flow of words through walking together, as evidenced by their journals. All four wrote poetry during our walks in the woods, and yet the movement piece is still elusive, ineffable.

Certainly it is present: both Alyx and Annalee move toward wholeness through vigorous physical activity, though Annalee is closest to me in her experience of running and motion. Alyx, refining both body and mind together, clearly sees the connection between motion and flow, feels herself becoming stronger in mind and body as she nurtures her physical self; she feels her relationships gaining strength and quality, too. Traci and Holly both voiced being out of practice, lacking gumption, but still felt inspired by surroundings and felt the need to move, to put pen to paper. In doing so, they revealed themselves as walking writers in spite of lack of practice.

It was in our discussions, then, that their identities resurfaced as teachers, as well.

We walked our way into a writing flow, and we talked our way into teacherly awareness. As writers and teachers, we came to uncover the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing; pedagogical implications surged forward in our conversations. As I walked with, wrote with, and talked with these teachers, my understanding of movement meditation has become transformed, too. I now understand movement meditation as metaphor for composition, the writing process, and the teaching of writing; as method for entering the writing process as a writer; and as a medium for practice for myself and for others.

Movement as metaphor. Throughout this work, I have written about movement meditation as a metaphor for the writing process. The Oxford English Dictionary defines metaphor as “something regarded as representative or suggestive of something else” (Metaphor, 2013). The smooth flow of vinyasa yoga feels the same as a session of successful writing; the words pour out of me as do postures from my fluid body. Likewise, the stuck sense of writer's block is a metaphor for the paralysis I feel when frozen during a rock climbing session, testing hold after hold, searching for a route that makes sense. Moving meditation has metaphoric parallels in the process of teaching writing, too, as teachers guide students through the recursive steps of insight, drafting, revision, and editing. In the end, the constant forward motion of training for a marathon suggests the process of writing this very work, for the long, slow and ultimately transformative process of composing a dissertation; crossing the finish, my body is different, my thinking is different, the whole world looks different and brilliant.

Movement as method. Movement meditation, too, proves to be a method for finding thoughts, for seeking flow, in writing and in thinking. Again turning to the

Oxford English Dictionary, I find that method is defined as “a procedure for attaining an object,” and in the sense of this work, that object is a thinking and writing flow (Method, 2013). Method is also, however, “A special form of procedure or characteristic set of procedures employed (more or less systematically) in an intellectual discipline or field of study as a mode of investigation and inquiry, or of teaching and exposition,” another definition particularly pertinent to this work (Method, 2013).

Using movement meditation, walks in the woods, as a method, the teachers in this study have tapped into their writerly thinking, producing poetry and reflective journals; they also have produced teacherly thinking through these purposeful walks. The regular practice of a set of procedures, the process or steps my conversants and I take to get to understanding are methodic: this can be the running, the walking, gathering the journals, our conversations, the way this research evolves, the writing itself. Method is the way this writing is constructed, too, the systematic arrangement of mine and others' words in this document, an “orderly arrangement of ideas and topics in thinking or writing” as it manifests in “an author's design or plan” (Method, 2013).

Method is also the way this writing came about, through my own regular sessions of running and writing, running as a practice for organizing my thoughts years before this work came to fruition, “orderliness and regularity in doing anything; the habit of acting in a planned orderly way” (Method, 2013). Moving meditation is, in fact, the method by which this very document came into being, born into insight during early morning runs, afternoon sessions of climbing, yoga flows, hikes, and bike rides.

Movement as medium. Perhaps most evasively difficult to explain, however, is the notion of movement meditation as medium, which can be defined as an

“intermediate... middle state,” the in-between space in which understanding is made, the still place of swirling thoughts or of silent calm I find during a session of movement.

Medium is also the conversations and words of which this work is made, the “raw material or mode of expression used in an artistic or creative activity,” and medium also is the work itself, “a means or channel of communication or expression” through which I communicate this work to you, the reader (Medium, 2013).

Most difficult to describe is the quality of medium as essence—the piece that evades definition, the whole of it all together, the activity through which understanding comes into being—and also the substance that surrounds and makes possible the activity. In climbing, it is the rock, and it is also the gravity, which holds me to the rock even as I defy it. In running it is my body and the ground and the sheer force of forward pace. In writing it is the message and the paper or the computer and the words. In this work it is the work of the philosophers, the texts with which I engage, the conversations and writing of the teachers kind enough to work with me, and my mind and body moving through flow, the words flowing out to you. Medium is the essence of and the process of all activity. It encompasses everything and becomes everything. It is the place in which work dwells.

Even so, medium is also the lightning flash of insight, the ways in which my disjointed and jumbled thinking become aligned and grow into clarity, the fluid organization of thoughts and processes that happen only when I am moving, only when I am tapped into the flow. In this way, medium is “An intervening substance through which a force acts on objects [or thoughts] at a distance or through which impressions are conveyed to the senses” (Medium, 2013). The way in which I come to clarity, the way in

which my thoughts become words, happens through the medium of movement meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing. Medium is this text, too, the words released into the wild; my work in the circuit. Medium is product wed to process. Medium is the connective tissue of movement meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing.

Closing the Circuit: Releasing This Work into the Wild

In chapter 1, I detail the notion that, as a teacher of writing, I have urged my students to write words that were not stilted, caged or confounded, but rather to write words like those that exist “in the wild.” I want myself, too, to create such electric, untamed, real-world writing. I want to offer writing with purpose, that can ripple beyond my small self and out into the wild world. Before closing, then, I must revisit the purpose of this work.

Pedagogical implications, not recommendations. Merleau-Ponty reminds that the purpose for phenomenological writing is “a matter of describing, not explaining or analyzing” (1945/2001, p. ix). As such, phenomenology does not seek to make suggestions about how or what should be done. As a phenomenological researcher, it is my role to stand in the world with “attentiveness and wonder, the same demand for awareness, the same will to seize the meaning of the world or of history as that meaning comes into being” (Merleau-Ponty, p. xxiv). I seek to provide a full description of the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking in writing as it comes into being for myself, for other writers, in philosophy, and in the practices of the teachers who conversed with me.

Van Manen (1997) reminds us that the end of phenomenology is suggesting different ways of doing, and of being bodily, in a pedagogical relationship with others

situated in a particular time and place. Interpretive, reflective descriptions of these ways of doing and being may suggest some aspect of intersubjective meaning. Perhaps readers will be able to “recognize [their] lives in the mimicry of stories and conversational anecdotes” presented here (van Manen, 1997, p. 144). Perhaps the stories Traci, Holly, Annalee, and Alyx share about their lives and classroom experiences will resonate beyond the scope of this work and stir in some readers the intersubjective awareness to consider implications for their own pedagogic practice.

Alyx, Annalee, Holly, and Traci find meaning in writing with students, in positioning themselves as fellow learners, mentors, and conversants in pedagogical relationships with their students. They work to see their students as whole beings, with lives, bodies, needs beyond the classroom—they allow their students some freedom to move in order to generate understanding as it manifests in the body. They take their students outside. They show them writing, teaching and living as embodied ways of knowing. These teachers nurture their own bodies through movement, and they find peace in solitude, in nature, and in their relationships with others.

Perhaps there is meaning, some level of the universal in these aspects of this study, the ways in which these teachers—and I—have found movement meditation in the world. I hope these implications for living with writers and living with ourselves will resonate beyond this work of writing. I know that there is meaning here that has changed me.

The inner pulse, spiraling out. During my work with these teachers, in the writing and doing and being of this piece, I have engaged in connectivity unlike any I have known as a teacher or writer or researcher. Like these teachers, who are striving

toward wholeness in their doing and being, in classroom and community, professionally and personally, I too have moved toward being whole. In this process, I have felt moments of enlightenment, of electrical insight, of surrender, and of transcendence. This process allows for a return to the driving metaphor of this work in *the lived experience of movement meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing*: the circuit. Leonard (2006) connects electricity to the very bodies in which we dwell, positing that

The human body, like the bodies of all living things, creates its own electromagnetic field. Every cell contributes to this field, especially the active gland cells and the muscle cells, which produce relatively strong electrical current upon each contraction. The nervous system is a network of unceasing electrical activity; the brain, an incredibly complex switchboard on which every light is twinkling, night and day. The electrical activity within the brain, as we have seen, is organized into pulsing waves which can be measured on the surface of the scalp, and which also propagate out into space at the speed of light. Similarly, the heart and its extended system of blood vessels produce electrical current and electromagnetic force with an accompanying electromagnetic field. The current generated by the heart itself can be measured on the surface of the chest as a charge of as much as a hundredth of a volt. The electromagnetic field associated with the cardiovascular system has been detected by sensitive instruments several feet away from the body. Each of us, then, is a radio transmitter. (Leonard, pp. 51-52)

For four years, I have been plugged into the transmission of this phenomenon, reading, writing, thinking, running, working, and making meaning of it. I have engaged countless others besides the four teachers who have accompanied me most closely—mentors, teachers, students, writers—but Leonard's words about our vibrating bodies, emanating rhythm and light ring true.

By considering human existence as electric rhythm as energy and flow, Leonard argues, we can overcome the body-mind duality so common and arguably problematic in Western culture, so that “...when we look at a human individual as a series of rhythmic patterns or wave functions, summed up as a single wave function or inner pulse, then the

dualism of mind and body dissolves” (2006, p. 62). Movement toward wholeness, in the sense of body as a manifestation of life rather than a tool for living, unifies human being. As Leonard states, “The body can be seen as one manifestation of the inner pulse, with its various rhythms, even to the frozen rhythms of fingerprints, growing out of the distinctive wave function. Mind as memory is seen as another manifestation. Thus, separating mind and body is theoretically as well as practically impossible” (p. 62). According to this thinking, personal identity is an individual pulse. Interaction with other bodies—through teaching, learning, living—is an expression of love and synchrony. The body is just an extension of one's inner pulse, throbbing in the current of the world. Each life hums, beats, and blazes in its own rhythm. Each life, its own drumming pattern, sounds out its way in the world.

We are pulsing energy, spiraling out. We are vibrating fields, drawing in. We exist in a rhythm, expressed in our bodies, in our thoughts, and in our words. According to Leonard (2006), we can hear distinctly the composer in a certain piece of music, we can feel the pulse of the writer in the words—we can tell Emily Dickinson from Mary Oliver by the cadence of her poetry, her essence on the page. Although much of this has to do with style, the writer leaves a piece of herself for the reader, that she is here with us, her pulse synchronizing with ours as we read.

Teachers leave a luminescent imprint on the lives they touch: those of their students, those of their colleagues. The teachers in this study have left a mark on me. Alight in me are the words of my conversants, the texts with which I have engaged, the poems read, the thoughts of the philosophers who have guided me, my own drafting; these insights cycle in my own body, moving in the rhythm of my footfalls, falling in the

process of the climb. Moving meditation places me deeply in the circuit of the question:

What is the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing? In this circuit I am made, and in this circuit I can rest.

APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INVITATION

Dear English teacher:

I am writing to invite you to participate in my research, a study that explores the lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing, with special considerations of implications for teachers of writing. I am conducting this research as a doctoral student in the department of Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership at the University of Maryland, College Park, under the guidance of Dr. Francine Hultgren.

The purpose of this study is to engage in moving meditation (a walk in the woods, for example) followed by written reflection, to stimulate thinking and writing. We will seek to understand the experience of writing as it is practiced through the process of movement for finding ideas and inspiration. As I seek to understand this experience, we will engage together in approximately four sessions of walking and journaling, followed by group conversations about our experiences, our writing processes, and implications for teaching. These sessions will take place over a four month period, from June to September, 2012, and each of these sessions will last approximately 2-3 hours. I will audio and/or video record these conversations. In addition, I will ask you to reflect upon and share with me in writing some of the ideas and thoughts gathered in our conversations. I may also ask you to engage in individual meetings or written communication with me, if necessary, to further explore insights.

To protect your privacy, confidentiality, and identity, you will not be identified by name in the published findings or in oral presentations, unless you choose to have your name included. You will instead be invited to adopt a pseudonym for the purposes of my writing. In addition, transcriptions of recorded sessions will be shared with you for verification of content and intentions, and when the research project has been completed, all audio files and transcripts will be destroyed. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate and you can end your participation at any time without penalty. You may also decline to answer any question I ask during our conversations. If this is agreeable to you, you will be asked to sign and date a consent form at our first meeting. By signing this form, you are agreeing to participate in this research project; I encourage you to ask questions now and along the way during our work together. After the research is complete, you are more than welcome to review the results; I hope you will choose to do so.

I hope that this study will make an important contribution to understanding the lived experiences of movement for writing and the teaching of writing. I will be contacting you to set up our first meeting together. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at slmorris@umd.edu or by phone at 304-270-7406. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this experience with me.

Sincerely,

Sarah L. Morris, Ph.D. Candidate,
Teaching, Learning, Policy, and Leadership, University of Maryland

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

| | |
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| Project Title | Channeling the current: The lived experience of moving meditation for finding a flow in thinking and writing |
| Purpose of the Study | This research is being conducted by Sarah Morris (under the direction of Francine Hultgren) at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a teacher of writing in a setting that allows access to nature, walking, and meditative movement in natural spaces. The purpose of this research project is explore the use of moving meditation and how that use may affect focus, concentration, and writing process for teachers of writing. |
| Procedures | <p>The procedures involve, first, completion of a consent form. Second, during the summer, 2012, on 3-4 different dates, you will participate in a series of activities and conversations with a group related to moving meditation and writing. We may take walks or hikes. You will be asked to write during each of these group sessions, and a conversation with the group will follow. The moving meditation and writing activities and conversations will extend approximately 2-3 hours. You may also be asked to participate in follow-up conversations of 45 minutes to 1 hour, or to compose written responses to conversation, to be determined after analysis of initial conversation. Topics of conversation will include: your thoughts and experiences, meditation, attention, focus, creativity, writing, and teaching. Conversation will be open ended and questions are expected to develop throughout the course of the conversation.</p> <p>Possible questions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⤴ When do you feel difficulty in writing, or when do you feel “stuck” as writer? ⤴ Tell me about what you do to alleviate the sense of writer's block? ⤴ What is it like when inspiration comes to you? How do you know when you need to write something? ⤴ Tell me about a time when you felt inspired by an idea, a solution to a problem, or a flow of words when you were walking, running, biking, swimming, or moving in any other way. ⤴ What was it like to take a walk with the intention of gathering ideas for thought or writing? ⤴ Describe your thinking process while taking a walk. ⤴ What was it like to write in your journal after you walked with intentionality of gathering ideas? ⤴ What ideas do you have for future writing after writing in your journal today? |
| Potential Risks and Discomforts | There are no significant known risks to participating in this study, however, activities such as walking, hiking, or other forms of moving meditation may involve some risks, as does any physical activity. Although the exercise in this study will not be gentle and not vigorous, if you feel uncomfortable with walking, you should consult a physician before beginning. You may feel anxiety about audio and video taping of conversations, but this anxiety may be assuaged through member-checking of transcribed conversations and interviews. You are encouraged to ask questions throughout the duration of the study and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. |

| | |
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| Potential Benefits | The benefits to you may include rich conversation related to your own experiences and to your writing; this conversation may lead you (as well as the investigator) to new insight. Additionally, you will be offered time to develop your writing in the presence of other writers. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of moving meditation for writing and thinking. |
| Confidentiality | <p>Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by taking all possible measures to keep personal information confidential. To help protect confidentiality: (1) your name will not be included on any written documentation, and you will be invited to choose a pseudonym for research writing purposes; (2) only the investigator will have access to the your name; (3) only the investigator will have access to recordings of conversations; (4) transcriptions of recorded sessions will be shared with you for verification of content and intentions; (5) when the research project has been completed, all audio files and transcripts will be destroyed. If a report or article about this research project is written, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible.</p> <p>Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</p> |
| Medical Treatment | The University of Maryland does not provide any medical, hospitalization or other insurance for participants in this research study, nor will the University of Maryland provide any medical treatment or compensation for any injury sustained as a result of participation in this research study, except as required by law. |
| Right to Withdraw and Questions | <p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator, Francine Hultgren at: 2311 Benjamin Building, College Park, MD 20742-1175, email fh@umd.edu.</p> |
| Participant Rights | <p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland 20742 301-405-4212 (Telephone) E-mail: irb@umd.edu</p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p> |
| Statement of Consent | Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been |

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| | <p>answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form. If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</p> | |
| Participation | <p><input type="checkbox"/> I agree to allow my writing responses to be collected and analyzed by the researcher.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I agree to participate in interviews.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I agree to be audio-taped during interviews.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I do not agree to be audio-taped during interviews.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I agree to be videoed during interviews.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I do not agree to be videoed during interviews.</p> | |
| Signature and Date | NAME OF SUBJECT [Please Print] | |
| | SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT | |
| | DATE | |

APPENDIX C: POSSIBLE WRITING PROMPTS

I offer these prompts as suggestion, and not as assignment. Our goal is to allow words to come to us as we walk, to open up our thinking about and toward the writing process by engaging in physical process. If having a focused prompt helps you, feel free to use these. If it does not, feel free to write whatever comes to you as you move.

Think about a story you would like to share with others. As you walk, try to see that story in your mind and match the images with words that might enable someone else to see that story as you see it. Write the words.

Listen to the rhythm of your breathing, slow and deep. Listen to the rhythm of your feet as they carry you. What words or phrases emerge from that rhythm? Is there poetry there? Write it.

Pay attention to the setting around you. As you walk, what do you see and hear? What does it remind you of? What do you notice? Record your impressions as descriptively as you can.

What happens to students in your classroom when they get stuck while writing? What can you do to get them to open back up, get un-stuck? What seems to help?

What does it mean to be a teacher of writing? What does it mean to be a writer? What behaviors and benefits are associated with these roles? Where do they overlap? How do they differ? Write your thoughts.

Set an intention for your walk today. As you move, think about how to make that intentionality reality. Write your thoughts.

Ask a question you would like to solve. As you walk, ponder the question and possible solutions. Record your process in writing.

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