

Evoking Affect, Becoming Movement:
From Writing that Skates to the
Swaggering Midlife Female Trick Skater

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ABSTRACT

Evoking Affect, Becoming Movement:
From Writing that Skates to the Swaggering Midlife Female Trick Skater

Linnet Fawcett, Ph.D.
Concordia University, 2006

This thesis questions how bodies in movement might be written into academic scholarship in a more vital and thought-provoking way. Taking as its central figure the swaggering midlife female trick skater and focusing in on dynamics characterising the public recreational ice skating scene at Montréal's *Atrium le 1000*, it draws on informal conversations conducted with skaters to create writing that skates, and develop an understanding of where communicating (through language) and skating (as and beyond writing) intersect. Adopting a visceral and sentient approach to researching, analysing and writing up the body, this thesis challenges the paradoxical absence of 'the corporeal' in the scholarly corpus, and embraces a researcher positioning which, while investigating the felt intensities of passion and pleasure, makes no apologies for its own excessiveness. Informed by poststructuralist thinking around affect and by feminist explorations of the gendered body, this thesis points to how the introduction of a truly 'alternative' sporting body into a 'disorganised' sporting environment can significantly impact how moments of self-actualisation as realised through participating in an activity like skating unfold, and how the communicatory relationships that come of joining the rink's communal flow materialise and evolve. In drawing attention to the liberatory potential opened up by this new conception of 'alternative,' this thesis raises our awareness both of the limitations inherent in those scholarly approaches that try to 'capture' moving bodies and motile activities within meaning and representation, and in those sporting and communicatory regimes that seek to 'pin down' aging female bodies.

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research. Their words have breathed vitality and momentum into this thesis. Without them, this particular tale could not have been told. Likewise, I am indebted to Janice Donato whose eloquence on ice compelled me to put on a pair of skates, and whose infectious passion for all things skaterly opened the door to another world. She is the one who is not afraid to fall. Without her, there would be no swaggering midlife female trick skater. To Barbara Hardy, an exceptional skating teacher, I extend sincere thanks for showing such belief in trick skating, and for giving those of us lucky enough to cross her path access to those technical and stylistic tips that enable us to reach new limits. I would also like to express my deepest thanks to Pat Machin, who taught me to care about good writing at an early age, and who has always inspired me to see in the Friday Fluff of life the seed from which the bigger things grow.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Paulette Rapinat (1923-2006) – my Creusoise *Mamie* who never skated, but who openly shared with me what she knew of life's edges. She was much loved. She is greatly missed.

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Chapter 1: Setting Sites

1:0 Introduction

This thesis is about recreational ice skating and writing, though not necessarily in that order. Whilst it looks at skating through the lens of writing, its ultimate aim is to make writing skate. If the inherent reciprocity between these two sites of inquiry renders the question of *an* order irrelevant, it does obviate the need for some kind of mediating if *meddling* figure who has a vested interest in both. Such a figure is found in the swaggering midlife female trick skater – a risk taking, gender-bending, genre-distending entity who performs free-style figure skating moves on pick-less hockey skates. What she and a growing number of recreational ice skating women are discovering is that in pushing the limits of a skating blade designed for the athletic (and highly masculinised) game of ice hockey, they can explore their on-ice potential without having to give over to the sequined and hyper-feminised world of ‘Ladies’ figure skating. That the swaggering midlife female trick skater is equally consumed by the writerly question of how one goes about inscribing into a scholarly text those passions, pleasures and affects of which an involvement in this exciting new grassroots sporting intervention has heightened her awareness not only makes her a fitting candidate for this task, but highlights the extent to which the task itself is an exercise in what Norman K. Denzin (1998) calls *interpretative interactionism* (335).

As regards this latter term, it speaks to the kind of research project which deliberately and unapologetically centres the researcher, taking the social, political and historical position from which she speaks and her direct experience of a given site to be the

primary filters through which all knowledges about that site will flow and all insights into that site will be created. This also means that she makes the *female* recreational skating body her central focus, and the impact that the swaggering midlife female trick skater's intervention might have on the way girls and women in particular move their bodies on ice her primary interest: even if the sight of teenage boys bunny hopping around the rink on their hockey skates in imitation of her style does excite her, opening doors to future research; even if in animating her skaterly writing and creating a "structure of feeling" (Williams 1977) around the *Atrium le 1000* skating rink, she draws on the voices of a few male skaters. The other key aspect of *interpretative interactionism* is that the researcher goes through some form of epiphany in the course of her research. This open acknowledgement of the research project's capacity to significantly alter the life of the researcher and in some cases, even lure the unsuspecting researcher moth-to-a-light-like to it, resonates with the kind of relationship that this project and I have enjoyed. As for those bodily and *über*-bodily sensations to which I have been awakened and alerted, I refer here to the kind of burning passion that leads people to avidly pursue what some would see as a purposeless and non-productive recreational activity. I am talking about the type of pleasure which, like Roland Barthes's all-consuming *jouissance*, enjoys the paradoxical status of being both "self-dissolving and self-unraveling" (Bryson 1984, 137). I use affect, here, in the way that Julia Kristeva (2004) conceives of it: that is, as a drive force which has yet to find an elaboration (148). As such, it remains that "unnamed Thing" (Kristeva 1989, 13) – something you know is there but which evades representation; that thing which Gilles Deleuze describes as an ever-changing configuration of movements and intensities that, in its ability to escape attachment to any one person or

object, retains the fluid identity of “an atmosphere, a time of day, or a season” (Bogue 2003, 34).

In the first section of this introductory chapter I provide a brief overview of the project, and discuss my own investment in and attachment to it. In the second section I engage with the surprisingly static way that the body in movement has been conceptualised in existing sport-related scholarship. I suggest reasons for this emphasis on the body as functional (if fleshly) machine and sport as a productive/rational activity. I ponder the limitations of representational approaches that seek to pin down meaning – what sport *is* – rather than grapple with how we experience sport’s affects – those bodily and sometimes almost out-of-body moments where we feel ourselves being swept up in a wave of intensity that both traverses and envelops us, that emanates from us yet at the same time exceeds us. This prompts a consideration of the troubling absence of the visceral¹ and the sentient in scholarly writing about sport: *visceral*, in that the reaction it produces emanates from, and is felt at the level of, the body’s inner organs, as when a heart pounds or a stomach flutters; *sentient*, in that the sensory organs brought into the research process extend beyond those traditionally used to overtly observe – the eyes and the ears – so as to produce accounts that, partly as a result of this invocation of the so-called ‘lower’ senses like touch or even lesser known senses like the haptic, and partly because bodily knowing is a privileged site in this kind of scholarship, carry traces of these sensing bodies and bodily sensations. After pointing to what is gained when writing becomes a place that is, as Paul Stoller (1997) puts it, “welcoming” to the body and the sensory perceptions of the researcher (xviii), I outline the central challenges of this thesis. These are a) to work towards a theoretical conceptualisation of

the female recreational skating body that, whilst not denying its fleshly existence, explores the capacities and limitations that result of conceiving of that body as flow, and b) to create a way of writing this body such that the prose itself actually evokes a sense of movement and a visceral experience of place.

In the third and final section of this introductory chapter I provide a chapter outline. Throughout the chapter I highlight ways in which a person with a background in communication studies can make a useful intervention into the field of sport studies. Positing that my ‘outsider’ status serves me well – though, following Teresa de Lauretis (1987), preferring to see this positioning as existing *alongside* sports studies as opposed to *outside* of it (26) – I suggest how in addition to injecting a communications-oriented perspective into this area, it also makes me more sensitive to the theoretical and methodological ‘taken-for-granted’ that those working from within the discipline of sport studies might be less likely to see.

1:1 Project Overview

Methodologically, this thesis grapples with the question of how to communicate skate: not in the sense of notation (the classic dilemma of dance) but rather, in the sense of how to write the body in motion – that is, how to convey, through words, how skating *feels*. Cross-cutting throughout this methodological challenge is the philosophical quest to work out just what is happening when bodies enter into movement both individually and communally – a quest that is illuminated by a gang of mainly dead mainly white mainly French male thinkers (among others, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Roland Barthes, Michel de Certeau and Alphonso Lingis) and their still living female linguist

and psychoanalyst colleague, Julia Kristeva. What unites all of those listed above is their interest in poststructuralism, even if – as in the case of Barthes – this interest might be better described as the itinerant meanderings of an ‘amateur’ dabbler. What draws me to them beyond this (and probably even *more* than this), however, is that they all seduce me with their writing. This is not a common feature of academic writing: that power to seduce, to pull you in, to leave you breathless and basking in the voluptuous afterglow of words. If its allure, thus, is understandable, the task of breaking this seductive spell – an act that all of the afore-mentioned would no doubt approve of, at least in principle, and hence another thread that links them – is left to a vigorous cohort of very much alive and kicking feminist ‘body’ theorists (Elizabeth Grosz, Joanna Frueh, Jean Grimshaw, Iris Marion Young, Jennifer Daryl Slack and Teresa de Lauretis, to name just a handful). These latter introduce into this exploration of passions that flow like electric currents and pleasures that explode with orgasmic intensity some much needed gender-talk. If enhanced by forays into sporting realms as diverse as baseball, bodybuilding, skateboarding, snowboarding, surfing, skiing, aerobics, dance, karate, wrestling and yes, even crazy-golf, this thesis is also nourished daily through exchanging tricks, living ‘life on the edge,’ and sharing ideas and reflections about skating with other skaters ².

More specifically, this thesis explores spatial dynamics and issues of territoriality as negotiated through gendered bodily comportment down at the *Atrium le 1000* – a public ice skating rink that sits in the middle of a busy food court in a combined commercial space and office building in downtown Montréal. This is a gruelling kind of exploration: the kind of exploration that obliges its doctoral student researcher-cum-

trick skater to spend endless hours lurking around at the rink, ostensibly ‘doing ethnography.’ I say ostensibly, because although this thesis is informed by an ethnographic component and interested in recreational rink culture, the end result is *not* an ethnography of recreational rink culture. To call itself such, this thesis would have to shed light on why a select group of people skate, for instance, or provide insights into how ‘culture’ is defined and constituted by those who partake in this particular activity – fulfilling goals that fit within what David L. Altheide and John M. Johnson (1998) describe as the “long-standing and taken-for-granted canons of ethical ethnography,” and which include “the critical commitment to search for the members’ understandings” of the setting under investigation, as well as those members’ understandings of their place within a particular context (291). As it is, this thesis sets out to do none of these things – a decision that has a significant bearing on the methodological choices I make, as discussed more fully in Chapters 3 and 4, and which also reflects what I am seeking through engaging in practices generally associated with the ethnographic process. What I am seeking is not a picture of skaters and their culture *per se*, but material traces of those skaters and their culture that can be incorporated into writing about that site that physically embodies both them and it. This means that on-ice conversations shared with fellow skaters and observations made whilst actively participating in rink culture are not seen as gateways into understanding my chosen site and grounds for an accompanying analysis; rather, their main purpose is to vitalise a form of scholarly writing that aims, in its inclusion of the body *as* it moves and talks, to elucidate the reader *about* skating through a lived bodily experience *of* skating.

Such ambitions demand a certain *kind* of ethnographic approach. Suffice to say that the primary tools of this particular ethnographer's trade are not pen and notebook, tape recorder or camcorder. Rather, they consist of high-end hockey skates, a pair of rhinestone-studded gloves, and various combinations of athletic pants and flashy T-shirts – tools that, in their entirety, the ethnographer fondly refers to as her 'skating outfits.' As for the ethnography itself – the 'participant observation' part of all of this – it consists of leaping, swirling and spinning her midlife female body across ice on a set of razor sharp blades...Oh yes, and of weaving in and out of those other skating bodies, the better to observe her 'subjects,' as she does so.

An *excessive* 'participant observer' *her*?

Probably.

Hampered by this excessiveness – by her personal passions and pleasures – when it comes to looking *objectively* at rink culture?

No doubt.

Mea culpa, oh yes, but defiantly so – I would even say strutting and swaggeringly so. This is, after all, an exploration into the body *as* flow whilst *in* flow – a quest that by the very physicality of its nature demands that my own moving body become involved. To this end, I draw on pro-wrestler-cum-academic researcher Laurence de Garis's (1999) notion of "performative ethnography," finding inspiration in his contention that such a 'hands-on' approach opens possibilities for sensuous knowledge that goes beyond what can be learned from the usual visual data. Responding to de Garis's observation that, "Though many sport ethnographers discuss "the body," there is little discussion of *their*

bodies” (71, original emphasis), I take up his challenge not only to *discuss* my body but to develop a visceral practice in which my own body as it interacts with other bodies out there on the rink becomes a primary site of research. Quite simply, to *write* it I have to *feel* it and to *feel* it I have to *do* it.

As for all the other people out there ‘doing it,’ the rink might well epitomise the poststructuralist community: that “space of circulation,” as Jean-Ernest Joos (2000) has defined it, which “remains a space of the possible” (52). However, in the fleeting “coming-togethers” (52) that lend this particular configuration its very *possibility-ness*, there is more than just a physical negotiation of space going on. At times, it can feel like it is not even bodies circulating out there on the ice but *Attitude*: a seething cauldron of multifarious attitudinal compartments that, in coming into contact, rupture the rink’s ‘melodic flow’ (Merleau-Ponty 1990) and set off a series of ungainly bumps, stumbles and splays. These attitude-induced blows to the flow cannot be reduced to the power of one material body to move another through mere physical force. Rather, it is the force of energy exuded by attitudes in their various bladed embodiments – Swagger, Bravado, Timidity, Hesitancy, Entitled – that manage, like Alphonso Lingis’s (2000) emotions, to “reorient others”; to alternatively “distract, detour, manoeuvre...[or] command” (17-18). Just how these forces of energy actually impact recreational rink dynamics is explored in this thesis, as are the ways that, through the emergence of different kinds of sporting bodies and different approaches to movement, these dynamics can change.

As for how a doctoral student in a Communication Studies department comes to be turning skating into a dissertation topic, or indeed where the link between communication and skating lies, it goes without saying that much of the emphasis in a field like communications is on talk, be it in its oral or written form. In keeping with this emphasis, most of my work prior to this current project revolved around the role of talk in community-building: specifically, how relationships in mediated forms of community – like a magazine’s ‘Letters to the Editor’ section, for instance – are negotiated and established through textual exchanges. After a while, though, all this talkativeness and textuality began to grate. As Gilles Deleuze (1995) suggests, we live in a world that is “plagued” by an excess of “pointless” verbal communication:

So it’s not a problem of getting people to express themselves but of providing little gaps of solitude and silence in which they might eventually find something...that might be worth saying. (129)

About this time – a time that found me longing for those silent interstices between words; a time in which I found myself asking how community might be constituted in those all-too-rare lulls in our otherwise cacophonous world – I took up trick skating. As I circled round and round at my local rink, that key word to any communicative act – conversation – began to take on a whole new meaning. To Converse: literally, “to turn around” – from the Latin *verser* – “together” – *con* (Funk & Wagnalls 1980, 296). This, I realised, was precisely what I and the other skating bodies out there on the ice were doing – conversing. Moreover, we were conversing not through talk but through non-choreographed motion and *hapticity* – a term I will return to in Chapter 3.

This prospect became even more exciting when I encountered Maria Lugones’s (1998) definition of conversation, which stresses the importance of “the unanticipated

response.” In those early days, I saw Lugones’s contention that the only interesting conversations are those “that have a suspension of the given in the making of sense” (165) as particularly apt given the gender- and genre-bending nature of trick skating. It is a form of skating that, in its playful and irreverent mixing-up of skate technology and skating practice, inevitably jars: evoking responses that range from unbridled delight, to wary bewilderment, to outright resistance. Over time, however, I have come to see Lugones’s unpredictable conversations in the context of trick skating specifically, but equally in relation to recreational ice skating more generally, at a deeper level: that is, as a way of writing ourselves into those cracks and crevices that are the ‘in-between’ spaces in sport and within which – in the bodies that move there but also in the words that speak those bodies – affect lurks. With regard to these ‘in-between’ spaces, Charles Stivale (2003) notes that they must not be seen in terms of the old binary logic of “an inside” or “an outside” but rather, as a plethora of layered, intersecting, overlapping lines that rejoice in their (un)status of being an in-between *complication* of matter and forces (48). If, in Stivale’s world of the Cajun dance arena, such in-between complicatedness comes of the variable experiences of speed and affect circulating intensely between musicians, dancers and spectators (41), the task of unravelling its workings in my own world of the *Atrium le 1000* skating rink is a central challenge of this thesis.

1:2 Reframing the Way We Think and Write Sport

As a feminist and female academic who has embraced ‘my sport’ in midlife, I see recreational ice skating as far more than physical exercise. It is a personal challenge; a communal activity; a form of meditation; a way to think one’s life and work.

In reflecting upon skating in this manner, I am not alone. For the recreational skating body is not only an individual entity, but an aggregate of like-minded souls who, like Deleuze-Guattarian (1987) “nomadic essences” (507) roam Montreal in search of ice the year round. This multi-generational, multi-ethnic, mixed gender and diversely talented cohort encounters regularly in the various rinks that dot our city. To devotees, skating is more than mere hobby. It is an obsession and a passion. Whilst on the rink we glide, twirl, push, bend, leap, swerve to avoid collision and sometimes fall. We are, in more ways than one, a mobile affinity group: a troupe of “weary travellers” who, through a shared affinity for the glide, have found an unconventional “cultural home” (Slobin 1993, 98); a band of bladed rink-rats who, in coming together to exchange tricks and live life on the edge, create a rave-like transitory *un-place* “where nobody is, but everybody belongs” (Melechi 1993, 37). And because time spent off the rink is equally consumed by skate – by mental replays of on-ice manoeuvres, by heated discussions of skating, by the application of skating metaphors to the practices of the everyday – there is no time when the devoted recreational ice skater is not-skater. Becoming-skater, in other words, is a constant and continuous process: transforming your body and its relationship to space, place and others; changing the way that that body moves through the world.

Most important, perhaps – and here the recreational ice skater differs from the goal-driven hockey player or the competitive figure skater – is that what is primarily sought through this particular form of corporeal expression is the simple yet exhilarating experiencing of the “thisness” of sharp blade meeting hard ice: a “thisness” which, for its emphasis on affect and the singularity of its unfolding, Deleuze and Guattari (1987)

term a “haecceity” (260). In the fifth and eighth chapters of this thesis I explore this notion at some length. For the moment, suffice to say that haecceity speaks to that crucial point of play and friction between the various material surfaces involved in ice skating that, along with one’s individual mastery of balancing on the edge of blades and one’s ability to open oneself to others circulating within the same “space of affect” (Stivale 1998), make of ice skating an infinitely exciting and exhilaratingly expressive physical activity. I would also venture that it is through an experience of haecceity that one gains access to a *way* of knowing – to a unique form of bodily wisdom, if you like – that not only enriches and deepens one’s understanding about the body, but provokes a fundamental shift in how one thinks about movement and sport.

Certainly, my survey of existing research in the realm of sociological sports studies suggests that the time is ripe for such a re-think. In his introduction to a special “body culture” edition of the sociology of sport journal, *Quest*, in 1991, for example, John W. Loy might well bemoan the “disembodied discourses of performance” that characterize much of sport scholarship, and which result from what he describes as the “scientization of physical education” (119). In a piece entitled, “Missing in Action: The Case of the Absent Body,” Loy might well welcome “the poststructuralist turn” that has meant that more scholars within his discipline are pursuing the study of “the social significance of the body” (121). However, what becomes evident on reading Loy – not to mention the articles *in* the special edition – is that when they say ‘poststructuralism,’ what they really mean is Foucault and Bourdieu. When they talk of accounting for the body, what they really mean is incorporating a Foucauldian conception of the body – that “oft-forgotten but crucial surface on which the social is inscribed” (Rail and Harvey 1995,

165) – into existing ways of writing the body in movement. In other words, their intervention is theoretical, not methodological. Moreover, it is about urging us to see the body through a Foucauldian lens – through the optics of ‘Discipline,’ ‘Biopower,’ ‘Surveillance,’ ‘Panopticism,’ ‘Subjectivity’ and ‘Technologies of the Self’ – as opposed to setting that body in motion through the more fluid, if elusive, poststructuralist theorising of a Julia Kristeva, or an Alphonso Lingis, or a Gilles Deleuze. This is not to say that there is anything *wrong* with examining the sporting body through a Foucauldian optic. In terms of my own project, Foucault’s (1977, 1987) stress on the productive aspects of power and his insights into the ways that discipline and freedom are intertwined shed important light on that crucial tension that exists for the recreational ice skater between being in control and letting go. Furthermore, his notion of a subject-less passion, as discussed in Chapter 2, and his account of the process of subjectification as a ‘folding of the line’ back on oneself, as discussed in Chapter 5, are both extremely important to this thesis. What I *am* saying, however, is that to privilege Foucault to the exclusion of all others makes for dull and predictable scholarship.

Four years later – this time a special edition on the “recent” poststructuralist turn in the *Sociology of Sport Journal* (1995, 12) – the focus is still overwhelmingly on Foucault. Only in one piece, Nancy Midol and Gérard Broyer’s (1995) Winnicott-inspired examination of France’s version of hotdog skiing culture, is a sense of living and breathing bodies in full flow actually evoked. Only in this piece – not surprisingly, a piece about an ‘extreme’ sport experience – do we feel the lush and lyrical language and texture of poststructuralism – “...*dropping one’s defences, feeling the harmony,*

becoming the snowfield, becoming one with the scenery..." (208, my emphasis) – creeping in.

In a sense, this general reticence on the part of sport sociologists to embrace the more ephemeral, the more poetic, the more flighty aspects of poststructuralist thought is understandable. As Suzanne Laberge (1995) suggests in her mapping of the development of sociology of sport as a discipline here in Québec, its relative newness to the academic scene, along with its "marginal status...in physical education departments [where] physiology, motor learning, and biomechanics still occupy a dominant position" (216), puts the field as a whole on the defence. A likely product of this combination of youthful and institutional insecurity is the desire to feel validated by the scholarly establishment, and this could well explain why so much academic writing on sport has such a *grounded* feel to it, is so *safe*. This tendency towards conservatism, as reflected in the quantitative methods used to research sporting topics and the pseudo-scientific – read *dry* – way that findings are presented, is no doubt related to another disciplinary insecurity, and this concerns how sport is viewed by our society. The idea that sport is mere child's play, is extramural, is what you do *after* the important work in life has been done, is an idea that makes *studying* sport not only questionable, but the butt of many a running (sic) joke. On the one hand, this association of sport to play has been encouraged by those whose early experience of competitive sport was less than positive. As Andy Miller (2002) comments with regard to *finally*, in mid-adulthood, discovering a 'sporting' activity – crazy-golf – that he could be passionate about, "I loved it because it was about play, not sport" (38). On the other hand, the reduction of sport to play is something that sport sociologists and sport philosophers alike devote

much time and energy to countering. I would suggest that in their haste and desperation to *prove* just how serious and socially meaningful sport is, they have placed too little emphasis on its joys, its flows, its equally important moments of meaninglessness. In nailing down sport and making it a discipline to be reckoned with, they have sometimes rendered it stiff, sterile, and bodiless. However, the real absence is not, as the John W. Loys et al would have us believe, those material flesh-and-blood bodies. Rather, it is the writing itself that lacks guts. Emptied of risk, adventurousness and a sense of play, what we are all too often left with is a corpus that sits heavily and which, in opting to stay in the rut, has lost its groove.

This is not to say that there are not some outstanding exceptions to this rule. Brian Pronger's seminal work on homoerotic desire in the locker-room (1999) and disciplinary regimes of the body in training (2002) leaves me breathless and inspired, his sumptuous interweaving of challenging philosophical and political concepts into the everyday world of sporting environments serving to remind scholarly audiences of just how exciting *reading* about sport can be. Likewise, the Deleuze-Guattarian prose of Synthia Sydnor positively soars: and this, whether she is talking about skysurfing (2003a) or statues that celebrate urban sporting legends (2003b). In her ability to bring movement quite literally to the monumental, Sydnor confirms that writing sport need not be a stationary affair. She is also one of the few sport theorists to even mention Deleuze and Guattari, let alone make them central to an analysis.

So yes, sparse though it is, there is definitely some innovative sport scholarship going on out there – scholarship that evokes the *feel* of movement. Furthermore, a sign of

better things to come lies in the growing call within sport ethnography circles for the production and institutional validation of scholarship that is autobiographical (Sparkes, 2002) and that is presented in more creative ways than the standard social science format allows (Bruce 1998, Denison and Markula 2002, and Brown 2004, among others). This call, if not explicitly designed to address the static nature of the moving body in scholarly accounts, cannot help but inject some much needed vitality into it. Nor do I mean to undermine the very important contributions made by sport scholarship that does not move *per se*, but that illuminates nonetheless. I am, in fact, indebted to this impeccably toned and tuned corpus, having drawn heavily upon it to both enhance my understanding of what was once an alien and intimidating sporting world, and to situate my own work³. My critique, thus, is not so much of the information contained within this corpus, but of how that information is all too often transmitted. Nor, I hasten to add, do I point the accusatory finger at sport scholarship alone. For if the absence of the moving body is perhaps more glaring here because this is a discipline that is so overtly *about* movement, I would suggest that other academic disciplines – even those that have embraced ‘looser’ theoretical and methodological approaches – are equally guilty of this omission.

For instance, in his book *Sensuous Scholarship*, anthropologist Paul Stoller (1997) offers two critiques of the growing number of feminist and poststructuralist scholars who have tried to re-introduce the body back into social thought. First, he suggests that in considering the body as “a text that can be read and analyzed,” they strip the body of “its smells, tastes, textures and pains” – in short, of “its sensuousness”. Second, he maintains that the writing itself is “bloodless,” is “curiously disembodied” (he cites

Judith Butler and Michel Foucault as examples of this). Such a voiding of the body of its physicality produces a somewhat contradictory state of affairs, suggests Stoller: in regulating and subjugating “the very bodies” they seek to “liberate,” these scholars end up reinforcing “the very principle they critique – that of the separation of mind and body” (xiv-xv).

While Stoller acknowledges that “the analysis of complex philosophical and political issues” necessitates “a densely packed discourse” full of “intricate arguments,” he is equally convinced that “such a requirement...[need not] exclude sensuous expression” (xv). In calling for scholarly discussions that “tack between the analytical and the sensible” (xv), Stoller makes an important demand on the scholar herself: that she take that body of hers – a body “stiffened from long sleep in the background of scholarly life,” a body just “*ach[ing]* to restore its sensibilities” – and get out there and “exercise its muscles” (xi-xii, my emphasis). Though Stoller’s notion of exercising muscles is somewhat more perambulatory than my own – for him, it consists of “*strolling* amidst the pungent odors of social life” and “*running his palms* over the jagged surface of social reality” (xii, my emphasis) – I maintain that trick skating has not merely *restored* my sensibilities. Much more than that, it has opened me up to sensibilities of which I was previously unaware.

As for incorporating these blossoming sensibilities into one’s analytical writings, the question that still presses is just *how* to do it. Paradoxically, what my excursions into the poststructuralist world of Deleuze-Guattarian ‘becomings’ have suggested to me is that the best way to do it, perhaps, is by *not* doing it. For instance, I *feel* skating as I

have never felt skating in any writing *about* skating – and I have read quite a lot of it – when I read Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) instructions, in their dense and highly abstract *A Thousand Plateaus*, on how to make yourself a *Body without Organs*, or a *BwO*. In fact, I am sure that ice skating is far from the collective mind of Deleuze and Guattari as they set that *BwO* up for the initial glide: as it swings there, precariously, “between the surfaces that stratify it and the plane that sets it free” (161). Yet for all that they write *not* about skating, their vivid descriptions of lines of flight, flow conjunctions, and continuums of intensities resonate with my experience of skating as nothing else that I have read does.

Still...If this felicitous borrowing from what seems, on the surface, to be a very different line of inquiry speaks to a fairly common form of scholarly reciprocity, I cannot help but ask what it means – in the grand scheme of sensuous scholarship – when the most evocative description of skating is to be found in a text that is not *about* skating. I see this not so much as a conundrum to be solved as a challenge to be grappled with in my own skaterly writing. After all, Deleuze and Guattari are the kings of “writing intermezzo” – what Charles Stivale (1998) refers to as “the paradoxical strategy” of mapping out the “in-between” spaces of diverse and divergent domains rather than using writing to reconstitute a “homogenous totality” (105). Their writing, as Lawrence Grossberg (2003) asserts, lends itself to being “bent” to fit with one’s own project, and conversely, one’s own project breathes life into, or animates, Deleuze and Guattari (3).

In this light, it seems relevant to mention that after several years of thwarted attempts⁴, I finally found my way *into* the abstract and highly convoluted philosophical writings of Deleuze and Guattari through the very concrete act of skating. Suddenly, the interplay of those striated and smooth surfaces, of those flow conjunctions and lines of flight, made sense. But what I have also realised is that my skating has changed as a result of reading Deleuze and Guattari. I have a new sense of my edges, feel the meeting of ice and blade differently, am developing a new relationship to speed and stillness, to the way I *move* through time and space – or, to put it in more Deleuze-Guattarian terms, to the way time and space *move through me*.

These emergent insights, combined with concerns regarding the absences and oversights in sport scholarship as identified earlier in this section, prompt the central and secondary questions that underline this thesis:

1:3 Central Questions

- What is happening when bodies enter into movement out there on the skating rink, both in terms of their own self-actualisation and in terms of their communicatory relationships with and to other bodies and their immediate surroundings?
- How can we write these moving bodies into a scholarly text such that the prose, rather than *representing* the experience of recreational ice skating, actually skates?

1:4 Secondary Questions

- What insights can the poststructuralist thinking around *affect* on the part of Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Roland Barthes, and Julia Kristeva, among others, bring to our understanding of these moving bodies, and to a non-representational approach to writing them that strives to evoke in the reader a bodily sensation of movement and a visceral experience of place?
- What understandings of the moving *female* body are left out of the aforementioned poststructuralist positings of the body in movement, and what light do feminist philosophers such as Iris Marion Young, Elizabeth Grosz, and Teresa de Lauretis shed on the historical, social and political specificities of this body and its approach to movement?
- How does *affect* relate to the terms *passion*, *pleasure*, *feeling* and *emotion*, and how do each of these terms relate to the experience of recreational ice skating specifically and to the fields of communication studies and sport studies more generally?
- If, as I argue, a more visceral and sentient approach to fieldwork and the writing up process is required, what are the particular insights that a communications-oriented intervention such as this can bring to the way movement is conceptualized and conveyed in scholarly texts that are interested in sport and/or the body?

- What kind of contribution can a figure like the swaggering midlife female trick skater make to how the body is being researched, theorised and ‘written up’ in the recent explosion of gender-based studies in sport scholarship, and in the burgeoning literature on ‘alternative’ and/or ‘extreme’ sporting practices?
- How does the swaggering midlife female trick skater’s approach to movement and potential impact on relational dynamics out on the rink challenge existing representations of women (and men) in sport, as well as common conceptions of sporting bodies, sporting activities, sporting venues and sporting cultures?

1:5 Chapter Outline

In Chapter 2 of this thesis – *Juggling Terms* – I examine in greater depth those terms that are either central to this thesis (*pleasure* and *passion*), used with certain caveats (*feeling*), or to a large extent left out (*emotion*), in order to identify how each links and/or crosses over with *affect*, as well as to bring to the fore specific understandings of these terms as grounded primarily in poststructuralist and feminist contributions to communication theory and cultural studies.

In the third chapter – *Musing Methodologically* – I reflect upon two linked activities that constitute the ethnographic element of this project: *doing it* and *writing it*. In addition to situating myself as a researcher within each of these realms, I discuss some of the authors, texts and concepts that have been integral to this project’s intellectual line of questioning and its practical design. Making central my desire to use field research and the writing up process as a means to better grasp the mysterious workings

of that ‘unnamed Thing,’ affect, I focus in on my use of ‘performance ethnography’ (de Garis 1999) when undertaking fieldwork down at the *Atrium le 1000*, and my use of Barthes’ (1978) fragmentary approach to writing when faced with the task of injecting this thesis with a kind of bodily writing that evokes the “affective culture” (7) of recreational ice skaters. With regard to the former, I challenge the trope of the detached and distant participant observer, and discuss the impact that a performative positioning and researcher ‘excessiveness’ might have on those insights to emerge from my site, not to mention on how this research might be viewed by the scholarly establishment. As regards the latter, I show how Kristeva’s (1984) discussion of the bodily *genotext* not only makes Barthes’s favoured writerly device – the figure – an obvious choice for writing in a bodily fashion, but informs the philosophical trajectory that led to its mobilisation. My belief that methodology and theory should inform each other rather than be treated as two separate components of a research project is evident throughout this chapter. Arguing that they – like the rink dynamics they seek to shed light upon – can only be enriched and enlivened by the dialogue that arises in *the space between*, I take every opportunity in this chapter to theorise out of methodology and methodise out of theory. This interweaving of the two not only sets a precedent for the rest of the thesis; it also signals the key premise upon which my methodology hinges.

I begin the fourth chapter – *Writing Affect* – with a detailed discussion of the figure. Inspired by Roland Barthes’s (1978) use of this trope in his *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*, and dotted throughout the thesis in a manner reminiscent of their scientific and entirely antithetical counterparts (Figure 1, Figure 2, etc), I explain how my skaterly versions of this trope are meant to catch the reader up in the particular momentum of

action-based figures like ‘spin’ or ‘stumble,’ for example, and release in the reader the affective charge associated with them. I also highlight the task of these figures as a collective unit, which is to break up the text, disrupt the seemingly seamless flow of academic prose, and remind us through the imposition of these literary road blocks that reading, like writing, like skating, are all activities that present a vast and endless array of navigational options, that are open to experimentation, and that allow you to teeter precariously on that thin line between staying in control and letting go. Suggesting that this exercise is in the spirit of Laurel Richardson’s (2000) CAP (Creative Analysis Practice) Ethnography, even if it questions CAP’s continued allegiance to the notion of representation, I use the second part of this chapter to investigate the nuts and bolts involved in assembling these figures and incorporating them into the thesis as a whole, and discuss how I engage with questions of style, form, and authorial blurring as regards their final presentation. Throughout this chapter I suggest ways that this exercise in writing *about* movement *through* movement might contribute to an overall opening up in the ways we write sport in scholarly circles. At the very least, I argue that such an exercise brings to our attention the particular challenges facing those who strive to insert the body as lived into typological etchings on a page and this, irregardless, of whether the figures in this thesis succeed or fail in their attempt to do so.

Chapter 5 – *Moving Bodies* – reviews some of the important contributions that feminist, sport studies, virtue-ethical and poststructuralist theorists have made to our understanding of the body in movement, and suggests how their work can be mobilized to enhance and animate the recent call in ethnographic and anthropological circles for a more ‘sensuous’ turn in academic scholarship. Considering this twinning in the context

of two of the driving forces of this thesis – my on-going quest to learn more about elusive affect in the context of the body in flow, as well as about the roles that passion and pleasure play in our lives – I work through a number of body *types* (the remembering body, the sporting body, the disorganised body, the recreating body) in order to move towards an understanding of the individual recreational ice skater as a *bodies* in movement. In leaving behind the rule-bound and far more conventional realm of ‘organised’ sport in order to experience liberating ‘lines of flight’ and joyful personal ‘becomings,’ this latter embraces a conception of movement in which the individual entity assumes the role of a bit player as what is generally taken to be the ‘background’ décor pushes forward to take centre stage. Comparing A. Bartlett Giamatti’s (1989) sporting body whose energy is organised around the demands of competition to Barthes’s (1985) disorganised body that consists of nothing but “vibrations of pain and of pleasure” (231), I posit recreational ice skating as the ultimate Barthesian art form. Challenging Giamatti’s conception of recreation as *re-creation*, I draw on Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) notion of *haecceity* and Giorgio Agamben’s (1993) understanding of the *halo* to consider the happiness that might come of inhabiting a ‘doing’ body that seeks not to *re-create* itself, but rather to constantly create anew that which has not been made before. Halcyon days are cut short, however, as “gender trouble” (Butler 1990) strikes: Elizabeth Grosz (1994) and Teresa de Lauretis (1987) providing a foreshadowing of what lies in store for this conspicuously un-gendered hypothetical skating *bodies* in movement as it moves into the *Atrium le 1000* and *Attitude*, in all its gendered glory, dons skates and takes to the rink.

Chapter 6 – *Gendered Spaces* – takes us down to the *Atrium le 1000*. A picture of this space as a “practiced place” (de Certeau 1984, 117) constructed out of particular interactions that occur at the points where “networks of social relations, movement and communication” intersect (Massey 1993, 66) is evoked through locus descriptions and fragments of conversations conducted with *Atrium le 1000* regulars, neophytes, personnel, surrounding food court vendors and rink-side *flaneurs*. The *Atrium le 1000*’s ever-changing “structures of feeling” (Williams 1977) – a function, in part, of the various clienteles it serves throughout the day – is examined, with special attention paid to the Friday and Saturday ‘DJ Nites,’ where spatial dynamics and issues of territoriality as negotiated through gendered bodily comportment are most pronounced. Conceiving of the rink as a swirling mass of attitudes, I let my gaze linger on macho Swagger. I observe how Swagger, in its bladed and generally male embodiment, disrupts this mobile community’s ‘melodic flow’ (Merleau-Ponty 1990). I then recruit sporty feminist philosophers Iris Marion Young (1990) and Jean Grimshaw (1999) to help theorise the resulting gender[ed] deadlock, and to explore my own mixed feelings towards Swagger.

Having drawn on the insights of Young and Grimshaw to come to a better understanding of how Swagger’s on-ice comportment seriously curtails the emancipatory possibilities to be found in and through an activity like recreational ice skating, I team up with Joanna Frueh (2001) in Chapter 7 – *Swaggering like a Feminist* – to reconfigure Swagger into an attitude and comportment that ice skating (and other sporting) feminists can not only comfortably “wear” (Ian 1995), but can actively draw upon to achieve new ways of moving their bodies and deriving pleasure from those

bodies. This process is book-ended by Ellyn Kestnbaum's (1995) attempts to conceptualise what might constitute a feminist figure skating routine on the Elite 'Ladies' singles circuit, and Judith Halberstam's (1998) and Mary Louise Adams's (1993) respective explorations of female masculinities, and the gender 'border case' in sport. Out of this reconfiguration there emerges the swaggering midlife female trick skater: an entity whose unconventional approach to movement and whose subverting of skate technology and its associated practices provide a way out of the more traditional and predictable kinds of on-ice gender[ed] dynamics that characterise recreational rink culture.

In Chapter 8 – *Becoming Movement* – I examine the swaggering midlife female trick skater's process of becoming a *bodies* in movement out there on the ice through a series of conceptual shifts which, whilst not throwing over what has come before, do incorporate into this thesis a more complex reading both of a sporting body that has had to come to terms with its own fallibility – or *fall-ability* – and of the rink as that *un-place* "where nobody is, but everybody belongs" (Melechi 1993, 37). This reading first reconsiders the operations of Deleuze-Guattarian becomings and haecceities through the introduction of a 'doing' body that *feels itself feeling*. It then examines how, rather than finding flow through the glide, we can learn to fall into flow. Thirdly, it conceives of the swaggering midlife female trick skater as a tactical trickster who engages in the practice of "making do" (de Certeau 1984) in order to renegotiate both her own positioning within recreational rink culture and a more fulfilling passage for herself and others within and through it. Finally, it draws on Kristeva's (1995) notion of 'women's time,' and her understanding of 'the semiotic *chora*,' to explore what happens when the

emphasis shifts from extending the sporting body *into* sporting spaces so as to demarcate that space (as mine, as yours) to falling into time *within* those spaces through a rhythmic and haptic bodily sensing of them.

The ninth and concluding chapter of this thesis – *Opening Doors* – revisits this thesis's key theoretical and methodological premises, and discusses these in the context of those challenges inherent in writing affect in general, and of evoking the swaggering midlife female trick skater and her particular approach to movement through this type of writing specifically. This process of retracing what I *did* do in this thesis also gives me the chance to pick up on ideas that were either lost in the general hubbub of dissertation production, or were so complex as to necessitate the writing of a whole other thesis. Amongst these, I pay special attention to what an understanding of the recreating skating body might bring to the ways that we conceive of the communicating body, and to how we might go about theorising the largely under-investigated issue of the aging female body in so-called 'alternative' sporting activities.

Chapter 2: Juggling Terms

2:0 Introduction

In this chapter I offer some preliminary thoughts on what *affect* is and what we can come to understand about affect through studying bodies in movement, as well as through opening ourselves to reading and writing in ways that allow affect to move us. I suggest what link affect has to the *passion* we develop for certain kinds of activities and the *pleasure* we take in doing them. I also distinguish affect from the term *emotion*, highlighting how the latter's connection to the individual subject and to intentionality means that it does not play a key role in this thesis. I explain why the same does not apply to the term *feeling* in spite of the close affiliation that it has to the emotions, and show how when used as a verb, feeling can equally be applied to the realm of affect.

2:1 Affect

Affect is to be distinguished from feelings and emotions in that it is impersonal and creates no lasting attachments. It does not belong to anybody, and its *modus operandi* – much like a northerly wind sweeping across the tundra – is to pass through, create a stir, but take no prisoners. Likewise, affect does not belong to any one of the senses, but operates “across” the senses (Seigworth 2003, 81). Best understood as a “force” (Colebrook 2002, 27) or “intensity” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, *xvi*), affect is dynamic, transitory and continuously variant. It surges, explodes and fades away (for its passage is invariably kinetic) not as a series of individuated events, but as a “continuous line of variation as a body passes from one [experiential] state to another” (Seigworth 2003, 82). In this passage between bodily states, the body's capacity to act is augmented or diminished (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, *xvi*), and this has a knock-on effect on other

bodies' capacity to act and to be acted upon in turn. Though, as Gregory J. Seigworth (2003) warns, the tendency at this stage might be to "equate affect simply with the emotions of life events" and the vagaries of our various everyday encounters, he is quick to remind us that "affect is, more properly, *the movement and modulation of these encounters or events across the flesh and through the body*" (88, my emphasis). In this respect, it could be ventured that affect is the very 'changing-ness' of change, which is why Deleuze and Guattari link it so closely to the processes of 'becoming.'

For Deleuze and Guattari, life itself amounts to nothing more than "the dynamic interaction of affects and a constant becoming-other" (Colebrook 2002, 60). We are not first and foremost beings who, having been created, then go on to feel and perceive – to be alternatively caressed or cajoled, buttressed or buffeted by the forces of affect. Rather, our very being-ness is constituted in and through the affective investments and connections we make:

It is from affects that distinct beings are formed. (61)

What the ongoing flow of affect through our bodies and 'across' our senses also means, though, is that being-ness is never static: we, along with everyone and everything else for that matter, are constantly in a state of becoming. This restlessness and lack of nomenclature on the part of affect makes it a difficult 'Thing' to pin down. In terms of this project, for example, I sensed that it was circulating out there on the rink whilst skating and imagined that it played a fairly important role in those moments of intense pleasure or pain that I, as a trick skater, was experiencing. At the same time, however, I was baffled as to how go about talking about it, let alone *writing* about it. It was somewhat of a relief to realise that in feeling this way, I was not alone.

Seigworth (2003), for instance, has done an excellent job of charting how Sigmund Freud's initial interest in affect turned eventually to its abandonment in favour of dream interpretation, even though Freud recognised that within the realm of affect, much of importance lay. Affect, however, was too difficult to get at: unlike light bulbs that represented the phallus and father-son dynamics that could be reduced to the Oedipus complex, affect did not fit easily within the world of representation, nor could it be explained by reductive interpretative frameworks. And so, Freud buried his work on affect in a bottom drawer. And yet, as Seigworth emphasises, Freud knew that in taking the easy way out – in abandoning his pursuit of affect and applying to psychotherapy a classic scientific approach – he was also leaving something key to understanding the human psyche out (75-80). This something – affect – he not only left to the poets, but acknowledged poetry's prior place within. As Freud himself is said to have commented, "Everywhere I go I find a poet has been there before me."⁵

Certainly, the existential angst of which Freud speaks – that sense that elsewhere, and in a manner that can hardly be improved upon, it has all been done before – resonates with my own experience of hunting down affect. As affect would leap out at me as I read a particular poem or passage of prose, or tug at me as I stared into a painting in an exhibition at Montréal's Museum of Contemporary Arts, my first inclination would be to do as Freud did: to leave affect to those poets and artists who do it so well; to not drag uncooperative affect into the scholarly project. This all changed, however, when I found affect – or to put it in terms that better reflect the experience, when affect found me – in Barthes's (1978) *A Lovers Discourse: Fragments* – a book that one would be more likely to encounter on a university course syllabus than a book club list, and

penned by an author who is recognised to be a semiologist, essayist and literary theorist though *not* a writer of fiction. It was just one small section of the text that did it, but for the first time whilst reading non-fiction – *academic* non-fiction – I felt profoundly, inexplicably, moved. This was not a movement of the mental kind – the “aha!” kind of movement that accompanies those moments of cognisant breakthrough when we make an exhilarating shift from not seeing at all to suddenly seeing with alarming clarity. No, this movement was distinctly physical: a painful quiver, a thud in the heart, a tremor passing straight through me as my body became awash with the enormity of something much bigger than myself, and yet intensely *of* myself. I did not understand what had struck me. I barely understood, as in intellectually comprehend, what the words that had so moved me actually *meant*. As I began to wail, however, I was aware that something similar to what I occasionally experienced out on the rink and that I equated with the term *affect* had done its work on me. This realisation prompted an in depth investigation of that which, in writing aimed primarily at a scholarly audience, had managed to provoke such an unprecedented and intense bodily response.

In the chapters that follow I pick up on this investigation in more detail. What matters here, in the context of this initial mapping of affect and some linked terms that need to be unpacked before proceeding further, is that it was in that moment of epiphany that the very distinct physical acts of skating, reading and writing became inextricably intertwined. Just as an earlier encounter with Barthes’s (1985) notion that the line in a drawing is but a trace of the artist’s hand’s becoming (172) had prompted me to conceive of skating as a form of writing oneself onto ice, this latest revelation meant that I could no longer think of the passions and pleasures sought through and evoked by

skating as disconnected to those sought through and evoked by reading. Here, of course, we bring into dialogue two very different kinds of activities – the first aerobic and kinaesthetic, the second mental and relatively static. Viewed as *processes*, however, their similarities outweigh their differences. More importantly, we encounter here two very separate ways of engaging with passion or pleasure – that of consciously seeking it out, and that of being inadvertently touched or moved by it. Though the two do not necessarily happen in isolation the one from the other, they do speak to two entirely different experiences of skating/reading. In terms of how these two experiences can be conceptualised in relation to passion, Kristeva’s (2004) understanding of passion as a state of being that has already found “an object and a dramaturgy” (147) resonates with the kind of experience that is driven by anticipation and deliberately (often doggedly) sought out, whereas Deleuze’s (1995) understanding of passion through his reading of Foucault – both the work and the man – sheds light on those unanticipated and generally bodily experiences that catch us unawares, and over which we have little or no control. As for the workings of pleasure, Barthes’s (1975) seminal work on how we read texts, *The Pleasure of the Text*, not only provides a language for and account of the two very different ways of experiencing pleasure, but manages in the process to render the unlikely pairing of skating and reading more tenable.

2:2 Passion

Kristeva’s (2004) reflection that, whereas affect is a drive without a dramaturgy, “Passion is already in a conflictual relation with the other” (148), clearly indicates that for her, passion is both personal and locatable. In other words, it exists in that ‘post-affect’ realm of intentionality, relationship and representation. In view of Kristeva’s

belief that affect does not so much get left behind as fail to enter our minds once we have joined the symbolic world of language or representation, I use the term ‘post-affect’ with caution. It does, however, help to capture that sense that there is a world *before* words and that there is a world *after* words and that once a word attaches itself to one of those brute and burning drives that we all too readily assume to *be* the passion, it becomes a passion in the Kristevian sense of the word – that is, a dramaturgy that has become disconnected from the drive that originally propelled it. This evacuating of affect from passion rather flattens it, making Kristeva’s passion somewhat of a *never-has-been*: its pinnacle being the instant it is born of its drive and topples over into representation; its only compensation being that “conflictual relation with the other” that injects some semblance of life into a drama that it is condemned to live itself out *as* itself. As for what happens before affect is evacuated, it is only the very rare writer who is able, according to Kristeva, to evoke those bodily drives and sensations that are not quite yet a passion, but which will shortly be subsumed by it. Citing Colette as one such writer, she argues that though Colette’s actual storylines about passion are “uninteresting” and “banal” (147), she manages to bring the senses together with words in such a way so as to capture that brief moment before the affect of passion is overshadowed by its narrative, its dramaturgy. In locating passion in the aftermath of that brief moment, Kristeva provides us with an insight into the kind of passion that can be consciously sought out and cultivated, as in “I’m just *passionate* about ice skating!” or “I’m developing *a* passion for the detective novel.” Deleuze, on the other hand – in attaching his definition of passion *to* that brief moment – speaks to the kind of passion that can neither be captured by nor reduced to words and their accompanying denotative and connotative meanings.

Picking up on Foucault's subject-less conception of subjectification, Deleuze (1995) likens the terrain of passion to "an electric or magnetic field" in which "individuations" take place through "intensities," producing "not persons or identities" but a number of "individuated fields" (93). Passion, in other words, does not operate at the level of the individual person. And like Foucault's process of subjectification, nor does it belong to any one subject. Rather, passion is a kind of individuation that dissolves persons "into a field of various persisting and mutually interdependent intensities...with strong phases and weak phases" and within which, the whole idea of "being oneself no longer makes any sense" (116). Perhaps the closest we can come to understanding what such a sub-personal passion actually *looks like* is to be found in Deleuze's description of Foucault himself:

You weren't aware of him as a person exactly. Even in trivial situations, say when he came into a room, it was more like a changed atmosphere, a sort of event, an electric or magnetic field or something...it wasn't like a person. It was a set of intensities. (115)

In addition to providing us with an almost graphic illustration of passion at work *across* individuals and *within* a given space, this description suggests an approach to conceiving of the passionate body not as fleshly substance and mindful intentionality, but as a field of energy comprised of crisscrossing flows that, in the places where they cross, set off charges of varying intensity. Expanding this analogy, the passion-filled skating rink – like the room Foucault enters – can be conceived of as an energy field constituted in and through the flow patterns that skaters create and the sparks that fly between them as they crisscross each others' paths. Within this ever-shifting configuration, the arrival of but one individual can result in a significantly "changed atmosphere" – a point that is developed further in the chapter that follows and then

revisited throughout the thesis but which, for the present purposes, serves to reinforce the extent to which passion in this second conception of it is both capricious and relational. However, unlike Kristeva's notion of passion this is not a capriciousness that is driven by fanciful whim or burning desire – the stuff of dramaturgy – and nor is it a relationship, conflictual or otherwise, that is directed towards 'the other' or that even takes into consideration that this 'other' is a person. Rather, it is a passion that occurs in kinaesthesia and that lives itself out as a chain of impersonal physical sensations. As such, passion is not all that dissimilar to affect itself: non-locatable in that it cannot be fixed to any one place; impersonal in that it makes *the* self disappear and even the existence of *a* self quite unnecessary. If this means that there is something "fearsome" about passion – "something not altogether human" (116) – therein, for a Deleuze or for a Foucault, lies passion's liberatory potential. Freed as passion is from the very human relations implicated in and constituted by the workings of knowledge and power, passion provides an artistic way out of them – a temporary breather, a welcome respite. In Chapter 5, Foucault's notion of passion as "an aesthetic way of existing" that helps to combat the "unendurable" burden imposed upon us by "the codified rules of knowledge" and "the constraining rules of power" (113) is picked up upon again when discussing the differences between 'organised' and 'disorganised' sport. What matters here is that passion can be understood as a set of intensities circulating in that time and space *before* the self becomes codified and constrained, but can equally, à la Kristeva, be conceived of as a post-drive force that has already crossed over into that latter state of being. If both forms of passion are integral to the experience of recreational ice skating and hence taken into consideration in this thesis, the passion that does not speak

and that evades traditional representational formats as a result of this silence is what piques my interest from a methodological point of view.

2:3 Pleasure

As for how I engage with the term *pleasure* in this thesis, I draw on Barthes's (1975) distinction between *plaisir* and *jouissance* to differentiate between the various types of enjoyment we derive from an activity like recreational ice skating, and to explore whether concepts that Barthes uses to better understand how we read can be usefully recuperated so as to enhance our understanding of the body as it skates. The key difference between experiencing *plaisir* from an activity and being hit by *jouissance* is that whereas the former is "a conscious enjoyment that can be articulated in language" (Moriarty 1991, 150), the latter "interrupts consciousness" and "shatters the mirror world of the Imaginary" (149) – that is, it jams the normal workings of language – to the point that even one's non-stop inner monologue becomes jammed, leaving one in a state where no words can be found to express what has been experienced. Whereas *plaisir* finds its realisation in conscious thought and its expression in words, *jouissance* is of the body – resisting language and refusing to be spoken, let alone analysed. As Barthes (1975) suggests with regard to the range of pleasures afforded by the text, as soon as you find yourself analysing a story's inner workings or measuring a story's worth, you have left *jouissance* behind and slipped into the realm of *plaisir* (13). Already, we can see parallels between Kristeva's understanding of passion and Barthes' notion of *plaisir*, and between the way that Deleuze conceptualises passion and Barthes speaks of *jouissance*.

In terms of reading, then, *plaisir* is derived from those texts that reproduce within the reader the culture and teachings that she has been force-fed from birth. This process of recognition ironically serves to blind the reader: fostering the illusion that she is an individual akin to Descartes's *cogito* – “I [read and] think therefore I am” – when, in fact, all it really does is reinforce just how much her subjectivity is shaped by the social (her experience of the world) and the symbolic (the language with which she speaks and through which she comprehends that world). In a sense, the greater the *plaisir* she derives from this process of reading what she already knows and recognises (to be funny, to be ironic, to be perverse), the more she confirms not only her *lack* of individuality, but the extent to which she belongs to the society from which and through which she reads. *Plaisir*, then, is *about* belonging: being a member, recognising the codes, understanding the rules. To read with *plaisir* is to find comfort in the familiar; it is, in short, to read *with* the grain.

The text that causes the reader to experience *jouissance*, on the other hand, does so because it threatens her cultural and psychological identity, tastes and values. As she reads, she is struck by “shock, disturbance, even loss, which are proper to ecstasy.” Often translated into English as “bliss,” *jouissance* is orgasmic: it quite literally sweeps us away (19). It is bodily, in the same sense that affect is bodily, and its fleeting though invariably explosive appearance serves to dispel any illusion of the self as a unified entity that can be ‘read like a book.’ In fact, the very act of reading a *texte de jouissance* – generally, an avant-garde text that has no linear narrative and is thus considered by Barthes (1974) to be a *writerly* text (5) – demands a different approach to that which would be used to read the *texte de plaisir* or *readerly* text (5), with its straightforward narrative and its linear storyline. This different approach Barthes terms “reading

vertically” – that is, “dwelling on the vertical dimension of language” (Moriarty 1991, 151) rather than reading progressively – horizontally – in pursuit of a plot, or in an attempt to find a meaning. In the chapter that follows I expand upon this idea of language that works vertically through the operations of *signifiante*, as opposed to language that relies on the processes of *signification* to produce meaning, and explain how I use this understanding of language to devise a writing method designed to evoke the movements and affects of skating. What interests me here, however, is the notion that there are different kinds of texts that afford different kinds (or intensities) of pleasure and that are meant to be read in different ways. Is it possible, I ask, to consider the pleasures of skating through this same lens? And if indeed it is possible, how much flexibility does this reading *of* reading/skating allow?

The temptation, for instance, is to posit freestyle recreational ice skating and its more extreme avant-garde sister, trick skating, as *textes de jouissance*, whilst those more goal-oriented and rule-bound skating practices like figure skating and hockey become constitutive of *textes de plaisir*. Having made this conceptual leap, the next step is to test the waters. Does form necessarily dictate the way that we must approach these various activities and receive their contingent pleasures? Must we *always* trick skate vertically and figure skate horizontally? Or can we experience moments of *jouissance* when figure skating? Find *plaisir* in performing a new unscripted move whilst trick skating? And if it is possible to read (skate) counter to form, must this transgression be an act of subversion? Or can it be that one person’s *plaisir* whilst reading/skating just happens to be another person’s *jouissance*?

A number of issues arise out of this line of questioning and will be returned to throughout this thesis. One such issue is whether the analogy between reading and skating works in the context of the great *plaisir/jouissance* divide. Another concerns the divide itself. With regard to the latter, Barthes is the first to insist that such divisions only serve to reinforce the kind of polarised dichotomising that characterises the hierarchical relations which currently define our society and us, and out of which dangerous stereotypes arise. To get himself out of this corner, he argues that because texts themselves are erratic, not necessarily staying put on one side or the other of the dividing-line, the line itself is only provisional. This would suggest that I could trick skate horizontally, especially as trick skating becomes a more commonly recognised feature of recreational rink culture, just as a female figure skater could skate vertically by skating a pairs routine with another woman, for example, and defying the rules of the International Skating Union (ISU) in so doing. Barthes, however, complicates this seemingly simple equation when he proposes that though it is possible to find brief moments of *jouissance* in a text that is predominantly a *texte de plaisir*, making the figure skater's subversion of ISU rules at least a plausible means to such a 'blissful' experience, the unlikelihood of finding any *plaisir* in the text that operates through pure bodily *jouissance* means that the same does not hold true for the *plaisir*-seeking recreational trick skater. My sense that *plaisir* is indeed a part of the trick skating experience, co-existing alongside *jouissance*, actually enabling those moments of *jouissance* in the same way that banality, as Maurice Blanchot insists, enables us to experience intensity (Seigworth 2000, 232-233), could mean that trick skating does not 'qualify' as a Barthesian *texte de jouissance*. Alternatively, it could mean that Barthes, in his effusive embracing of the anti-cultural workings of *jouissance*, has

underestimated the role that *plaisir* plays in enabling those brief bodily moments that allow us to escape culture's grip. Then again, it could mean that the analogy between skating and reading does not really work: that those forms of skating and reading that operate through *signifiante* (recreational trick skating and the avant-garde text) do not do their signifying work in the same manner, even if they share similarities in the ways that they temporarily disrupt (and erupt into) the linear continuity of the more established skating and literary practices, like figure skating and the production of the bourgeois novel.

Barthes, for his part, finds a way to reconcile *jouissance*'s apparent indifference to *plaisir* with *plaisir*'s apparent willingness to offer short-term accommodation to *jouissance* when he proposes that "a text of sheer *jouissance* cannot exist" (Moriarty 1991, 151). With this assertion, Barthes immediately troubles the notion that *jouissance* is purely bodily – that it remains untainted by cultural *plaisir*. However, he manages to avoid contradicting himself by situating the possible presence of *plaisir* within *jouissance* in the somewhat elusive realms of partiality and potentiality:

The potential presence in *jouissance* of elements one might have thought pertinent only to *plaisir*, such as emotion, forestalls the emergence of a unified image of *jouissance* (152).

In other words, sheerness here denotes unity – something that is antithetical to *jouissance*. By extension, this forestalling of *jouissance*'s unity by *plaisir* is also entirely necessary, for without it *jouissance* could not exist. As for how this act of forestalling takes place as regards these different kinds of texts themselves, it is the 'writerly' reader who ultimately decides how a text is positioned, and this because of her simultaneous participation in the bourgeois culture that produces works of literature

(and which, by virtue of being born into it, is her rightful inheritance) and the avant-garde project that manages, through moments of orgasmic bliss that are at once desired and feared, to annihilate that culture, to destroy it (153). If this suggests that the trick skater could, after all, be likened to a ‘writerly’ reader and finds a place in Barthes’s conception of reading, what the above passage indicates is that for Barthes, the constituted unified self and the orgasmic bliss that temporarily shatters that sense of a unified self are mutually interdependent. In Chapter 8, the ways in which *plaisir* and *jouissance* work together as we skate around a rink (or read a text) is elaborated further when I call upon Barthes’s (2000b) particular vision of utopia – an “atopia” which is a ‘non-time’ and a ‘non-space’ that allows us to temporarily ‘fall out’ of history (412) – to develop an understanding of the *Atrium le 1000* as an “un-place” (Melechi 1993) constituted in and through relational dynamics. What the above passage also makes clear is that the realm of emotion, for Barthes, is associated with *plaisir*, not *jouissance*. This linking not only helps to distinguish affect from emotion – the former aligning itself with erratic, inexpressible, unruly *jouissance*, whilst emotion is somewhat more domesticated, dwelling as it does in expressible, containable, graspable *plaisir* – but provides a fitting segue into the final two terms to be discussed in this chapter.

2:4 Emotion and Feeling

If affect, as suggested earlier, is changing-ness itself – that passage from one experiential state to another – emotion can be conceived of as the recognition of that change as it pertains directly to oneself. As Aaron Ben-Ze’ev (2000) explains, “Emotions typically occur when we perceive positive or negative significant changes in our personal situation – or in that of those related to us” (11). In addition to being the

recognition of this change, an emotion is also its personal expression. To feel happy or unhappy, then, is an emotional response to a change in our situation which in the first case, improves it, and in the second case, makes it worse (14). To the extent that emotions “focus on our own goals” and “represent the world from the point of view of those goals” (Nussbaum 2000, 79), we also have some control over them: they belong to that realm in ourselves that registers the changes that our bodies and minds have undergone, and organises those changes into a ‘world-view’ that makes sense to us.

In other words, emotion – as the recognition and personal expression of these changes – comes after affect. Bound as it is to a perceiving and feeling person, emotion belongs not to that subject-less field of intensities – to Deleuze’s passion and Barthes’s *jouissance* – but to a state of being whose “significance” and “scope” is “determined by us” (Ben-Ze’ev 2000, 16) – that is, to Kristeva’s dramaturgical passion and Barthes’s consciously enjoyed and easily expressed *plaisir*. In addition to making emotion a highly personal experience, this element of self-determination speaks to what Ben-Ze’ev considers to be one of the two basic components of an emotion: intentionality (49). According to Ben-Ze’ev:

Intentionality is the relation of “being about something.” It involves our cognitive ability to separate ourselves from the surrounding stimuli in order to create a meaningful subject-object relation. (49)

Here, of course, we leave the terrain of affect altogether, entering into “meaningful” relationships with the other and clearly delineating where we stand in relation to that other. Here, too, we trouble the whole notion of *relating-ness*: for if, as Ben-Ze’ev suggests, “Significance, or meaning, is by nature relational” (18), then these are surely not the same kinds of relations as those found in those fields of intensity, those spaces

of affect, where meaning – in the sense of “being *about* something” – no longer matters. Interestingly, Nel Noddings (2003) posits that it is only within these latter spaces that an ethics of care for the self and for the other truly emerges, growing not out of the caring subject’s connection to any one object (as in an emotion-based relationship) but out of that subject’s feeling of connection to the idea of connectedness *tout court* (132). This insight on the part of Noddings is picked up again in Chapter 8 in order to shed light on bodies that stretch themselves to their own limits in communal sporting spaces without necessarily curtailing the ability of other bodies to do the same. Here, it helps us to grasp the basic difference between an emotion-induced state of being-in-the-world where the aim is clearly to separate yourself from all that surrounds you in order to build relationship, and an affect-driven process of ‘becoming-other’ in which the whole point is to merge with the surrounding stimuli in order to do so: to take a walk, as Virginia Woolf’s (1992) Mrs. Dalloway does, and realise as you “slice like a knife through everything” that never again will you be able to say “I am this, I am that, he is this, he is that” with any degree of certainty (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 263). What is also clear is that whereas the latter depends on a kind of reneging of the self, the former is about taking control of the situation. In this regard, it speaks to that aspect of the emotions that Peter Goldie (2000) sees as essential to our understanding of them: namely, that they “can be educated”; that “we can be taught to recognise, and to respond emotionally, as part of the same education” (28). This is in line with Aristotle’s view that the emotions are tameable and indeed, can and *should* be consciously cultivated:

Our emotions should be appropriate to the situation: felt toward the right individual, at the right time, in the right amount, being neither too violent nor too calm. (Kristjansson 2002, 19)

If such a framing of the emotions implies some form of training – a programme or regime, perhaps, not unlike that which aspiring figure skaters and hockey players must submit to in order to produce an appropriately *measured* performance – it also gives the impression that the emotional realm is nothing more than “a deliberative intellectual system” (Ben Ze’ev 2000, 266). This, Ben-Ze’ev (2000) argues, is simply not the case. For the second basic component of an emotion is feeling, this latter acting as a kind of counterbalance to emotion’s more cognitive side, as expressed through intentionality. If the presence of feeling introduces an element of spontaneity and unpredictability into even the most trained or ‘educated’ of emotions, just what the term *feeling* actually means is complicated by the range of meanings that have been assigned to the word itself. Used to alternatively signal “awareness of tactile qualities, bodily sensations, emotions, moods, awareness in general, and so forth” (64), Ben Ze’ev’s preferred understanding of feelings is that they are “modes of awareness which express our own state and are not directed at a certain object” (64). Such modes have “no meaningful cognitive content” (50). Nor do we play a particularly active role when it comes to inducing them. Feelings, as Ben Ze’ev explains, just “seem to surface” (50). They can, in a sense, be conceptualised as those “raw impulses” which Aristotle was at pains to distinguish *from* emotions, these latter being better described according to Aristotle as “socialised modes of response” (248).

If this lack of intentionality on the part of a feeling clearly distinguishes it from an emotion, it is important to remember that feelings remain a key dimension of emotions, even if they are not reducible to them (65). This irreducibility, however, is what makes feelings adaptable: they can be discussed in the context of emotions *or* affect. The

presence of intentionality within emotions, on the other hand, renders these latter incompatible with the workings of affect. This means that emotion, as a concept, is less important to this thesis than is the concept of feeling – the former only making an appearance in Chapter 6 when I draw on Alphonso Lingis’s (2000) way of *seeing* the emotions in terms of the energies that they discharge, as opposed to the states they represent, in order to conceptualise the rink as a swirling mass of attitudes. At the same time, the implication of feeling *within* emotion does mean that I restrict my use of feeling in this thesis to its active verb form. This decision signals the important difference I see between *a feeling* and the visceral and sentient experience of *feeling something*: the latter lending itself to that transient physical sensation of becoming aware of and/or awakened to the passing through of “pre-personal and placeless affect” (Seigworth 2003, 80), whereas the former better reflects the realm of emotion, speaking more to what has already become attached to, hence filtered through and understood by way of, an individual’s psyche and life experience.

In suggesting that we can feel before what we have felt becomes contextualized as *a feeling* – that is, in aligning my use of the verb ‘to feel’ with Deleuzian passion and Barthesian *jouissance* – I also draw on Raymond Williams’s (1977) notion of “structures of feeling,” arguing that his conception of these structures as being experienced as “*changes of presence*” that occur “*in solution*” and that are still “*in process*” (132-133, original emphasis) is very much in line with how poststructuralist thinking posits affect. This hunch is reinforced by Williams’s discussion of the distinction between the terms *feeling* and *experience*, and his insistence that though the seemingly “wider” term, *experience*, might “better” encapsulate those knowledges

about the social that are generated “as they are actively lived and felt” (132), the connection of the word *experience* to a “past tense” (132) which is already defining, classifying or rationalising what is happening *as it happens* robs experience of those “characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone” (132) that his “structures of feeling” seek to describe. Thus, though Williams concedes that the term *feeling* is “difficult,” he concludes that it does manage to convey that particular awareness of the social that can generally only be known *as* it is being lived – though on occasion, will be later glimpsed in some of the art and literature that is *of* that lived reality (134) – and that goes beyond institutional memory and “formally held and systematic beliefs” (132). In short, what Williams is talking about here is “not feeling *against* thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought” (132, my emphasis). Furthermore, and in contrast to the kind of interpersonal subject-object relationships that result of an emotion-based ‘being *about* something,’ this far more active process of *feeling something* takes place “in a living and inter-relating continuity” (132) – in a ‘structure’ or “set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension” (132) – that resonates with affect’s presence and passage: that is, with that ever-changing configuration of crisscrossing movements and varying intensities that is not mine or yours, but that keeps you and I in relation to each other and our surroundings as we skate around the rink and become one with our environment.

Chapter 3: Musing Methodologically

3:0 Introduction

Skating is my bubble. When I'm in the bubble, I don't have any worries. I don't think about the job, the kids, money, the mortgage, the shopping – all that stuff you think about the rest of the time. Of course, my daughters don't understand why I *have* to skate. When I explain to them how moving to the music and having a rhythm going makes me feel so good...well, you know kids, that all sounds so *weird* to them. I mean, they don't like the idea that “mom” moves her body at all, let alone *moves* to the rhythm [Laughter]. (Nathalie)

This skating, it's a passion. It's like being a drug addict. When I can't get to the rink, I put my head in the freezer just to smell ice, just to feel the cold of ice. Or I put ice cubes in my mouth, just to taste the sensation of ice. (Lisa)

Circulating round and round at the *Atrium le 1000* I chew the fat with fellow skaters and without much prompting, the skaterly stories emerge. These are stories that speak of an obsessive and drug-like passion: a love for an activity that affords a respite from worldly concerns through the pleasures of rhythmic bodily movement; a craving for the hard materiality of ice. These are stories that speak to those enigmatic and ethereal spaces of affect: bubbles that, rather than encasing, provide gateways to freedom; freezers that, by virtue of their frosty countenance, stand in for skating rinks. And yes, these are also mobile stories – stories recounted in transit to nowhere, if you are talking linearly, though to infinity and beyond, if you are talking existentially. These are stories in motion that are all the more textured for being shared while actively engaging in the activity itself, rather than spoken into a microphone in a more structured interview situation. They are stories about movement that are all the more nuanced for being told

to a skater-cum-researcher who shares the passion, who understands the obsession, and is thus not a ‘them,’ but a ‘one of us.’

In this chapter I explore the process of collecting, processing and assembling those stories recounted to me whilst skating. As a researcher interested in spaces of affect – that is, in spaces that are in a constant state of flux and transformation as a result of “the fleeting, yet intense circulation of “feeling”” (Stivale 1998, 164) that is produced when people, through movement, enter into an “active, performative dialogue” (165) with others and their immediate environment – I ask how one goes about *evoking* affect first, when out there in the field, and second, when it comes to writing up one’s research. This line of questioning is not without its obligatory *provocateur*: namely, the surprisingly static way in which the body in movement has been conceptualised in much existing sport-related scholarship, as discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. And nor is this hunt for elusive affect without a mission: this being to restore movement *to* movement; to set the sporting body *into* motion as opposed to make it representative *of* motion.

In the first part of this chapter I briefly discuss how my understanding of affect and a related term, *hapticity*, inform my conception of the relational dynamics at work in my primary research site, and hence my development of a fitting methodology with which to explore these dynamics. I then go on to outline my methodological approach to fieldwork down at the rink – an approach that is inspired by Laurence de Garis’s (1999) notion of a performative or sensuous ethnography, and that draws in part on a haptic sensibility to navigate my scholarly way through my chosen terrain. I argue that in

using my own body as a primary research tool whilst doing my fieldwork, as opposed to merely discussing *the* body in abstract terms, I actively address the oft-bemoaned absence of the visceral and the sentient in scholarly writing about sport. Such an approach, I posit, is also in line with why a fieldwork component has been built into this thesis in the first place: not, as discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis, to produce an ethnographic account of why recreational ice skaters skate and what they get out of doing it, but rather to create a lexicon of words recounted in motion that can later be used to animate writing that skates. As for how I go about actually assembling these moving talking bodies into prose patterns that evoke a sense of movement and/or a visceral experience of place, I use the third part of this chapter to discuss how Julia Kristeva's (1984) inclusion of the body and its semiotic drives within the realm of symbolic language informs my understanding of how we can write the body in a non-representational manner, and how Roland Barthes's (1977a) distinction between 'Text' and 'the Work' inspires both the use and the placement of the figures that appear in this thesis. Throughout this chapter I point to how this thesis's conceptual layout and philosophical impetus are driven and informed by methodological considerations of the 'writerly' kind.

3:1 Creating a Method out of a Philosophy of Rink Dynamics

As discussed in the previous chapter, affect is that mysterious "unnamed Thing" (Kristeva 1989, 13); that configuration of crisscrossing speeds and stillnesses and varying degrees of intensity that "spill over beyond whoever lives through them" (Deleuze 1995, 137); that slippery force which, having the identity "of a multiplicity of elements that somehow cohere without entering into a regular, fixed pattern of

organization” (Bogue 2003, 34), does not yield easily to classification or containment. Therein, however, lies much of affect’s allure, and if an ongoing fascination with that which cannot be captured, pinned down or restrained is what sustains my interest in affect, it is perhaps no coincidence that affect and I first found each other down at the skating rink: a blossoming Deleuzian passion for trick skating quickly turning into a scholarly exploration of this passion à la Kristeva, and a quest to find out more about what it means for bodies to be in movement.

Whilst skating, I had discovered, you can merge your body with other bodies: you can open yourself to the passing through of affect – to a “becoming-other” (Bogue 2003, 164), if you like – by allowing your individuated body to ‘give over’ to a bodily ‘in communion’ with others and all of the physical elements that constitute your immediate surroundings. Conversely, you can close your body off to others, and in so doing effect a breakdown in the ‘melodic flow’ of the ice rink in general, and of individual skaters in particular. If this disruption of the flow is especially evident when young children are on the rink – their tendency being to rapidly and erratically switch directions or shift down a gear or dart into the fray without any seeming awareness of those sharing the ice with them – certain adults also seem to be particularly prone to creating flow disjunctures. Interestingly enough, this has little to do with skill level. More, it has to do with the degree to which a skater cares to, or is able to, sense the space around her: not so much to sense the presence and proximity of others – in other words, to see what either *is* or *is not* there – but rather, to sense that which neither *is* nor *isn’t* – that is, to fall into a comfortable rhythmic dance with the ever-changing configurations of alternatively filled and empty space. If this conception of the rink as a time and space

constituted *in* motility and *through* fluidity resonates with my understanding of affect, the faculty to *sense* these shifting presences and absences simultaneously, I came to realise, resonates with the term *hapticity*.

Jennifer Fisher (1997) provides a compelling explanation of how haptic sense differs from the other five senses we engage to navigate the world:

Haptic perception can elucidate the energies and volitions involved in sensing space: its temperature, presences, pressures and resonances. In this sense, it is *the affective touch*, a plane of feeling distinct from actual physical contact. (6, my emphasis)

It dawned on me that this kind of haptic perception was probably operating in those all-too-brief moments when we skaters became a swirling mass of kinetic energy – when our individual bodies became but one element in a fluid interplay of ice, blades, music, air and other bodies. But it also struck me that bringing such a haptic sensibility to my fieldwork could help to break down the ‘Seeing versus Doing’ Divide that not only characterises so much ethnographic research, but has ended up inhibiting fuller participation of the moving body in the constitution of knowledges that directly concern it. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (in Parviainen, 2002) suggests that a process in which one thinks in and through the moving body is “founded upon a kinetic bodily logos” (13). Within such a logos “movement is the mother of all cognition” (14): our sense of self and the world around us is constituted in and through tactility and motility. In such a conception of the thinking and knowing subject, it is “our tactile-kinaesthetic bodies” that serve as “epistemological gateways” (14). To put it simply, “We learn by moving and by listening to our own movement” (16).

3:2 Breaking Down the 'Seeing versus Doing' Divide

Laurence de Garis (1999) might not use the term *hapticity* to describe his invoking of 'the affective touch' when it comes to doing his fieldwork, but he is more aware than most sports scholars of the need to bring one's own body into the research process. In his bold and insightful "Experiments in Pro-wrestling: Toward a Performative and Sensuous Sport Ethnography," he calls for an overthrow of traditional ethnographic approaches to sport, with their over-reliance on what can be visually observed from the position of the transcendental overseer, in favour of more bodily-engaged ones. Countering the 'objectivity through keeping your distance' stance of proponents of the former, he posits that his threefold positioning as a participant, as a subject-participant, and as a researcher has given him access to sentient knowledges to which the participant observer watching in from the sidelines can never be party. More specifically, he has been: a) a highly visible pro-wrestler; b) a 'subject-participant' in a traditional ethnographic study on pro-wrestling in which he confesses to having fabricated the odd 'fact' for the sake of good copy; and c) an academic researcher who writes about his sport.

I am drawn to de Garis's critique of more conventional forms of doing ethnography for two reasons. First, he identifies what I see as a major problem in sport ethnography (and for that matter most other types of ethnography) – this being the tendency to keep the participants on one side of the playing field, and the observers on the other. Witness, for example, a recent anthology on 'alternative' sports entitled *To the Extreme: Alternative Sports, Inside and Out*. The editors, Robert E. Rinehart and Synthia Sydnor (2003) express pleasure at having twinned a piece by a practitioner of each of these

‘sports on the edge’ with an article by an academic who has studied the particular phenomenon – generally from an ethnographic perspective. In so doing, the editors feel that they have created that all-important dialogue between *doing* and *seeing*. What we are left with, however, are richly textured descriptions of how surfing the waves and leaping out of plane with a parachute feels in one text, and a dry-ish academic analysis of what is happening out there ‘in the Extreme’ in the text that accompanies it. In other words, the ‘extreme’ element that gets left out here is how we, as academics, might push the envelope when it comes to researching these ‘on the edge’ cultures. In calling for a “kinetic ethnography” (66) in which the academic researcher becomes a visceral performer who climbs quite literally into the ring, de Garis does more than merely pay lip-service to this unfortunate divide. What he does is provide an exciting way out of it.

The second reason I am drawn to de Garis is that he is interested in new ways of data collection. This means engaging other senses apart from our eyes when we go out into the field. It means getting not just *bodies* involved in a research project, but one’s *own* body. It means that that very body, in fact, becomes a primary research tool: the front-line of understanding, if you like; a kind of sensory sense-making device that picks up something more than just the words of one’s informants. And I like this emphasis. It strikes me as more interesting than situated-ness *per se* – that is, the extent to which one is or is not a part of the culture one is studying, and the impact this insider/outsider positioning might have on one’s research findings. Done to death this issue, if very adequately so – see, for example, Denzin and Lincoln (1998), van Maanen (1988), and Titon (1985) – I am much more concerned with how we *come to know* as ethnographers, than where we stand in relation to our ‘subjects.’ Furthermore, I am

interested in how we bring those sense-ations into our prose when writing up our findings. For like de Garis, I am wary of ethnographers who believe that they are engaging their senses when they write *about* the senses. In clearly distinguishing between “an ethnography *of* the senses” and “sensuous ethnography,” de Garis helps us to understand the crucial difference between *intellectualising* the senses – a process which merely perpetuates the Cartesian mind/body split – and *incorporating* the senses into one’s research method.

So here is my positioning, and like de Garis’s it is threefold: I am an avid trick skater; I am a regular recreational ice skater down at the *Atrium le 1000*; and I am an ‘excessive’ participant observer studying the culture I am also instrumental in shaping. If the first two elements of this positioning are self-explanatory – the words ‘avid’ and ‘regular’ no doubt setting off traditional ethnographic alarm bells, but beyond that requiring little in the way of clarification – the third element, with its descriptor ‘excessive,’ is less straightforward. Here, I pick up on John Fiske’s (1992) notion of the “excessive” reader, and his suggestion that this reader’s sheer zeal for a particular media product and her status as a “fan” will not only make her the most likely kind of media consumer to respond to a researcher’s call for audience feedback, but will result in a plethora of exuberant responses that should not be taken to reflect the attitude and feelings of the average or “ordinary” reader (46). Whilst acknowledging Fiske’s concern for research data that does not ignore the mean in its haste to embrace the infinitely more compelling (read ‘research-worthy’) extremes, what intrigues me more is why excessiveness is viewed so suspiciously by the scholarly establishment. Perhaps it has something to do with what A.C. Grayling (2002) calls “the secret of excess” – this being that “it happens when it has already happened” (92). Perhaps the idea that excess creeps up

unbeknownst, taking control of us before we can take control of it, is too much at odds with the scholarly project to ever sit comfortably within it. Prompted largely by a desire to learn more about this institutional fear, I posit the researcher as excessive. This move not only acknowledges the inescapable zeal that I myself bring to this particular research project; it is also designed to highlight the degree to which we prefer to think of the researcher as the kind of being who, on occasion and against her better judgement, might be drawn to the excesses of her subjects, but who for her own part keeps any excessiveness safely under wraps.

In challenging this construct of the restrained and detached researcher, I embrace a fieldwork positioning that is characterised by an open enthusiasm for my research topic, an unabashed investment in my research subjects, and an overt involvement in the activity I am investigating. Countering the idea that the findings of this thesis might be undermined by such a performative positioning, I argue that this excessiveness works in my favour: affording me visceral access to the intimate knowledges of skaters and their practices; even *drawing* my subjects to me. Quite simply, I'm a bit of a skating oddity: a recreational midlife miscreant out there on the ice turning tricks. Not that this ability to draw attention – this performativity on my part – enhances my own enjoyment of skating or gives me access to the zone. On the contrary, and as I discuss in Chapter 5, one of the hazards of making an exhibit of oneself – of becoming even an *amateur* performer – is that you leave the realm of “pure enjoyment” behind (Barthes 1985, 230). On the other hand, being a highly visible skating oddity does benefit the research process, compelling people to talk, ask questions, show off their moves, share their skating stories. From condescending conventional skaters to aspiring trick skaters to casual passers-by: all are only too eager to communicate to me their thoughts, reactions,

compliments and critiques. And these, in turn, become part of my field notes. In other words, through conducting my research not as a researcher but as an excessive performing body, I create what de Garis (1999) refers to as “a polyphony of cooperatively evolved voices” (68). Furthermore, in drawing attention to myself as a performer participant, I de-centre myself as the all-knowing, all-seeing “transcendental subject” (MacAloon 1992) ethnographer.

The co-conversations that result of this process of authorial merging and positional blurring, however, introduce a whole new set of challenges at the writing-up stage. Key amongst these – and to return to the definition of *conversation* offered in the introductory chapter of this thesis – it is no longer a case of simply “turning around together”: it now becomes a question of negotiating who, amidst that polyphony of voices, gets credit for saying what; if, when dealing with ideas that evolve cooperatively, the ownership of these ideas can be determined; and how, in the event that they can, this ownership ought to be textually conveyed. These issues will be discussed more fully in the chapter that follows. At a more conceptual level, one grapples with the seeming paradox of trying to capture in writing what Joyce Carol Oates (1994), when talking about the boxing ring and the very visceral practice enacted within it, describes as “that place *beyond* words”(14, my emphasis). Beyond ecstatically and excessively *doing it*, is it even *possible* to make the skating rink come alive such that the reader *feels* what it is to find freedom in a rhythmic bubble, to crave the taste of ice, to turn tricks out there on that “large glass on which desire circulates” (Sontag 2000, xxviii)? It is to this latter question that I now turn.

3:3 Towards a Method of Writing Movement and Evoking Affect

For choreographer William Forsythe, the task of representing the body in movement is an on-going challenge, and a soul destroying one at that. Indeed, the very impossibility of fixing the moving body in a unified form condemns us, he insists, to treat the body as “hypothesis.” The only figures that we can mobilise to capture it, he suggests gloomily, are those figures that mark its dissolution. This is because “only parts and fragments...assemble themselves” when we draw on the “imperfect storage of the memory of movement” (Brandstetter 2000a, 16-20). In other words, and somewhat ironically, in seeking to re-member the body the best we can do, according to Forsythe, is dis-member it. This frustration on the part of Forsythe resonates with what Kelly Oliver (1999) identifies as Jacques Derrida’s “continual struggle to articulate the “other” of language” (346). Derrida’s ‘other,’ in this case, is the living body, and the task of making language speak that body being one that Derrida, in his inability to see language as anything other the living body’s “dead remains,” deems “impossible” (346).

Whilst Derrida, having relegated the living body to the realm of “the un-inscribable,” dreams of a syringe-like pen that could tap directly into the body’s blood flow and through which, in an effortless transfer from vein to page, the inside would “give itself up” (346), Julia Kristeva takes a more pragmatic approach, seeing in the natural connection of semiotic bodily drives, or affects, to the symbolic world of grammar and syntax, a way out of this writerly impasse. Kristeva’s conviction that words are but “combinations” (343) of these two realms – the semiotic providing the bodily tones and rhythms of language, whilst the symbolic provides its stability and structure – enables

her to reconcile the living body to the language that speaks it. Thus, rather than “lamenting what is lost, absent or impossible in language” (346), Kristeva urges us to rejoice in how through affect, the living body is infused into language. Furthermore, she insists that we should not see these semiotic rhythms and tones in language as being *representative* of our bodily drives; rather, they must be understood as a means through which our bodily drives are actively *discharged* (342) in and through language. This distinction is crucial, for it renders language alive, potent, generative and participatory. Instead of seeing language as a cemetery-like stockpile of Derridean ‘dead remains,’ it becomes a force that has the potential to act through us and upon us.

Kristeva (1984) applies the terms “poetic” and “revolutionary” to the kind of writing that is sensitive to the semiotic component of language, and that strives to set off affective charges in the reader – to make the body that lurks within language *felt*, so to speak. She juxtaposes this kind of *material* writing as epitomized by the “genotext” (86) – that is, text that *works* words to elicit out of them their sounds and rhythms – with the more meaning-driven, transmission-oriented writing one finds in the “phenotext” (87). As Kristeva is quick to point out, the semiotic *genotext* and the symbolic *phenotext* should not be understood as two distinct entities but rather, as two aspects of the signifying process that are caught in a state of “dialectical oscillation” (Oliver 1999, 343) and that, together, enable us to make sense of a given text – the *genotext* through lending it texture and vitality, which motivates us to read on, and the *phenotext* through providing recognisable linguistic signposts, which allows us to work out where we are going.

In our progress-oriented, meaning-hungry world, however, the bodily *genotext* tends to get overlooked as we focus all of our attention on the *phenotext*. This latter has as its primary purpose the clear communication of an idea or description of an object, and not surprisingly, it does what it can to render the words used to convey those meanings transparent – that is, it tries to make us *forget* the words that speak those meanings. This is not to say that some texts are made up of words that have a materiality and other texts contain words that do not. As it happens, all words are material. It is just that some texts choose to highlight this bodily aspect of words, whereas others are less concerned by it. This means that for the writer who is primarily interested in *phenotext*, words are there to *serve* ideas and objects – and here we encounter the realm of symbolic representation *par excellence*. On the other hand, the writer who resides more in the realm of the *genotext* savours the word’s (and by extension, the sentence’s) fleshly substance, and celebrates its sonority, its tactility, its motility – even its olfactory qualities. The word, in this case, *is* body: and what such words or combinations of words produce are not representations of thoughts or feelings, but “sensations of extreme precision and richness” (Kristeva 2004, 148).

In Kristeva’s elaboration of the role of the semiotic in the production of meaning, I find a way of conceptualising rink dynamics that situates the potential for liberating lines of flight not in alternative skating practices themselves, but in the space that opens up when these practices come into play with more traditional ways of writing one’s (gendered) body on ice. This notion of the rink as a space of rich interchange between semiotic *chora* and symbolic *syntax* and *grammar* is discussed more fully in Chapter 8. As for the more immediate task of finding a way to evoke the rink’s affect and the ice

skater's movements in textual renderings of that place and its associated practices, I find in Kristeva a 'theory' of writing that points to where affect might be dwelling in language. It is in Roland Barthes's (1977a) distinction between 'Text' and 'the Work,' however, and his practical application of this distinction (and others) in his own attempts at writing affect, that I find a possible means to release affect and movement in this thesis.

Like Kristeva, Barthes is troubled by writing that communicates *too* smoothly: that is, by writing that does such a good job of concealing the workings of language that the meanings that emerge out of it become naturalised, slipping all too easily into the manipulative hands of ideology and the complacent (if comfortable) realm of 'common sense.' Such writing Barthes (1977a) ascribes to 'the Work,' and this kind of writing's central claim – that it possesses a determinate meaning – he equates with the term *signification*. The *texte de plaisir*, as discussed in the previous chapter, is a prime example of 'the Work.' The job of 'Text,' on the other hand, is to disrupt the smooth operations of signification. More akin to a "methodological field" than to a book in the library (157), 'Text' finds its expression in the *texte de jouissance*. One of the ways that 'Text' does its disrupting is through exposing the processes of writing as mere 'strategies' for conveying meaning. By enlisting the subversive services of *signifiante*, 'Text' manages to "jam the mechanism of communication" ((Moriarty 1991, 145). This means that 'Text,' unlike 'the Work,' is productive and active. Whereas 'the Work' relies on representation to communicate meaning, removing a given object from its context and displaying it like a "theatrical tableau" before a "spectator-subject" who gazes at it from "a stable position" and "enjoys a secure unifying perspective" (148),

'Text' breaks with traditional representational practices and in so doing, shakes the spectator-subject's world. No longer do I 'identify' with a character's thoughts or actions or with the author's viewpoint as I read; rather, I am pulled quite literally into the literary text. In this passage from passive spectator-subject to active participant – from a "readerly reader" who "obeys" all the signs to a "writerly reader" who "transgresses" them (Wiseman 1989, 118) – fragments of text become attached to my body, making it ache, seethe, erupt, bubble over, shrink away. Though I do not necessarily understand why, I feel moved by this experience of reading: 'Text' has entered me and I have entered 'Text' and though any illusion of a unified subjectivity has been shattered in the process, I feel curiously, breathlessly, replete. If, on the one hand, I have been reduced to nothing more than a space where fragments of language circulate, I have also finally made it *into* language – I am no longer external to languages processes and practices.

As for the writer, she – like the Barthesian 'writerly reader' – is but another "body dispersed in fragments throughout a text" (Moriarty 1991, 149). Released from the burden of having to be the origin of meaning she is free, in her newly scattered form, to create writing that strives to evoke sensations rather than communicate ideas; that revels in rendering visible the body that is dispersed throughout those textual fragments rather than hiding that body of hers behind a barrage of words. She is also free to pick up other strands of writing, other bodies, as she rolls tumbleweed-like through the wider textual terrain. For she is not the only writer/body/text to have been released from the heavy onus of solitary meaning-making: it is now a bit of a writerly free-for-all out there, a kind of fly-by-night Wild West Rodeo outfit where you get to spin me up in your lasso

if I get to spin you up in mine. And of this playful interweaving of writerly strands and writerly bodies, intertextuality is born. An intertextuality that Kristeva (1980), the term's originator, defines as "the transposition of one or more *systems* of signs into another, accompanied by a new articulation of the enunciative and denotative position" (15, original emphasis); an intertextuality that Barthes, its greatest practitioner, sees as a means by which the "aching individuality" of the writer can dissolve into a more "generalized subjectivity" (Moriarty 1991, 185).

The text that results of this "abolition of self in the process of writing 'about oneself'" (185) is the kind of text that Barthes most admires – that is, a text that bulges with the writer's body and its pulsations, but pays little or no heed to what the writer, with her socially- and symbolically-shaped subjectivity, actually thinks. Such texts he describes as "eloquent" – the word "eloquence," as Barthes (1987) points out, having been in former times associated with the heart (78). If, incidentally, the name of the principle site of my research, the *'Atrium' le 1000*, is also a reference to the heart, Barthes insists that to write eloquently is to pick up on the beat, the pulse, of the body: it is to write, quite literally, *from* the heart. The heart he refers to here is not the heart "as thought or perceived," but a heart that Henri Lefebvre has described as a "strangely different" heart – that is, "the heart as lived" (Seigworth 2000, 250). One could venture that to skate eloquently is *also* to pick up on that 'lived' bodily beat: to give over to a way of moving one's body on ice that, like Barthes's (1987) bodily writing, "advances, runs, rolls, bowls along, set in motion again and again by different 'ignitions'" (77-78); to write one's self across the rink in a manner that bears the "unavoidable, implacable, unalienable mark of the body" (78).

Barthes (1985), for his part, turns to certain musicians to illustrate how this insertion of the body *as* it advances, runs and rolls actually sounds. The music of Schumann, for example, is described by Barthes as “a muscular music” (261). To listen to Schumann’s *Kreisleriana Opus 16*, suggests Barthes, is not so much to listen to a piece of music as to *hear* Schumann’s body, to “hear what beats in the body, what beats the body, or better: [to] hear this body that beats” (299). For Barthes, Schumann’s body is “stunned,” “distracted,” “intoxicated” – an “invariably ardent” body that refuses to stay in place. This refusal results in music that radiates, that comes across as “a continuous *big bang*” (302). In other words, what this pulsional body produces is not a musical *oeuvre* but “an exercise in intermezzo”: that is, freewheeling and fragmented music which is characterized by a continual interrupting, disturbing and displacing of that which might otherwise “settle” into a place that is *not* in-between. As for what Schumann’s body *does* as it “enunciates musically,” it strikes, it collects itself, it explodes, it pricks, and sometimes – doing a double turn without warning (the very meaning of the intermezzo) – it stretches out and weaves (300-306). For all that this body gathers momentum, pulls back, pushes off, spins through the air and then glides, this description could be that of a body skating. If Barthes (1977b) picks up on the freewheeling fragment to produce such bodily texts himself (93), it is perhaps no coincidence that I pick up on his use of this trope to produce writing that *beats* the body that skates. In the chapter that follows I examine the fragment and its composite form, the figure, in more detail.

Chapter 4: Writing Affect

4:0 Introduction

Though Barthes's (1978) fascination with the figure is in evidence in much of his writing, it is in *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* that we see it most tangibly at work, and are guided so fastidiously through its innermost workings. This chapter begins with a detailed description of Barthes's figure as it appears in his *Lover's Discourse*: explaining first how such a trope is designed to work; elaborating next how I draw on Barthes's use of it in order to momentarily freeze-frame the voices, actions and sentiments of my informants in such a way that the texture and momentum of on-ice dynamics are not lost. I then discuss some of the practical issues that arise when one uses a trope like the figure in scholarly writing – amongst these, the crediting of sources in cases where ethnographic 'co-conversations' result in authorial blurring, and the evolution of a style and format appropriate to conveying to a solitary reader what one might more easily communicate to a live audience through the spoken word.

4:1 Playing with Figures

In his *Lover's Discourse*, Barthes first introduces us to the trope of the 'figure' and then goes on to demonstrate its usefulness in revealing how love as an affective process as opposed to a narrative story is experienced. Essentially a fragment of discourse running here, running there (3), the figure for Barthes epitomises language at its most gymnastic: it is through the figure that he manages to both inject life into the body as it moves from world to page, and to *textualize* that body so that it becomes but another "scene of language" (4) floating through a vast sea of similar language scenes. In other words, Barthes's notion of the figure is not to be understood in "a figure of speech"

kind of way, a rhetorical way – that is, as static and fanciful: the artifice in discourse. Rather, it is to be understood as “the body’s gesture caught in action” – that is, as the body *as* it moves, not the body “contemplated in repose,” after the fact (4). Particularly useful when discussing the body of “athletes” and “orators.” the figure is, according to Barthes, that which “in the straining body can be immobilized” (4). Most important to understanding how Barthesian figures actually work, perhaps, is his reflection that figures “take shape insofar as we can recognise, in passing discourse, something that has been read, heard, felt...A figure is established if at least someone can say: “*That’s so true! I recognize that scene of language*” (4, original emphasis).

Figures, in other words, are about vibrations, about creating a sensation akin to an aftershock. Operating at the level of the visceral, they are fleeting yet powerful: fleeting, because they exist in the realm of the ephemeral; powerful, because they operate *through* and as a result *of* recognition and resonance. In other words, figures make you *re-feel*: they are the reverberations of what has been felt. Unlike representation, they follow no logic and tell no linear story. Much like skaters out there on the rink “they stir, collide, subside, return, vanish with no more order than the flight of mosquitoes” (7).

As for how Barthes puts these figures to work in his *Lover’s Discourse*, his aim is not to put forth a ‘philosophy’ of love. As Barthes insists and the structure of the book suggests, there is no desire here to ‘capture’ *the* meaning (or even *a* meaning) of love. Rather, Barthes’s aim is to build an assemblage of affect around his chosen topic: to evoke love’s impulses, agonies, ebbs and flows through pasting together relevant

fragments of discourse drawn from theory, literature, personal experience, and exchanges with others into a number of short texts that, in each case, evoke a ‘figure’ that Barthes associates with the experience of love: for example, ‘absence,’ ‘ravishment,’ ‘I-love-you,’ or ‘jealousy.’

For my own part, several words – or figures – have emerged in the course of my fieldwork as those which are integral to the practice and experience of ice skating down at the *Atrium le 1000*: amongst these, ‘stumble,’ ‘glide,’ and ‘spin.’ The texts accompanying the figures that appear in this thesis are comprised of fragments of discourse culled from conversations with fellow skaters, from personal reflections on their words and the research process in general, and from resonant theoretical and literary quotes, and each attempts to conjure, in its totality, a sense of how the figure in question feels. In other words, the purpose of these texts is to provoke a visceral response in the reader. If the reader feels, on reading the figure ‘spin,’ a physical sensation of dizziness or nausea or hunger, or experiences a fleeting moment of fluttery intoxicating abandon, then the text could be said to be doing its work. For indeed, these texts are designed to work: in creating sensations that evoke movement and/or affect, they are meant to make you *feel* something as opposed to tell you *about* something. Borrowing from Michel de Certeau (1984), I am interested in what these texts “*change in the dark grotto of the bodies that hear them*” (162, my emphasis).

Of course, the idea that these texts *will* effect some change in the reader who encounters them is integral to Barthes’s understanding of the figure as a political intervention, and the fragment as its principle tactic. Within this understanding, and to return once again

to Barthes's suspicion of language that communicates *too* smoothly, it is "continuous discourse" that is the enemy: lulling complacent subjects into believing that there is only one 'truth'; robbing them of their revolutionary spirit – of their capacity to, and *desire for*, change – by creating the illusion of life's "apparently inevitable flow" (Moriarty 1991, 181). The fragment, however – because it disperses the subject and disrupts the flow – becomes a way to destroy this illusion, to prevent the subject from "coalescing round a central truth" (181). Thus, "to adopt the fragment" as a writing strategy is, for Barthes, not only to challenge the solidifying and stultifying tendencies of language and by extension, the system and its institutions as constituted *in* and *through* language, but equally "to prevent one's own discourse cohering in this way" (181). As one of feminist theory's most famous slogans proclaims, the personal *is* the political. Not, that is, that Barthes's 'politics' – renowned as they were for never really leaving the page – necessarily warrant this fortuitous linking to one of feminism's more praxis-based mantras.

Of course, one of the consequences of Barthes's tendency to limit his political commitments to struggles of the readerly and writerly kind is that he was seen by many as a disappointingly 'soft' revolutionary living through a potentially exciting time for post-war European intellectuals to effect social change. Certainly, the swaggering midlife female trick skater finds herself questioning the extent to which an investment in Barthes's writerly fragment can help her to disperse her own gendered subjectivity and that of others down at the rink so as to disrupt, whilst skating, those deeply ingrained patterns of public space distribution, occupation and entitlement. The questionable status of Barthes's fragment as a tool of political and social action aside,

however, there is something compelling about Barthes's suggestion that in introducing a literary hiccup into the predictable flow of language, we startle ourselves into seeing what we have not been able to see before: that is, the layers of established meaning upon which the words we speak and write are built, and the degree to which our sense of self is affirmed (or not) each time we speak ourselves and write ourselves (or not) into those meanings. As Deleuze (1995) so poetically describes this process of suddenly glimpsing what the smoothness of "homogeneous language" has managed until then to conceal:

A spark can flash and break out of language itself, to make us see and think what was lying in the shadow around the words, things we were hardly aware existed. (141)

At the same time, my awe over what Barthes reveals to us through his simple invocation of the fragment is somewhat tempered by the sudden thought that, as a writing strategy, it might not be entirely appropriate to a thesis that is essentially about developing an understanding of the skating body as flow. Though in the early stages of building this project I would fleetingly become aware that there was some kind of inconsistency – I could not yet name it – between my chosen trope for writing movement and evoking affect in this thesis and my larger interest in the body as flow, it was not until quite recently that I finally put my finger on the problem: the figure is about *breaking* flow, not *making* it. My first impulse was to jettison either the figure or the flow. My second was to work creatively with the inconsistency.

In opting to go with the latter, I have opened up a new line of questioning – a line of questioning which, in querying the appropriateness of the fragment *within* this thesis, has also brought to light my own preconceptions *about* movement. For example, when

setting the skating body textually a-glide, is it possible that a seductive coherence *is* put into play that threatens the very freedom that that body has presumably found in flow? Is it, after all, the skating body that erratically stumbles that has discovered its *jouissance* and has managed to cut free? If this reassessment of flow is provoked by Barthes's deep suspicion of continuous discourse within texts specifically and within language as a whole, the challenge it has presented to my own previously unquestioned belief in flow's desirability has helped to "thicken" (Geertz 1973) the girth of this project. For one, it prompts a more nuanced reading of the concept of flow, precipitating an exploration of how textual flow might relate to bodily flow and provoking an inquiry into whether such an articulation is indeed useful. This task I take on in the eighth chapter of the thesis when considering how Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) reading of flow 'fits' with a swaggering midlife female trick skating body which, by that point, is fully engaged in the process of *becoming* movement and affect. Secondly, it forces me to confront my personal biases with regard to what constitutes "the internal goods" (MacIntyre 1981) of recreational ice skating, opening up in the process a space for reflecting *against* the grain of my own enthusiasm-laced, flow-embracing thinking. This gives the thesis a more critical edge, but does so in a manner that neither denies nor squelches those 'healthy' and motivationally 'necessary' passions and pleasures on the part of the 'excessive researcher,' as discussed in the previous chapter.

Finally, this re-assessment of flow in the context of its theoretical and methodological incompatibility with the Barthesian figure has, somewhat ironically, loosened Barthes's hold over this project and enabled me to play around with 'his' figure in a more

adventurous way. In other words, rather than trying to fit *within* the figure my approach has become one of *testing out* the figure: exploring whether one can use a writing approach designed to disrupt the flow of language ('Text') to create flow, or conversely a writing approach designed to create the illusion of flow ('the Work') to provoke a flow dis-rupture; seeing if fragmentary writing inevitably works better when evoking a 'stumble' rather than a 'glide'; asking whether, if 'glide' *does* glide after being set into flow by a smattering of discursive fragments, there is anything potentially 'subversive' or 'revolutionary' about the bodily drives discharged through smooth-flowing 'glide' – and if not, whether one can still call 'glide' a 'figure.'

In short, in selecting the Barthesian figure to bring the voices of the skaters at the *Atrium le 1000* to life, I embrace the inconsistencies it points to in terms of my own and the overall project's basic premises, whilst recognising the possibilities it offers this project in its capacity as a writing strategy that is not only a method *of* inquiry (Richardson 1997), but a method still open *to* inquiry. In working with the figure, I also heed Laurel Richardson's (1997) call to develop more "ethical" ethnographic practices that "violate the conventions of how sociological interviews are written up" in order to "uncover" those conventions "as choices authors make, not rules for writing truths" (142). Thus, where Richardson uses the poem as a fitting form for writing up her sociological interviews and fieldwork notes, I use the figure. Where Richardson uses poetic representation to create knowledges that are "prismatic, partial, and positional" as opposed to "singular, total, and univocal" (143), as is characteristic of classic prose-based representations, I use fragments of discourse. Her observation that poetry, unlike prose, "Elicits a bodily response in readers/listeners" due to its conscious employment

of “such devices as...cadence, rhyme...repetition and variation” (143) is an observation that can equally, I argue, be applied to figural writing. In fact, her suggestion that we must find ways as researchers to make speech into an “embodied activity” (143) reassures me that in choosing to work with a literary device like the figure, I am on the right track *out* of the realm of representational writing. Furthermore, in inserting the figures that result of this exercise in writing movement and evoking affect sporadically and somewhat erratically throughout the thesis, I transform *this* text – a text that would otherwise read as a flowing academic treatise in the tradition of the *phenotext* or ‘the Work’ – into a piece of writing that demands a certain degree of negotiation on the part of the reader. In this way, the figure operates at two levels: provoking a textual interaction of a bodily kind as the reader engages with each self-contained unit; forcing the reader to navigate disruptions in narrative continuity and read in a variety of different fashions as she or he engages with the thesis as a whole.

In resisting the call of the representational and opting instead for a route that travels the hazardous bends and unpredictable potholes of the unruly body, I heed Deleuze’s (1995) warning that “when you invoke something transcendent you *arrest* movement, introducing *interpretations* instead of *experimenting*” (146, my emphasis). As this thesis is clearly about *creating* movement, and given that I fully embrace the spirit and nature of research and writing that is about *trying things out* rather than *pinning things down*, this attempt to sidestep the transcendent – though far from evident and in many ways, the trickiest of potholes to circumnavigate – is certainly a route worth pursuing. Like Richardson (2000), however, I am hesitant to call the *kind* of writing that I will do in this thesis ‘experimental’ or ‘alternate.’ For to frame it as such does little to dismantle

the notion that traditional practices are *the* standard against which we must continue to measure ourselves as researchers.

Richardson, for her part, has coined the term “CAP Ethnography” to describe the kind of research that does not set itself up against an established research practice but rather, sees in its natural merging of Creative expression and rigorous Analysis the possibility for developing research Pactices that offer “in and of themselves valid and desirable representations of the social” and that, moreover, “Open spaces for thinking about the social that elude us now” (10). Though I recognise the significant impact that Richardson’s ground-breaking work and eye-opening ideas in the area of sociological research have had on how I think about and engage with methodology, and whilst for the most part I embrace Richardson’s CAP ethnography, this thesis posits that we need to go one step further than these “valid and desirable representations” and challenge the very *idea* of representation when writing about the social. Though this point has already been raised in the context of this thesis’s philosophical interest in affect and its theoretical mapping of affect’s possible (un)location in language, I turn in the second part of this chapter to the matter of representation as it pertains more concretely to my practice of writing in this thesis. I also outline some of the other practical considerations that must be taken into account when, through new methodological approaches, we open up the kinds of “spaces for thinking about the social” to which Richardson refers.

4:2 Questions of Style and Communal Authorship

In taking a stand against traditional, ‘experimental,’ and even CAP modes of representation in scholarly research – that is, against representation *per se* – I should

stress that it is not so much representation as ‘a means of coming to know’ that I am challenging, as how those in the academy tend to think about what constitutes knowledge and hence go about doing the representing. In short, knowledge need not always be connected to content – to what something means. It can equally be connected to delivery: to how something sounds; to those rhythms and cadences – a particular kind of verbal pacing – that can, both in themselves and in the manner that the researcher pieces them together, illuminate and inform. In other words, we can present our research in ways that tap into other modes of knowing – more sentient and bodily modes of knowing. We can write for an academic audience in a manner that appeals to the senses as well as to the intellect, or better still, that reaches the intellect *by way of* the senses. This we can achieve, insists scholar and dance professor Susan Leigh Foster (1995), by writing in a “corporeal” fashion (9). A practitioner of this literary technique as much as she is a proponent of it, Foster’s delightfully entitled “Manifesto for Dead and Moving Bodies” offers plenty of practical tips to the aspiring corporeal writer – tips that can be picked up by simply observing how Foster writes movement into even that most sedentary of activities, the production of prose itself:

Sitting in this chair, squirming away from the glitches, aches, low-grade tensions reverberating in neck and hip, staring unfocused at some space between here and the nearest objects, shifting again, listening to my stomach growl, to the clock ticking, shifting, stretching, settling, turning – I am a body writing. I am a bodily writing. (3)

Small wonder, given all the movement here, that Foster goes on to question how we could have possibly ever pretended that in the academic project, “the body was uninvolved, that it remained mute and still while the mind thought” (3). Stressing how even “the caffeine we imbibe mutates into the acid of thought which the body excretes, thereby etching ideas across the page” (3), Foster urges us to throw out the notion that

we could use “verbal discourse [to] speak *for* bodily discourse” (9). In its place, she calls for writing that enters “into ‘dialogue’ *with* that bodily discourse” (9). Just as bodies move, writing itself must move: you must, she explains, “Put into play figures of speech and forms of phrase and sentence construction that evoke the texture and timing of bodies in motion” (9).

With these instructions in mind, I offer another simple example – plucked from the opening paragraph of Foster’s manifesto – which puts into practice just what she is saying. She writes:

A body, whether sitting writing or standing thinking or walking talking or running screaming, is a bodily writing. (3)

What is striking here is how this short evocative sentence would lose its whole feeling of movement – its whole sense of the body performing itself through writing – if Foster were to have broken each of those physical actions up into separate entities rather than let them twin up together and fly. It also raises the question of whether bodily writing is primarily a stylistic enterprise – style being, according to Deleuze (1995), that “set of variations in language, a modulation, and a straining of one’s whole language toward something outside it” (140) that manages to “bring something to life, to free life from where it’s trapped” (141). If, for Deleuze, the whole purpose of writing is to “trace lines of flight” that *liberate* life from the “homogeneous” language system that manages so well to entrap it, we can recognise that style is *there* when “the words produce sparks leaping between them” (141).

As for where that style comes from, Barthes's assertion that style "reflects a body's experience of the world" (Moriarty 1991, 186) suggests that there is indeed a connection between bodily writing and writing *with* style. This notion of style as a 'bodily phenomenon' is elaborated by Barthes (1967) when he suggests that style springs not from the historical – which is more likely to influence a writer's form – but from the biological and the biographical:

[Style] is the decorative voice of hidden, secret flesh....the outcome of a blind and stubborn metamorphosis starting from a sub-language elaborated where flesh and external reality come together. (12-13)

Style, then, emerges out of a place that is too personal to be historical, yet not personal enough to be biologically determined. It is born in that place where one's fleshly body rubs up against one's past and present experiences of being-in-the-world: a place that, for Barthes, comes *before* the social, the ethical, and the political – these being the domains of *écriture* – but which is not purely physical body either. Rather, "The body to which style relates," suggests Barthes, is "a body of imagination and memory" (Moriarty 1991, 187). Is this the body, then, that informs how I assemble the figures that are dotted throughout this thesis? Is style, as contained within this body of imagination and memory, what I bring to this exercise in writing movement and evoking affect? Or am I really dabbling with form – that writerly convention that Barthes assigns to an altogether different body, the historically-situated body? In an attempt to answer this question, I take a closer look here at how I go about selecting those fragments of discourse that make up the figures.

The voices that appear alongside my own and those of the more recognisable theorists, philosophers and literary types are those of regular skaters at the rink. These are the

people I am primarily interested in – people who are passionate about and dedicated to skating, regardless of how good they are at it. The figures have slowly emerged out of conversations I have had with *Atrium le 1000* regulars about skating, whilst skating. As we circulate, I ask them questions about how skating makes them feel, why they do it, and what place skating has in their lives. I pay equal attention to what they say (i.e. what is important about a particular aspect of the activity to them) as to how they say it (the pace they speak at, the way they string words together, in short, their delivery). In writing up my field notes directly after one of these on-ice dialogues, I try to capture both content and delivery. However, what they say is often at odds with the way they say it and in these cases, as I am incorporating their words into a figure, I always go with the latter. This means that a skater may be talking to me about the figure ‘glide,’ but because her delivery does anything but evoke a sensation of the glide, a comment she makes about this figure will end up in quite a different figure – in the figure ‘stumble,’ for example, as Nathalie’s comment about “*gliding* in her bubble” does below.

In general, I have observed that those whose denotative description of a particular figure manages in the telling to connote that figure as well are those who, in a bodily way, comfortably inhabit that figure on ice. In other words, people skate like they talk and talk like they skate: to best understand how a person skates is sometimes not to listen to what she has to say about skating, but to listen to how she says it. If delivery, here, tells us more about skating than does content, the methodological question that still begs an answer is whether in mobilising writing to re-produce this kind of bodily experience of skating, one is participating in an individuated stylistic exercise or playing around with

historically contingent form. My inclination is to see this kind of bodily writing as a combination of the two, style being inescapable – how to escape that physical body of mine infused with imagination and memory? – whilst form, inasmuch as I consciously manipulate fragments of discourse in order to evoke a range of bodily sensations of physical movement and visceral experiences of place in a reader who, like me, is located in a particular time and space, is both an indication and a recognition of where I am actually situated.

Of course, what is equally built into this acknowledgment that style and form lurk together within a bodily approach to writing movement and evoking affect is the assumption that the reader will share something of the writer's time and space, even if her physical body is infused with wildly divergent imaginings and memories, or something of that writer's sentient experience of being-in-the-world, even if she lives in another era and location. This something, it is assumed, will call out from the writing and pull the reader into its slipstream – regardless of whether that reader has ever skated before, or experienced a life remotely akin to the writer, or has anything in common with the writer's way of seeing the world. Just what this something is resonates with those articulations of presence and particular formations of the social which, when either lived through or glimpsed at later in certain examples of an epoch's art or literature, are recognised to be constitutive of that era's "structure of feeling" (Williams 1977), as discussed in Chapter 2. This something also falls into the terrain of Barthes's (2000a) *studium* and *punctum*, terms that he applies to the realm of photography but which, in what they suggest about the two very different ways that we can be 'touched' by a photograph – *studium* emerging from the larger picture and appealing to our

<p>The opera allows an enunciation to speak that in its most elevated moments detaches itself, continues alone after the orchestra has fallen silent, follows the curve of the melody a moment longer, vacillates, slowly slips away from its path, gets lost, finally disappears into silence.</p>	<p><i>Michel de Certeau</i></p>
<p>Its sounds strange, probably, but when I'm gliding in my bubble it's like I'm back in childhood, I feel totally free, I'm having fun. Actually, I had a pretty bad childhood. So maybe this is how I think childhood is supposed to be.</p>	<p><i>Nathalie</i></p>
<p>Fragment, <i>frammento</i>, means a small chip which has broken out of a larger body. Which leads one to ask whether an accumulation of fragments, rather than being termed a mere 'rubbish heap,' should not actually be called the 'city of the future.'</p>	<p><i>Aldo Rossi</i></p>
<p>See, I had to wear figures – <i>girls'</i> skates – as a kid. But now I've changed to hockey skates. Yahoo! Have you ever broke out and made a run for it on girls' skates? Well, I tell you, those picks will catch you out and send you flying.</p>	<p><i>Alicia</i></p>
<p>Of course, the properly feminine body exhibits a specific repertoire of gesture, posture, and movement. This body must learn to display its charms, but discreetly. The properly feminine woman must never allow herself to sprawl into available space. She must avoid the looseness in body comportment that is the mark of the "loose" woman.</p>	<p><i>Sandra Bartky</i></p>
<p>I mean, I was just tripping all the time on those stupid picks. It's a conspiracy, man, this girls have to wear figure skates, boys get to wear hockey skates thing.</p>	<p><i>Alicia</i></p>
<p>So you're walking ...And you don't always realize it but you're also falling. With each step...you fall. You fall forward a short way and then you catch yourself. Over and over...you are falling...then you catch yourself falling. And this is how you are walking and falling at the same time.</p>	<p><i>Laurie Anderson</i></p>

Figure 4.1: Stumble

worldly knowledges and sensibilities, whilst *punctum* leaps out at us from some tiny seemingly insignificant detail that just rips into our body and ‘pricks’ something intensely personal within us (26-28) – are equally useful when thinking about how a combination of style and form inform both our writing and our reading.

At the same time, there is another thing at work here beyond the imagination- and memory-soaked fleshly body of style, and the historically-situated body that dictates form. What there is here is a moving body amidst other moving bodies: a body in full flow as it conducts those interviews and reflects upon its informant’s words. Even the words themselves are mobile, continuing to waft around the skating rink months after those who have spoken them have packed up their skates for the day and gone home. As the researcher sits in front of her computer working out how best to assemble these words, she can only *feel* them when she allows herself to waft with them. Slipping past a column, dotting a row of lunchtime diners staring out over the rink as they eat their salads and shish kebabs, sliding briefly along a railing and then resting ever so briefly on a commotion at the ticket kiosk, those words have affixed themselves to whatever caught her skating body’s eye as she listened, whilst circulating, to them. And so, in recollection, they are set back in motion: attached mnemonic-like, yes, to the rink’s fixtures and fittings, to its passer-bys and its minor unfolding dramas (Yates 1966); yet strung together into sentences that, depending on how those words were being skated, either glide or falter, hang suspended in the air or crazily dip and dive. Just as motility informs the ethnographic practice, bringing talk about skating and an experience of skating into direct dialogue with each other, motility is also woven into the writing process, existing there alongside style and form, introducing a momentum that is

simultaneously *prior to* and *constitutive of* both the resulting figures, and the writing throughout this thesis as a whole.

This brings me to a final point concerning this project: just what I am seeking through conducting these on-ice conversations with recreational skaters at the *Atrium le 1000*, and how what is being sought impacts decisions that I have made regarding my selection of informants, the way I cite sources, the question of consent forms, and even the inclusion of an ethnographic component in the first place. For indeed, and as discussed in Chapter 1, though this project purportedly began as an ethnographic study of recreational rink culture, it soon became clear that my primary interest lay not in explaining recreational ice skating as a phenomenon, but rather in philosophically and methodologically engaging with the question of how people's conversations about skating whilst skating could be mobilized to evoke the affect of rink culture and to create writing that skates. Such a shift in purpose and emphasis naturally has an impact on how one goes about fielding the standard bureaucratic hard-balls that get thrown at the ethnographic researcher. For example, the question of a 'representative sampling' becomes somewhat of an oxymoron as fragments of people's conversations are quite literally *sampled* for insertion into a figure, and are used not to *represent* the original speaker but to create a bodily text that, if constituted in part by that speaker, is also quite distinct from her. In other words, if the whole point of this exercise is to challenge representational formats and to counter the idea of the subject – ethnographic or otherwise – as the 'origin of meaning,' then what place do rigorous selection processes or standard citation practices have in such a project? Furthermore, when conversations are fleeting, conducted in transit, shared with a 'regular' who might never reappear at

the rink, or built of two, three, four, five separate voices all speaking and skating in syncopated symphony, then how does one even approach the question of consent forms?

If the answer to this latter question is that one does what one can – seeking out those skaters with whom I have shared a mobile conversation so that they can sign a consent form; changing the names of these skaters so as to protect their confidentiality (see Appendix 1) – I justify the sometimes ‘casual’ nature of my actual citation methods by drawing on Moerman’s (1988) argument that in order to make a given culture ‘talk,’ it is sometimes necessary to allow individual speakers to *disappear* into discourse patterns. In terms of letting the voices of my research ‘informants’ float loosely through the figures and this thesis as a whole, then, and extending further this notion of making a given culture (like recreational ice skating) ‘talk,’ I broaden the conversation by bringing together voices from entirely different ‘cultures’ or domains in these figures – an ordinary skater, say, ends up conversing with a well-known theorist – so as to create a continuous train of *feeling something* in which issues like individual authorship and positioning within the scholarly establishment matter less, or are at least to some degree blurred. This freeing of individuals from the burden of authorship and the weight of positional expectation opens up, on the one hand, an equalising space of expression that helps to foster a loosening of meaning’s grip on words; on the other hand, it does not sit well with academic convention, which means that I must still make certain concessions as regards scholarly sourcing. As Figure 4.1 above demonstrates, I try to minimise the intrusion of these sources into the figures themselves. I also try to create a more equal relationship between skaters/theorists by detaching *all* of their words from a context

(time and place of conversation/date, title and page number). If this slippage out of form jars with the rigours of scholarly citation as upheld in the rest of the thesis, the figure is only doing its work: serving to bring to light – to extricate from that shadow cast by words (Deleuze 1995) – yet another way that our assumptions around what we *expect* to see in an academic discourse blind us from seeing what *is* there.

Nor, finally, can I expect that words once spoken will necessarily even ‘sound’ the same when transferred to written form – a point that is particularly brought home to me when I present one of these figures orally, and realise just how much of the original speaker still resides in me and informs my delivery. Here, I am alerted to how the ‘writerly-I’ is troubled by the prospect of leaving it up to the ‘writerly reader’ to inscribe her own bodily rhythms and cadences into these figures. Or perhaps not so much troubled, as worried that without my interpretative – intrusive? – vocal presence, these figures just might not *work*. For the bodily voice injects inflections that the written word struggles to emit – a rallying concern and central challenge of this thesis in terms of the production of these figures, yes, but also a point that, as this description of Guy Scarpetta’s first encounter with Roland Barthes’s voice well illustrates, applies equally to their reception:

I was at once struck by the marked contrast between his words and his voice. Albeit the content of his discourse was abstract, semiological, ‘scientific,’ the voice itself never ceased being eroticized: warm, deep, slow-paced, cajoling, velvety, modulated (Casals playing Bach on the cello): it was with his voice that he would cruise. I immediately sensed that most of his auditors, male and female, so intensely submitted to the charm (the ‘obtuse meaning’) of this voice that they ended up savoring it for itself, almost independently of what it said. A kind of ‘extra,’ this voice grazed them, disturbed them, enveloped them, seduced them – to the point of excitation pure and simple. (Miller, D.A. 1992, 26-27)

Granted, Guy Scarpetta might just as well be describing an encounter with Barthes's prose for all that the latter injects his voice, his body, his whole living being into his unique brand of 'muscular' writing. And not that I can claim to be "Casals playing Bach on the cello" when I present these figures orally, or that any conference audience members with whom I have shared my figures – or the rest of my skaterly writing for that matter – have ever reached a point of "excitation pure and simple" when I read them out loud. It remains, however, that the spoken voice – *any* voice – can "do things" *with* and *to* texts⁶ – something that is *not* being done, as it happens, when the solitary reader encounters them on a page. If, on the one hand, this produces a writerly reading that goes against the grain, it is, on the other, only the figure doing its work. Except that this time, the figure is also winking back at the researcher: reminding her that for all that she seeks to write herself *out* of language and meaning and representation, she remains inescapably – irritatingly – a product of them.

Chapter 5: Moving Bodies

5:0 Introduction

As is probably blatantly clear by now, I consider this thesis to be a meditative philosophical intervention that is equally invested in matters of a methodological kind. In the previous two chapters these latter, though integral to and inseparable from this thesis's philosophical interests, were none-the-less the pivotal point around which the discussion revolved. In this chapter it is to questions of a primarily theoretical nature that I turn: bringing to light some of the significant contributions that feminists, virtue ethicists, philosophers of sport, and poststructuralist theorists have made to our understanding of bodies in movement – the first of this project's two main sites of interest; working towards a conception of the recreating skating body that might comfortably inhabit this project's second main site of interest, spaces of affect, as it joins other bodies down at the *Atrium le 1000* in Chapters 6 and 7; and setting up the conditions to enable that body to undergo yet further tweaking as it goes from moving with others in a *gendered* sporting space of affect to actually *becoming* movement and affect in the eighth chapter of this thesis. To this end, I organise this chapter around four different body *types* – the remembering body, the sporting body, the disorganised body, and the recreating body – and suggest in each case where the capacities created and the limits encountered by this body might lie. Individually, these bodies serve as beacons, each one guiding us towards and through a particular theoretical positing of the moving body that invariably opens some doors but risks closing others in the process. In their totality, though not through any linear progression, they bring us closer to an understanding of the female recreating skating body as a poststructuralist *bodies* in

movement that finds pleasure in the freedom to produce for the sake of producing alone (Barthes 1985), an escape route out of corporeality through an experience of haecceity (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), enlightenment in the acquisition of a halo (Agamben 1993), though ultimately disenchantment in the erasure of a historically- and politically-located positing of the female subject (Grosz 1994).

5:1 The Remembering Body

Held enraptured by a perfectly toned and tuned athletic female body in action, convinced that what she is seeing is magic, feminist novelist, essayist and aspiring karate practitioner Dorothy Allison (1996) ventures that the body that moves before her is a body that has “never forgotten itself” (64). In this moment of revelation and wonder, the body becomes, for Allison, something she can love. Even her uncoordinated, half-blind and once abused body becomes lovable. What seduces Allison as she watches this body in movement is its seeming belief in its own capacities – its power to jump and thrust and be “the creature that is not afraid to fall down but somehow doesn’t anyway” (64). Allison never becomes this jumping, thrusting and ultimately sporty body, but it does spark in her an “echo of love” (66) for her own previously rejected body, reminding her of the potential for movement that even a body like hers houses. For Allison, just the knowledge that this potentiality *exists* is “miracle enough” (66).

I am intrigued by this ‘magical’ athlete who awakens others to what their bodies are capable of doing through physically embodying that potentiality in the way she moves her own. And like Allison, I am drawn to this athlete’s self-belief: her ability to let her

body go because she knows that within that same body, there resides the where-with-all to regain control at just the right moment – to maintain that all-important balance between “restraint and release” (Giamatti 1989, 60). I am not convinced, however, that the magic behind the way she moves and the self-belief that allows her to take risks as she moves lie, as Allison asserts, in being a body that has “never forgotten itself.” Perhaps this lack of conviction springs from the range of meanings that can be attributed to such an act of eternal remembrance: is Allison saying that this is a body that lives in a state of perpetual self-awareness? – has never neglected itself? – always puts itself first? Or perhaps these doubts come of my experience of fieldwork: the idea that there could be any one explanation for what sets individual bodies *free* in movement ceasing to make sense after having encountered people who speak of having ‘found themselves in movement,’ and people who only feel at one with themselves when they are ‘lost in movement,’ whilst others are finally inhabiting themselves comfortably for the first time ‘because of movement,’ and still others have to channel *somebody else’s body* – Wayne Gretzky, Michelle Kwan – in order to achieve their optimum ‘when in movement.’ Then, of course, there are those personal and contextual factors to consider: factors such as gender, age, cultural and ethnic background, all of which significantly impact how one body moves through a sporting space and interacts with other bodies within that space, as opposed to another. And then there are the extenuating circumstances: the fact that so much of how we perceive and experience and *speak about* our bodies in movement depends on how and when we came to movement: the sporty ‘born-agains,’ of which I am one, no doubt enjoying a very different relationship to their newfound bodies in movement than the ‘always-have-beens’. And even these latter must have experienced some point in their life when they

were not able to perform this or that bodily action or move and which, as a memory best left forgotten, might occasionally come back to haunt them. As Kafka explains:

I can swim like the others, only I have a better memory than the others, I have not forgotten my former inability to swim. But since I have not forgotten it, my ability to swim is of no avail and I cannot swim after all.
(Brandstetter 2000b, 118)

In other words, and as Kafka so succinctly demonstrates, just how well memory serves us as we move our bodies could well depend on just *what* is never being forgotten.

But there is something more going on here: something that cannot be fully explained by these many different and evolving ways of being a body in movement; a feeling that no matter what Allison means by those words, there is just too much self-conscious fleshly body hanging around there – too much memory, perhaps, weighing it down – for this body that has ‘never forgotten itself’ to actually take off, find flight, become liberated through and within movement. On the one hand, this feeling resonates with William Forsythe’s point that the moving body undergoes “a violent dismembering” when subjected to the processes of remembrance (Brandstetter 2000a, 18) – a point briefly touched upon in Chapter 3 in relation to the moving body’s tendency to resist representation, though worth repeating here because it equally highlights the extent to which the moving body “re-membered” is also “the constellative body”: a body no longer unified and whole but “assembled,” as Gabrielle Brandstetter (2000a) explains, “out of a multitude of its disparate parts” (24). On the other hand, this feeling draws me towards approaches to theorising bodies in movement that abandon the notion of an individuated thinking subject who moves, in favour of a more fluid understanding of movement in which individuated bodies, be they unified or in bits, play but a small part.

In this latter conception, movement is out there first, as opposed to located in the 'I' that moves – an idea that Jaana Parviainen (2002) has seized upon to theorise how dance can still be successfully taught by aging or disabled instructors who are unable to *physically* embody, hence demonstrate, the moves they are passing on to their students. In terms of this project, what such a conceptual leap signals is that whether the singular recreating skating body skates alone or enters into concert with others, it is always more than just *a* body in movement. It is, in effect, a *bodies* in movement.

This is not to suggest that in joining the poststructuralist flow, this body has been transformed into something new; rather, it has merely been awakened to that which it always was but only now recognises. No longer can this body see itself as a distinct entity forging its solitary course through time and space. What it must now acknowledge is its basic connection to and inseparability from this much larger configuration called bodies in movement. If the statement "I am a *bodies* in movement" is not one that trips easily off the tongue, the implications of such a statement are far-reaching. For one, it prohibits the simple transposition of knowledges about the singular body in movement into the broader context. In other words, because that body now *is* the broader context, the idea that the body that moves alone is not the same body that moves communally with others becomes redundant. Equally troubled by this poststructuralist positing of the moving body is the notion that in trying to be the same body, and move in the same way that it would when alone in its environment, the individuated body effects a breakdown of the larger body of the rink, the playing field, or the swimming pool. For even when it thinks itself alone, this singular body in movement is not really on its own: to realise this is to start treating the ice, the grass, the

water as a co-skater, a co-footballer, a co-swimmer; to feel this at the very core of your *bodies* in movement is to fall into a rhythm and find a way to ride with the frozen surface, the dewy carpet, or the slapping waves. But this is to jump ahead – a taste of where this thesis is going. To get to that point of *un*-body and *un*-place where the singular female recreating skating body can be comfortably conceived of as a *bodies* in movement, it is worth casting a glance in the direction of the sporting body more generally: asking first what drives this body to do what it does; probing next what kind of pleasures this body takes from its exertion.

5:2 The Sporting Body

In moving towards an understanding of what distinguishes the recreational ice skating body from those sporting bodies that participate in “purposive” sporting activities like hockey and speed skating – sports where “the aim, purpose or end can be specified independently of the manner of achieving it as long as it conforms to the limits set by the rules or norms” (Best 1978, 104) – or in “aesthetic” sporting activities like figure skating and precision⁷, where “the way in which the appropriate movements are performed is not incidental but central” (Best 1978, 104), it is helpful to examine first what is common to all four of these on-ice activities. For though on the surface they appear quite different – the first organised around the game structure, the second around record-setting, and the third and fourth around an attention to form – what unites them is that they are all based on an established practice.

<p>I mean, this feeling you get, it's like nothing else, it's like being on another planet, I don't know how else to describe it. When I'm out here doing it, my mind is clear. I have no problems. They just all go away.</p>	<p><i>Michel</i></p>
<p>Likewise, when a pianist practices a new piece, she goes from being...all fingers and thumbs...toward a fluency that not only permits, but also demands, that the fingers be left to themselves.</p>	<p><i>Jaana Parviainen</i></p>
<p>But still, I'm grappling here with Nathalie's idea of freedom, how freedom for her is experienced through that feeling of "being in the bubble," that is, when she's closed off from the rest of the world: Is this not a contradiction? But maybe I'm pigeonholing bubbles, which makes me think of Deleuze's notion that there <i>are</i> no closed systems, that all of life is a flow, that everywhere you care to look there are openings, if only you take the time to look.</p>	<p><i>Me</i></p>
<p>And I prioritize differently now...Things I thought I had to do, but didn't really want to do much, I no longer do. I come skating instead. I work out my life around skating – around something that's just about me, and that I can't not do.</p>	<p><i>Nathalie</i></p>
<p>What my body is doing out here is trying to create a Merleau-Ponty-esque "unity with its environment"...My body is trying to "organise the surrounding space as an extension of its own being."</p>	<p><i>Me and Merleau-Ponty</i></p>
<p>The first time I came to the Atrium – that was when I was 12 – I fell in love with skating. My mother brought my sister and me and we all skated, but it was me that fell in love with skating and wanted to come here all the time. Which is what I've done, ever since I was 12, coming here to the Atrium to skate, round and round I go. Not doing fancy stuff, daring stuff, I don't care about all that. I just love the feeling I get skating. I just love more than anything to glide.</p>	<p><i>Kathy</i></p>

Figure 5.1: Glide

According to virtue ethicist Alasdair MacIntyre, what defines a practice is that there is “a particular goal or good internal to it” which is “common to its practitioners” (Knight 1998, 10). Though MacIntyre’s interest lies primarily in how we can develop excellence of character, or virtue, through pursuing those internal goods that are constitutive of a practice, what his definition usefully highlights is that a practice has to contain within it some point, and that that point has to be shared by all those who partake in the practice. If, right away, we can see how recreational ice skaters slip between the cracks of MacIntyre’s fairly air-tight definition, those sporting bodies that *do* share the common goal and communal understanding that make their sport ‘a practice’ have to do more than endorse this goal and understanding to earn their place on the team. For if the *emulation* of a certain set of already established standards is what is demanded of those hoping to achieve the internal goods of a practice, it is through *subordinating* themselves to those standards that individuals become, according to MacIntyre, both better practitioners and better persons (10, my emphasis). The assumption here, of course, is that only those activities that are intrinsically virtuous – that is, that “promote the common good of society” (10) – qualify as practices. To demand the practitioner’s unquestioning emulation of, and total subordination to, a set of standards that were anything less would be deceptive at best, exploitative at worst.

What is also implied here, though, is that the individual sportsperson can place his or her faith in that which has been taken by others to be a practice, without necessarily questioning how the internal goods that make it so were determined in the first place. In other words, in putting the onus on the practice itself – the integrity of hockey or figure skating lying in how well the internal goods or “goods of excellence” (10) that

constitute hockey or figure skating are striven towards and ultimately realised – the historical conditions and contextual circumstances out of which those practices emerged are not questioned enough. As regards MacIntyre’s concerns, this means that certain virtues will be favoured over others – in all likelihood, those that reflect the worldview of the white, educated, middle or upper class nineteenth century male *behind* most of the organised sports we play or participate in today (Cashmore 2000, 294-301). As regards this thesis’s concerns, this means that an activity that is emergent rather than recognised as an established practice – an activity bound not by a set of pre-determined standards to which one must *subordinate* oneself but open to what the practitioner might bring to it – can make such a line of questioning integral to its evolution, as well as foreground the needs and concerns of those who have historically occupied a marginal place in the development of physical activities and sports (women, various ethnic groups, the differently-abled). Granted, MacIntyre does acknowledge that institutions can “corrupt” practices, encouraging the pursuit of profit, say, over goods of excellence like courage and truthfulness (Knight 1998, 11). But he is less ready to probe some of the more dubious motives that might lie at the origin of these practices – a task that renaissance scholar and one-time commissioner of American Major League Baseball, A. Bartlett Giamatti (1989), enthusiastically takes on.

Insisting that sports are highly conventional, their inherent conventionality lying in the fact that “games are rule bound” (55), Giamatti suggests that “what sets these activities off from work” and makes them “doorways to leisure” is that the rules themselves are “completely arbitrary” (55). As for those who participate in sporting contests and agree to play by a set of rules that “make no sense except in their own terms” (55), they must

willingly submit their bodies to a disciplinary regime that is dictated by the particular conventions, or “social agreement” (55), associated with their sport. If the conventions are too “strong,” then the game becomes dangerously cult-like (there is nothing outside the game). When they are too “weak,” they cease to be agreements and become instead “fictions” that can damage not only the social fabric of the game, but result in “social injury” for one party or another (65). If the aim, then, is to keep the conventions properly in balance, the primary drive behind those disciplinary regimes that are dictated by each sport’s particular conventions is that of “organizing energy” (55). In other words, bodily energy must be *organised* not so much to ensure the health of the participant, as to assure a good contest and the healthy continuation of the sport itself. Within this conception of sport and the organised sporting body, chance plays no part:

By imposing identical conditions and norms upon play, the essential assumption of all the rules is that skill or merit, not chance, will win out.
(60)

In this way, conventions act “as stays against chaos” (61). By keeping the energy of the sporting body properly organised – ensuring it does not “get loose” so as to create an overly violent situation in a game already involving physical contact, for example, or preventing it from being channelled into an act, like cheating, that would threaten the integrity of the game – chaotic occurrences that might “break the conventions of the game” are kept to a minimum (63). What Giamatti also maintains is that through organising the sporting body’s energy in this way, all those concerned – players and spectators alike – are assured of having fun. In other words, sporting bodies might be subjected to disciplinary regimes and the games we play may be “social agreements to

live by” but at the end of the day, the purpose of these various “instrumentalities” is “to make our common life *pleasurable*” (65, my emphasis).

As regards the kind of pleasure that is being afforded the participant or spectator who abides by the rules and lives by the game’s social agreement (and to return here to the distinction drawn in the second chapter between culturally mediated *plaisir* that is actively sought out and unruly and bodily *jouissance* that creeps up on you unawares), it is obvious that Giamatti’s ideal sportsperson embraces a highly conventional and self-conscious form of *plaisir*. Moreover, this *plaisir* is delusional to the extreme, based as it is on an understanding of ‘fun’ that harkens back to its seventeenth century verb form, “to fun,” which means “to hoax” or “to make a fool of” (71). Thus, though fun in its current incarnation is generally accepted to mean “sport or diversion” (71), Giamatti argues that this earlier association lingers on in the word – burdening it with the added implication that “when you are having fun...you are fooling yourself” (71). All of which leads Giamatti to posit sport as “a trick, an illusion – not real” (71). If doing or watching sports in this positing amounts to “a conscious agreement to enjoy, a pleasurable self-delusion,” it is this element of unreality that we willingly buy into that highlights best, for Giamatti, the “deep” conventionality that lies at the heart of sport (71).

But what of those leisure activities that are not “conventional” in the sense of being bound by a set of socially-determined rules? – by an experience of pleasure that emerges out of the conscious acceptance of the arbitrariness of those rules? How to describe those activities which, like recreational ice skating, commit no ‘social injury’

when rules are subverted rather than strictly observed? – produce no delusions in the name of pleasure because no illusions have been constructed in the first place? We are talking here, of course, about a distinct kind of recreational activity: one that does not involve winning or losing; one that is driven by the personal interests, aspirations and needs of the person who partakes in it; and one where the only goals that matter are those set and recognised by the individual practitioner. As for rules, they do exist: during a public skating session at a typical ice rink, for example, skaters are expected to move around the rink in the same direction, are not allowed to eat or drink or talk on their cell phone whilst on the ice, must not form chains of three or more people, and so on. Some rinks will have stricter rules – no skating backwards, no taking both skates off the ice at the same time – and some rules will be dependent on which monitor, if any, is there to oversee and enforce them. What distinguishes these kinds of rules from the ones that govern the world of organised games and sports, however – and this applies across the board, whether the level of play is recreational *or* professional – is that they are disciplinary as opposed to constitutive of the activity itself. Whereas in the case of organised games or sports, the activity falls apart when the rules are altered or removed, in the case of this other kind of activity, only the conditions that surround the activity and the limits to which that activity can be pushed are affected by a change of rules. In other words, if the spaces in which recreational activities like ice skating take place are subject to a certain degree of organisation, the skater's moves and motives *only* become an issue when they threaten the smooth operation of those spaces. Apart from that, the recreational ice skater can move her body across the ice as efficiently or inefficiently, as quickly or slowly, as confidently or hesitatingly, as she wishes. This prompts one to ask whether in the absence of a contest – seemingly the hook upon which all of sport's rules

and conventional pleasures hang – the need to “organize energy,” as Giamatti puts it, still applies. Here, Barthes’s (1985) notion of “the disorganised body” proves helpful, his description of this body as “no more organs, no more muscles, no more nerves, nothing but vibrations of pain and of pleasure” (231) not only providing an interesting counterpart to the *organised* sporting body whose every organ, muscle and nerve is primed and pumped for optimum performance, but serving as a useful starting point for exploring an understanding of bodies in movement that emphasises “modes of individuation” (Slack 2003, 10) over individual entities.

5:3 The Disorganised Body

One of the key features that distinguishes Barthes’s (1985) disorganised *vibratory* body – the body quite literally *dis-organised* as it slides into the realm of pure sensation – from the *virtuous* sporting body of MacIntyre and the *organised* sporting body as put forth by Giamatti, is that it conceives of all of its labour “as an experiment, a risk” (231). Bent on exploring the process of making whilst simultaneously participating in “the catastrophic destruction of the product” (232), the disorganised body strives towards no end outside or beyond itself – is interested only in the sensations that accrue of pursuing those ends. If this resonates with the kind of recreating skating body that might lack the necessary physical and emotional attributes to win a sporting competition (or even *care* about winning it, for that matter) but is still well enough equipped to alternatively suffer and enjoy sport’s more sentient offerings – what Jane English (2003) refers to as sport’s “basic benefits” (226) – Barthes (1985) for his part links such a body to a certain kind of painter: the kind who seeks not to represent the world through the medium of paint, but to impregnate the canvas with his or her sentient experience of the world. If this

means that the canvas is transformed into a pulsating mass of bodily sensation – sometimes blissful, sometimes repellent – Barthes’s other stipulation is that the painterly body responsible for this obvious example of ‘Text’ must be an amateur – “*the one who does not exhibit...[but] seeks to produce only his own enjoyment*” (230, emphasis in original). For the amateur body, according to Barthes (1977b) – be that amateur “someone who engages in painting, music, sport, [or] science” – is a body unmotivated by the “spirit” of competition or mastery:

The Amateur renews his [sic] pleasure (*amator*: one who loves and loves again); he is anything but a hero (of creation, of performance); he establishes himself graciously (for nothing) in the signifier: in the immediately definitive substance of music, of painting. (52)

Maintaining that such a body is that which comes closest to experiencing “pure enjoyment” (Barthes 1985, 230), Barthes insists that all of this changes if the amateur “exhibits and makes himself heard” (230). This is because:

Once he has a public, his enjoyment must come to terms with an *imago*, which is the discourse the Other offers about what he does” (230).

This discourse, this *imago*, is an “intruder”: it “disturbs and distorts” (230) that which the disorganised body previously experienced as sensation for sensation’s sake. And just as the competition and the spectator compel the organisation of the athlete’s energy, the disorganised body can no longer co-exist with the amateur painter who exhibits, who acquires a public, who aspires to the production of ‘the Work.’

It is interesting to note that Barthes himself was an “amateur painter” (though as biographer Louis-Jean Calvet (1995) comments, he preferred to think of himself as a “Sunday painter” (194)) for whom painting was “a sideline” – a sideline which, at first,

was “merely playful” but which, in time, “became increasingly important to him” (194). If this escalating devotion to, passion for, and (one assumes) talent in an activity which is relegated to the sidelines – the Sundays – of one’s life is consistent with Barthes’s (1985) view that the amateur “is not necessarily defined by a lesser knowledge, an imperfect technique” (230), Calvet’s (1995) observation that when Barthes died, “He left behind almost five hundred [dated and itemized] paintings” (194) suggests that Barthes, for all that he did not publicly exhibit, was a fairly serious and committed ‘amateur.’ Moreover, he was interested in what lay behind this commitment: a point reinforced in Barthes’s (1977b) playful take on the autobiographical form, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, when he writes that among his future book projects there is *The Amateur* – a book that will “record what happens to me when I paint” (149). Considering myself, for a moment, the Barthesian ‘amateur’ – the one for whom the ‘sideline’ of skating no longer feels ‘merely playful’; the one whose interest in *what happens to me when I skate* sparked this project in the first place – I find myself plunged into a state of longing for this unwritten book. Barthes’s admission elsewhere that those books he foresees writing but never writes are victims of his tendency “to postpone until later what bores him” (Sontag 2000, 423) does, however, cast somewhat of a shadow over this unrequited desire. On reflection – and beyond the boredom it might induce – I see how such a premise runs contrary to the entire Barthesian project.

For Barthes, I feel, was far more interested in what moved him (to paint, when reading, in a photograph) and what moved others, than in what happened *after* he or they had been moved. If such an attitude is reminiscent of German choreographer Pina Bausch’s comment that she is “not interested in how people move, but what moves them,”⁸ this

interest on Barthes's part is reinforced by his own approach to drawing, which in the case of trying his hand at reproductions consisted not of "directly imitating" another artist – "what would be the use of that?" – but of "imitating his *gesture*" – of letting his own hand trace that other "hand's footsteps" in order to better understand what lay behind a particular artist's act of producing (Barthes 1985, 170-173). At quite another level – and one more in line, perhaps, with the present discussion – the very writing of such a book would be to organise that which is compelled by its very definition to remain disorganised: to subject the one part of Barthes's very public body that did not *have* a public – his vibratory Sunday painterly body – to a most intrusive form of public scrutiny.

This, then, could be posited as a primary condition of the disorganised recreational skating body: that if it is observed, noticed, tabulated, recorded, measured, assessed, admired, critiqued – in short, *analysed* – as it carries out its 'merely playful' or 'increasingly important' strokes on ice, these 'intrusions' must not in any way account for *why* it skates, or influence *how* it skates. Rather, they must be considered as an "in addition" that, as Barthes (1985) explains, belongs not to the skater but to those *doing* the observing, admiring, assessing and so on (230). In other words, this 'in addition' must play no part in the disorganised skating body's 'pure enjoyment' – an enjoyment which, by necessity, "is shunted toward no hysteria" (230) – and nor must it be known *to* that body. For *to know* is to incorporate – whether consciously or unconsciously, however willingly or unwillingly – that 'in addition' into one's sense of purpose, beyond which point 'pure enjoyment' that is "withdrawn from any neurosis" ends (230).

At this stage, it would be tempting to posit recreational ice skating as the ultimate Barthesian art form. Witness, for example, Barthes's (1985) description of the function of the line in drawing:

The line – any line inscribed on the sheet of paper – denies the important body, the fleshly body, the humeral body...No longer the splendid body frozen in marble but a force, a direction, what the line makes legible is the trace of the body's pulsion and expenditure. The line is a visible action...And what the [drawing itself makes visible] is a movement that was the hand's becoming. Unlike the final product, what is real is producing. (170-173)

If Barthes's fascination with the act of producing art and his relative disinterest in what is produced *as* art is evident here, his description of the line's passage across the sheet of paper – that visible action that traces the body's pulsion and expenditure – certainly resonates with how the once magnificent and now sadly defunct Canadian ice dance skating duo, Shae-Lynn Bourne and Victor Kranz, describe their skating in the 2002 *Stars on Ice* program:

If skating is considered Art in progress, this Art does not have boundaries or limitations...We learn to draw with our blades on a blank sheet of ice, only for the painting to be erased by drops of water. (13)⁹

In other words, if these two respective quotes confirm my hunch that within every philosopher king or queen there lies a skater, just as within every impassioned skater there lies a philosopher, the emphasis in both cases on art as producing certainly supports the nomination of ice skating in the 'ultimate Barthesian art form' category. And surely the purely recreational ice skater would be the most fitting candidate of all, given that there remain *no* traces of her passing once those lines have been erased by drops of water: no point systems to mark a performance, no images forever captured on

celluloid, no instant replays, nothing left whatsoever of intricate patterns once painted on ice.

Tempting though it might be, however, that lurking ‘in addition’ disqualifies recreational ice skating from the running. For recreational ice skating is above all else communal: not, as in the case of the amateur painter, some private affair pursued through cold winter months in one’s lonely garret; rather, an activity that can neither escape nor remain blissfully unaware of the *imago*, taking place as it does in a public arena. If this means that the recreational skating body’s ability to attain, much less remain in, a Barthesian state of ‘pure enjoyment’ is fairly unlikely, how then to explain those brief moments of sheer ‘thisness’ – of fully existing *in* the moment – that are afforded her and that give her access to such an experience? Such moments, I argue, can be seen as lines of flight *out* of those Barthesian discourses that, whether designed to give us wings or ground us, invariably pin us down.

Likening the line of flight to an “operation of smoothing” (500), Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest that it is through this process that we *smooth over* the rigid grooves of “striated space”: that space which is organised and which in turn organises us; the space of rules and institutions and established ways of doing things that favours stasis over change, and that we spend most of our lives dwelling within. The smoothing, though, makes it all bearable: transforming us briefly into nomads; disorganising and displacing us as we tap, say, into a new bodily pace and rhythm whilst living life on the edge out there on the public skating rink so as to allow an intense and intoxicating and fleeting escape *into* what Milan Kundera (1999) has described as “the unbearable lightness of

being.” If this means that the operations of smoothing disturb and disrupt the operations of striation, it does not mean that smooth spaces are “in themselves liberatory” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 500). Rather, they are better conceived as sites in which displacement, invention, confrontation, reconstitution – in short, *change* – becomes possible. For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari caution us against believing “that a smooth space will suffice to save us” (500). They also insist that though the striated and the smooth are “not of the same nature,” they do exist “only in mixture”:

Smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space. (474)

This active coexistence *of* spaces and the constant slippage *between* spaces is an important aspect of Deleuze and Guattari’s revolutionary politics. Based on the premise that you *can* have too much of a good thing, they temper the obvious appeal of the smooth with the warning that all smooth and no striation pushes you *over* the edge: joining, as you topple, the ranks of the drug addicts and the schizophrenics (150). Here, and as Deleuze and Guattari suggest with respect to that process of “making” your own *Body without Organs* – it really does become “a question of life and death” (151). Basically – and to borrow loosely from Freddy Mercury – too much smooth space will kill you.

The idea, then, is to get it just right: enough striation to keep your head above water, to stop yourself from plunging into the void; enough lines of flight to avoid stagnation, to relieve the banality of the everyday. In other words, this is a finely tuned balancing act: in some ways deeply conservative, yet saved by a radical twist. For unlike Giamatti’s ‘conventions’ that must be constantly kept in check or MacIntyre’s ‘practices’ with their

rooted-ness in the emulation of and subordination to those goods of excellence already internal to them, the balance here is achieved by breaking down what already exists in order to create anew.

If this Deleuze-Guattarian (1987) route *into* the realm of pure sensation seems on first glance to be at odds with the path taken by Barthes – ours to be had *in spite of* the existence of those discourses, those striated spaces, as opposed to *only* in their absence – what is interesting is that Deleuze and Guattari, like Barthes, play around with the notion of a body that is “no more organs” whilst positing their route. Their particular version of this body – called the *Body without Organs* or the *BwO* – is not “before” the organism but “adjacent to it” and resolutely “contemporary”: that is, it is strictly *of* the moment, and its purpose is to provide a temporary escape route out of the discourses, institutions and structures which bind our organic bodies to the practices and practicalities of the everyday (164).

Likening the *BwO* to an egg though not, as they are quick to point out, to an egg that is “regressive” – that is, the kind of egg that would take the child back to the mother or the adult back to the child – Deleuze and Guattari propose that the *BwO* is your own little “milieu of experimentation”: a milieu of “pure intensity” that is “continually in the process of constructing itself” and that “you always carry with you,” wherever you go (164). However, you do not possess the *BwO* – it is “never yours or mine” (164). Such a framing of the *BwO* would necessarily relegate it to the world of “organic representation,” not to mention to the status of a possess-able flesh-and-blood body. Thus, the *BwO* is *a* body, but one in which “organs are no longer anything more than

intensities that are produced,” along with their accompanying “flows, thresholds, and gradients” (164). As such, the *BwO* can be better described as “an assemblage” that is constituted through a whole host of “machinic connections” (165). What the *BwO* should *not* be seen as is an *Organs without the Body* or an *OwB*. For nothing, here, has been lost from some previously unified totality: the *BwO* “is not at all a question of a fragmented, splintered body” (164). Rather, the *BwO* is *disorganised* only inasmuch as its energies and capacities are not consciously organised *around* the organic organism to produce some kind of desired end result. If the *BwO* has any link to desire, it is that it is desire itself. If the *BwO* is without beginning, without end, and without subject, this does not also mean that the *BwO* cannot be drawn and draw others into “zones of proximity or undecidability” (507).

As for how you *make* yourself a *BwO*, “This... – and here you can strap on some imaginary blades, step out onto the rink, and prepare for take-off – “This,” as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) tell us, “is how it should be done”:

Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times...Connect, conjugate, continue...Construct flow by flow and segment by segment lines of experimentation, becoming-animal, becoming-molecular... (161)

And, I would add, becoming-skater. For this is how recreational ice skating *feels* to me – a *feeling something* also aroused, incidentally, by Roland Barthes’s afore-mentioned description of ‘the line as a visible action’ that denies ‘the *important* body, the fleshly body, the humeral body.’ This, then, is where Barthes’s *disorganised* body and Deleuze

and Guattari's *BwO* come back together: not in the conditions that enable them and bring them into becoming, but in the affects that underlie them and that they manage in turn to discharge.

What these experimenting and risk-taking bodies also suggest is that unlike Giamatti's sporting body in which energy must at all costs be organised so as to avoid a chaotic outcome, chaos here does not seem to be a problem. Not when chaos is embraced rather than shied away from; not when chaos is creatively worked into an approach to skating and an understanding of sport as *disorganised*, rather than treated as a force that has to be combated against when navigating the rink. Here, Foucault's notion of the process of subjectification enters the picture once again: this time not so much in relation to a subject-less and affect-driven form of passion, as discussed in Chapter 2, but as a "folding of the line" (Deleuze 1995, 113) that amounts to "bending force back on itself" (113) so as to create a power relation and momentum that generates *from* the self, as opposed to being entirely reliant on outside forces like the rules of the game, or the conventions of the sport. In fact, this process of subjectification – of "setting force in a relation to itself" so as to foster a "self-relation" (113) – renders rules "in some sense *optional*" (113, original emphasis). If, as Deleuze suggests, "the best thing is to exert power over yourself" (113), what this move away from an understanding of power as a "force to be exerted on other forces" (113) signals is an understanding of the self as *creative*, in the sense that there is no set path laid out to follow and *productive*, in that one's lot in life is producing (the self, that folding of the line) *tout court*. Certainly, this sense of the self as an ongoing project that must be continuously created and endlessly produced resonates with some of the recreational ice skating bodies already posited in

this chapter – that unconventional sporting body that sets her own rhythm and pace; that amateur disorganised body that turns all labour into an experiment, a risk. And in so much as Foucault perceives of the process of subjectification as “an artistic activity” that is not about “protecting oneself, taking shelter,” but that is rather “*the only way of confronting the line, riding it*” (114, my emphasis), the imagery of recreational ice skating – not to mention its particular joys and challenges – are richly evoked. What is not so clear, however, is whether this eternally creating and producing ice skating body is doing so in order to *re*-create and *re*-produce that which has come before, or whether there is some other purpose to this perpetual and self-perpetuating hive of activity. With this in mind, I turn finally to the recreating body: probing the meaning of ‘recreation’; exploring just what is going on when we *recreate*.

5:4 The Recreating Body

The term *recreation* finds its roots in the Latin word, *recreatio*, which means ‘refreshes and restores’ (Drewe 2003, 18). What the person who partakes in activities of a recreational nature is being refreshed and restored *for* is another day at the office, another night on the graveyard shift. That recreation provides “a *diversion* from everyday work activities” (42, my emphasis) is thus an integral aspect of this term. So too is the idea that if this diversionary goal is usurped by another – if winning, let us say, becomes so important to the recreational hockey player that the game’s restorative properties are lessened – then the application of the term ‘recreational’ to the activity in question can no longer be justified (42). Based on this statement, one could venture that it is the *approach* a particular player or participant takes to an activity that determines whether or not it is *recreational*. Such a qualification would certainly make the task of

naming the recreational easier, rendering unimportant the seemingly huge chasm that exists between a *recreational* stroll through the woods, for example, and a highly competitive game of ringette¹⁰ played by a ‘senior ladies’ team (aged 30+) in a local *recreational* league. It would also provide a way out of Max Kaplan’s (1960) somewhat reductive view of recreation as “*light and restful activity voluntarily chosen*” (19, my emphasis) – an assessment of the level of exertion demanded of their activity that the ‘senior ladies’ on that ringette team would no doubt contest, even if they are there by choice. Leaving the issue of recreational nomenclature up to the individual partaking in the activity does not seem to be the route taken by most sport scholars, however. In her book, *Why Sport?: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Sport*, Sheryle Bergmann Drewe (2003) is at pains to point out the numerous ways that these latter have tried to carve up the respective terrains of play, games, recreation, leisure and physical education, as well as those of recreational, spectator, intercollegiate, elite and professional sport. What emerges is an eclectic array of shared affinities and strange bedfellows based loosely around the degree of physicality involved, and the impetus driving participation. The idea that persists, however, is that one’s state of mind should be “different” in a recreational sporting context from that which we take to work with us, or that which we require to succeed as an elite-level or professional athlete (19).

Giamatti (1989), for his part, cuts through these divisions and categorisations by positing *all* sport as “a shared moment of leisure” that in turn becomes part of a society’s “shared vision” (14). In this understanding of *leisure*, the concept of “free time” is key (28), as is the assumption that all activities pursued within this space of freedom are necessarily autotelic, or self-contained. That is:

Their goal is the full exercise of themselves, for their own sake, because in them a condition is achieved that is active, not idle; entertaining, not simply useful; perfecting of our humanity, not merely exploitative of it. (28)

As for Giamatti's understanding of a *vision*, the physical sensation is one of "sight and insight...compounded" (36) and the impetus is decidedly religious. Be it on our own, as part of a team, or in conjunction with one's community, Giamatti insists that sport – whether watched or played, whether at the recreational level or the professional level – enables us "to experience a happiness or absence of care so intense, so rare, and so fleeting" (14) that for a brief moment, we "imitate the gods" and "become godlike in our worship of each other" (36). Dangerous at its most extreme – in cases, for example, where a fan's "fanaticism" or an athlete's "complete absorption into the temple" renders sport cult-like (56), as discussed earlier on in this chapter – yet an important "medium for self-transformation" when such a brush with the gods awakens within us an "artistic or imaginative impulse" (38) and allows us to engage, if only temporarily, with "a higher human place of existence" (39), Giamatti does not link sport to the part of religion that is concerned with "moral strictures or political power or endless promises" (37). Rather, he associates sport with the part that is concerned with going back "to a freedom we cannot recall, save as a moment of play in some garden now lost" (44). Giamatti also insists that in this latter regard, all leisure activities are the same. Whether we are talking about the spontaneous game of tag initiated by children skating on a winter pond, or the televised game of hockey watched by millions, "All play," according to Giamatti, "aspires to the condition of paradise" (42).

As for how we stage this return to “a freedom untrammelled” (47) that we have come to associate with paradise, Giamatti posits that it is through the processes of re-creation:

Recreation is re-creation, the making again according to some standard in the mind, vision in the head, in the hopes of making what one imagines, palpable. [The athlete, like the artist]...is basically driven to express what begins as a gnawing hunger and becomes *a rage to perfection*...a rage to get it right, to make things fit as they never have before, to show a sight or make a sound that is as completely coherent, as fully a law unto itself, *as close to completely what glistens within, as possible*. (40, my emphasis)

On this definition of recreation as *re-creation*, I would take Giamatti to task on two counts. First, I do not see *re-creation* through recreational sport as a “making again” according to some already fixed standard, some preconceived vision. For as Deleuze and Guattari tell us with respect to haecceity, *to make again* is an impossibility: the very ‘thisness’ of each singular event or haecceity – in the case of my trick skating, say, a spectacular cherry flip executed on freshly Zambonied ice at 11:01 p.m. *precisely* to the tune of Gloria Gaynor’s *I Will Survive* on a crowded Saturday ‘DJ Nite’ at the *Atrium le 1000* – the way that all the many elements that make up this spectacular jump come together at a particular moment to make it as it has never been made before and will never be made again, make the Giamatti-style ‘return’ to some kind of ideal image of a jump impossible. So rather than a ‘making again according to’ – and drawing once again on Deleuze and Guattari – I prefer to see recreation as a becoming: as a joyous and infinitely ongoing process of making one’s self over without beginning, without end, and certainly without end-goal. In becoming, one is always in the middle. Becoming is not about some pre-conceived end. Becoming, as Deleuze insists, “is for the sake of change itself” (Colebrook 2002, 14).

My second challenge to Giamatti is that, unlike him, I do not see the ‘rage to perfection’ or to ‘get it right’ as that which drives the recreational ice skater. However, it is not that I think we recreational types seek anything *less* than perfection. On the contrary, I think we seek more: seeking that which Giorgio Agamben (1993) has described as “a halo” – the “*supplement* added to perfection...the *vibration* of that which is perfect, the *glow* at its edges” (55, my emphasis). This beautiful description of that which exceeds perfection – its vibration, its glow – seems, to my mind, to far better ‘capture’ what drives us as we recreate than Giamatti’s more inward-looking reflection that, through sport, we seek to reproduce *as close to completely what glistens within*. Though light imagery is evoked by both, it is Agamben’s outwardly radiating glow that does not so much alter the act or event as make it just that little much more brilliant that resonates with what I occasionally experience when I skate. It is Agamben’s “accidental reward...added [on] to the essential” (54), not Giamatti’s always-lacking-because-never-quite-as-glisteny-as-the-original glisten, that speaks to that elusive and rare but oh-so-astounding moment of serendipity when I find myself in the zone, in the flow.

Thinking the body as flow rather than flesh – as visceral dimension and virtual potential rather than representation – means that the body is not only defined by what it is at any given moment, but equally by its seemingly seamless passage *between* moments. As Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1975) suggests with regard to how it feels to be in “the ‘flow’ state”:

[It is experienced] as a unified flowing from one moment to the next...in which there is little distinction between self and environment, between stimulus and response, or between past, present and future. (36)

That the body experiencing this state in which self, environment, time and space blur is at the same time “in control of his [sic] actions” (36) does, however, speak to a certain degree of agency: this is not a body that has simply abandoned itself *to* the flow; rather, this is a body that participates in the processes that produce such a blurring. Just what kind of agency Czikszentmihalyi has in mind is problematic, and is examined in greater detail in Chapter 8. This reservation aside, and when considered alongside Jean-Luc Nancy’s notion of the body not only as substance but equally as “spacing, gap, leap, nearness and withdrawal” (Nancy and Pontbriand 2000, 23), what such a positing of the body *in* flow and *as* flow does prompt is a re-think of the body’s frontiers and borders – its very *edges* – in relationship to space and to others. Released from endlessly reproducing through corporeal re-creation some paradise lost or some existing standard of excellence in the hope of reaching some elusive future goal, the body becomes an exciting site of possible transformations and unexplored becomings. If this body shifts us ever closer to becoming that *bodies* in movement out there on the ice, it also hints at the freedom that might lie in being part of what Jennifer Daryl Slack (2003) terms the *doing* body: that is, a body defined by the ‘can do’ rather than the ‘what is.’ This body I return to in the eighth chapter, suggesting how it carries the *potential* – though not always the enabling *conditions* – to propel the swaggering midlife female trick skater to reach new physical limits with her own body without necessarily impeding other people’s ability to do likewise in a shared sporting space of affect. For the moment, though, a more general impediment to reaching those limits out there on the public skating rink needs to be addressed: an impediment that revolves around a particular set of dynamics attributable to what Judith Butler (1990) has termed “gender trouble”;

dynamics that challenge those conspicuously *un*-gendered body types that have thus far skated in and out of this chapter.

If this oversight on the part of many of the theorists upon whom I have drawn to gain a better understanding of bodies in movement means that it has been left up to feminists and the relatively small number of female philosophers (and not all of these) to examine in any depth the physical, historical, social and political specificities of the female body *as it moves*, it is not an oversight that comes as any great surprise. As Elizabeth Grosz (1994) points out, the tendency to flatten out gender (gender, here, being generally understood to mean *women*, even if gender is something that *both* women and men are attributed) has been fairly typical of the generally male Western philosophical project in its attempts to understand, describe, and even *deterritorialise* the world. In this regard, even that throw-the-universalising-philosophies-out-the-window male poststructuralist lot are not so very different. For in spite of what appears on the surface to be a recognition of and engagement with feminist issues and struggles on the part of the latter, a number of feminists argue that such ‘support’ not only signals “yet another male appropriation of whatever is radical or subversive in feminist politics” (162), but a “borrowing” from “women’s politics, struggles, theories [and] knowledges” that ends up “depoliticizing their radicality” (163). Urging feminist scholars to do the same – to see what might be usefully appropriated from the work of Deleuze and Guattari, say – whilst questioning the “joyous ease” with which these latter seem to circumnavigate often complex and contentious terrains, including the issue of their own white male privilege, Grosz ventures that:

They seem to have little if any awareness of the masculinity of their pronouncements, of the sexual particularity of their own theoretical positions. (182)

For example, Deleuze and Guattari might well propose that ‘becoming-woman’ is the “first” step in a process that works towards “desediment[ing] the masculinity of identity” (179). But as Grosz goes on to explain, this proposition – quite apart from the seeming contradiction that the word ‘first’ introduces into their whole idea of a beginning-less and endless process of becoming – sounds “alarmingly similar to a number of (male) political groups that have supported feminism on condition that it be regarded as a stage, phase, element, or subdivision of a broader cause” (179). Equally worrying, this “provisional becoming or stage” (178) is headed towards “an absolute, indiscernible anonymity” (179) – a form of “annihilation” within an endless *end*, if you like, which if attractive to the ‘becoming recreational ice skater,’ is somewhat premature for women. Here, we encounter the central concern that many feminists have with poststructuralism: in rubbing out biological difference and gendered identity *before* those structures and processes that essentialised the differences and assigned the identities have been properly acknowledged, and *before* the political exclusions, social inequities and historical erasures that women have endured and continue to endure as a result of these structures and processes have been satisfactorily addressed, what is in fact being *rubbed out* are women and everything they have fought so hard to bring to the masculinist world’s attention.

In short, it is just too easy to dismiss the specificities of the female body and that body’s resulting experiences of the world by subsuming this body into a genderless swirl of almost post-*human* speeds and stillnesses, flows and intensities. To do so, as Teresa de

Lauretis (1987) has remarked, is not only to seriously underestimate the degree to which the simple act of marking the *F* box on an application form engenders us as women; it is to ignore how that *F* then “mark[s] itself on us” (11-12). This point becomes particularly salient as we slip a pair of skates onto our as yet hypothetical *bodies* in movement, and head on down to the *Atrium le 1000*. For if the term that best describes the set of dynamics that disrupt the process of becoming movement out there on the ice is *space terrorism*, what those (generally) male bodies that commit their acts of on-ice intimidation and curtail the movement of other bodies through their (*over*)occupation of the available rink space and the way that they move *their* bodies alert us to, is how it is not only bodies and movement that become marked by an *F* or an *M*, but sporting spaces too.

Chapter 6: Gendered Spaces

6:0 Introduction

This chapter takes us down to the *Atrium le 1000* skating rink, where I examine the numerous ways – some halcyon, some less so – that this vibrant sporting space of affect is brought into becoming. In the first section I juxtapose the striated and “geographical” space of the *Atrium le 1000* with its more “anthropological” counterpart (de Certeau 1984, 93), showing how this latter is assembled daily out of the particular interactions that take place both on-ice and around-ice at the points where “networks of social relations, movement and communication” intersect (Massey 1993, 66). I argue that the *Atrium le 1000*’s ever-changing “structure of feeling” (Williams 1977) is both a function of the various clienteles it serves throughout the day, and a product of the unequal power relations that result of skaters’ “differentiated mobility” (Massey 1993, 63) within the shared space of the rink. Doreen Massey’s (1993) notion of a “power over mobility and communication” that can lead to “the spatial imprisonment of other[s]” (63) is then carried over into the second section, where a preliminary mapping of the terms *attitude*, *comportment*, and *gender* sets the stage for an examination of how gendered bodily comportment impacts spatial dynamics on a typical Friday or Saturday ‘DJ Nite’ at the *Atrium le 1000*. Drawing on Jean Grimshaw’s (1999) reworking of Merleau-Ponty’s notion of ‘melodic’ flow, and her suggestion that in this linking of the environment to those moving within it, there is “a circuit in operation between hands [or feet], gaze, thoughts and the objects being used” (104), I observe how Swagger, more than any other attitude circulating out there on the rink, disrupts what Merleau-Ponty would term the rink’s ‘physiognomy.’ Arguing that the gender(ed) deadlock that results

of this breakdown in the circuit seriously curtails the emancipatory possibilities to be found in and through an activity like recreational ice skating, I bring sporty phenomenologist Iris Marion Young (1990) on board to explore how this attitude might impact and inform girls' and women's constantly evolving engagement with movement *in* and *across* sporting spaces. I also explore how Swagger affects me personally and viscerally, concluding that before I can comfortably "wear" (Ian 1995) it, Swagger first has to be reconfigured into a feminist attitude and comportment.

6:1 The Rink as a "Practiced Place"

There are two *Atrium le 1000* skating rinks: the *Atrium le 1000* of "striated" space (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 474), of "readable" and "proper" place (de Certeau 1984, 36); and the *Atrium le 1000* of "smooth" space (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 474), of "anthropological" and "practiced" place (de Certeau 1984, 93). Though my interest lies primarily in the second *Atrium le 1000*, it is worth paying a brief visit to the first. Here we find the organisational trappings of striation:

- The *Atrium le 1000* skating rink is located at 1000 rue de la Gauchetière Ouest, Montréal, Québec, H3B 4W5
- Contact us on (514) 395-0555 or at www.le1000.com
- Open Daily, Thanksgiving to Easter, from 11:30am to 9:00pm, Sunday to Thursday, and until midnight Fridays and Saturdays ('DJ Nites')
- Open Tuesday to Sunday, Easter to Thanksgiving, from 11:30pm to 6:00pm, and until 10:30pm, Fridays and Saturdays ('DJ Nites')
- Entrance Fee: \$5.75 (adults); \$4.75 (students); \$3.75 (children, 12 and under)
- Entrance to 'DJ Nites' limited to 13 years of age and over

- No eating, drinking, chewing gum or use of cell phones whilst on the ice
- Etcetera...As is generally the case with striation, the list goes on and on.

Here too we find the measured (and somewhat immodest) logic of the “readable” *Atrium le 1000* as defined by its “geometrical” proportions and alternatively “visual, panoptic or theoretical constructions” (de Certeau 1984, 93), and as described in the promotional magazine that one can pick up on site, *Destination Atrium Le 1000*:

- “The ‘upscale’ *1000* boasts Montreal’s tallest office tower, with 51 storeys for a combined 205 metres”
- “*Le 1000* welcomes 16,000+ passers-by daily to and from work”
- “The skating rink’s ambient temperature is constantly a pleasant 18 degrees Celsius”
- “The *Atrium le 1000* skating rink was voted top major regional attraction in the 100,000+ visitors category at the *Grands Prix du tourisme québécois 2006*...attract[ing] over 200,000 visitors in 2005” (No. 2, Spring, 2006, 2).

As for the second *Atrium le 1000* – the *Atrium le 1000* of the “smooth” and “anthropological” space that cannot be mapped onto paper and that resists what de Certeau (1984) refers to as the “law of the proper” (117) – its connection to the eloquent heart, as discussed in Chapter 3, surfaces once again. This time, however, the link is not so much to the practice of writing this ‘atrium’ as to the practices enacted within it. Here, I draw on Angela Carter’s (1982) reference to the Japanese expression, ‘the landscapes of the heart,’ picking up on her contention that in this “correlation between inside and outside that converts physical geography into part of the apparatus of the

sensibility,” what must always be remembered is that “home is where the heart is and hence a moveable feast” (24).

Here, then, we encounter an *Atrium le 1000* where “physical geography” is also a “moveable feast”: where the very place-ness of its “sensible” terrain is located *in* and *through* the spatial practices that mark it out and reconstitute it daily. These include the on-ice practices of gliding, of spinning, of falling, yes, but they equally extend to joining the endless queue that winds its way around the food court as you wait to get in on Boxing Day, of buying a three month pass at the ticket kiosk, of going downstairs and tying up your skates and slamming shut your locker door and filling up your water bottle and weaving in and out of other skaters as you climb back up those stairs and finally – finally! – join the holiday horde out there on the ice. These displacements on and around the rink are akin to de Certeau’s (1984) “figures of pedestrian rhetoric”: those “countless tiny deportations” that transform a geographical location like the city into an “urban fabric” composed of intertwining and intersecting “social experiences” (103). In the context of de Certeau’s rhetoric of walking, the “art of “turning” phrases” and the turns (in French, *les tours*) and the *detours* that comprise the “art of composing a path” (100) become equivalent. If this means that both phrases uttered and paths trampled can tell their respective stories of a space (and moreover stories that often resonate the one with the other, cross over, as Figure 6.1 suggests), it remains that the various and respective “turns” that are taken to tell the story do not necessarily render that space “readable,” as might a map or a set of statistics, just as they do not render its borders static or stable, which would be more in line with de Certeau’s understanding of a “proper place.” Rather, what is distinctive about these stories is that, for all that the

For all of her working life, until she retired some 15 years ago, Annette clocked in every morning at *Eaton's* Department Store, where she had a job in sales – “Shoes, women’s lingerie, giftware, you name it, I covered most of the floors, I covered most of the departments” – Now she arrives regular as clockwork at the rink Monday through Friday, there to make sure it opens up sharp at 11:30am – “It’s Annette who keeps us in line here, its her who keeps the staff on its toes” – Skating for about an hour, which has become harder since she broke her hip at the rink a few years back – “But hey, what am I supposed to do all day if I don’t come here? Besides which, skating is good for me” – Then breaking for lunch, slipping on her skate guards, going up into the food court, buying a proper dinner – “This is my main meal, I don’t keep much in the refrigerator at home, years of training working at *Eaton's*, I guess” – Watching the skaters go round and round from her rink-side perch, waving to Danny who lives in a group home and goes to the rink every Tuesday, Thursday and sometimes Friday but never on a Wednesday because that’s his swimming lesson day – “We’re like family for a lot of the people who come here, I mean, where would some of these people go all day if it *weren't* for the *Atrium le 1000*?” – Going back down to skate some more, chatting with some of the other daytime regulars – “I don’t know what happened to that old guy, Robert, one day he just stopped coming, something must have happened, maybe he died, guess we’ll never know” – Reprimanding a gaggle of children from the school group, the summer camp group, who are playing a

game of tag and going in the wrong direction to boot – “Some of these monitors just don’t do their job right, you have to keep these kids on a real tight leash, or else they’re just plain dangerous” – Giving tips to a group of exchange students from China who are clinging to the boards, clinging to each other, first time out on skates, doing the Canadian thing – “Somebody is going to kill himself out there” – Smiling encouragingly at a group of nuns in full habit – “It can’t be easy skating in all that stuff” – Catching the same bus home at the end of the afternoon, regular as clockwork – “See you tomorrow then, Annette!...Safe journey home, Annette!” – And now its the after-work crowd arriving – “I work in construction, so its pretty cold out there sometimes, but by the time I get here, ‘cause I cycle hard all the way here, I’m sweating, man, and this rink is like a goddamn sauna” – Along with the out-of-work-but-spending-the-day-looking-for-work crowd – “This keeps me going, the thought of coming here at the end of the day, but I better get something soon or I won’t be able to cover the cost of my three month pass” – And that guy, the scary looking one, who keeps getting barred, but creeps in when the monitors aren’t looking, like today, and just look at him go, whooping loudly and circulating wildly until crisscrossing calls on walk-talkies – “Security? Can you come down here, please?” – bring security guards rushing to the scene and the dissident skater is escorted away swearing and cursing, kicking over the garbage can that the cleaner, whose trail is marked by an exchange of full bags for empty, had not quite reached in time.

Figure 6.1: Conversing

phrases or paths used to tell them strain towards the concrete – are by turns repetitive, by turns even *clichéd* – they still do manage to retain an element of uncertainty: that sense that everything could be differently uttered or differently trampled tomorrow. Though in de Certeau’s realm of the city it is walkers who compose such paths, who write the city into this kind of a fleeting temporal existence, one can equally conceive of the rink in this way: seeing in the crisscrossing paths of its skaters, its personnel, its surrounding food court vendors and its rink-side *flaneurs*, the individual threads that, in their entirety and as each new day unfolds, create (and recreate) of this space a rich if rewritable tapestry.

This is not to say, however, that in conceiving of space as those ‘practices’ that either utter or trample their way through it – not as a “static reality,” in other words, but as “a specific form of operations and interactions” that are there to be “experienced” (Massey 1993, 67) – that space is automatically a freer milieu to move around in. Nor, for that matter, does it release us at the local level from what Doreen Massey (1993) sees as a world increasingly characterised by the “compression” of time and space, with its concomitant –and somewhat paradoxical – “geographical *stretching-out* of social relations” (59, my emphasis). A phenomenon enabled by the increase in “movement and communication *across* space” (59, my emphasis), what these motile and technological links to other points beyond the immediate space in which we are physically situated make us part of is a much broader “power-geometry” (59) – as the flurry of mediated interactions and coordinated operations set in motion by the dissident skater in Figure 6.1 well illustrate.

At the same time, however – and even if we *are* all reduced to little more than flux and flow in this space that refuses to see itself as a specific “place,” and that resists drawing a line around itself so as to designate an inside from an outside (64) – it remains that within this new constellation of time and space relations, a power imbalance reminiscent of the old nation-state with its clear-cut geographical boundaries continues to exist. This power imbalance relates not only to who gets to move where and how in this ever-expanding geography of physical movement, but equally to who actually controls the often invisible communications that make this compression of time and space even possible (62).

Massey, for her part, critiques those “easy and excited notions of a generalized and undifferentiated time-space compression” (63) which, in failing to conceptualise “space, mobility and access in a more socially imaginative [and inventive] way” (63), commit the even more troubling offence of turning a blind eye to those groups, like third world women, who might constitute the essential labour force responsible for building the communication systems and airplane parts that enable such a compression of time and space, but are certainly not the beneficiaries of these time- and space-compressing technologies. In an attempt to render more central the role that these often invisible (hence overlooked) demographics play in this phenomenon of time and space compression, Massey calls for a “progressive” understanding of space that makes each “particular, unique point” (66) where paths intersect – no matter how small or large the connection, no matter at what level of the local or the global the crossover happens – a key component of this understanding. In bringing to the fore this notion that *differentiated* power relations operate in spaces that, whether local or global, are

invariably touched in some way by their connection to that which exists beyond the immediate physicality of geographically and historically constructed ‘place,’ Massey also encourages us to pay particular attention to the *quality* of the relationship that results of this connection. In effect, what Massey urges us to recognise are the implications of our (inter)actions, and this whether the point of intersection is as tangible and visible as that of two skaters crossing paths out there on the ice, or as ephemeral and invisible as an exchange of email messages that keep crossing. Only then, suggests Massey, can we begin to appreciate how our own mobility and communication within (and beyond) spaces is not the same as that of others, nor does it take place in isolation from those others or have no bearing on them. As Massey insists with regard to our necessary recognition of this notion of differentiated mobility:

We need to ask, in other words, whether our relative mobility and power over mobility and communication entrenches the spatial imprisonment of other groups. (63)

Clearly, though, this kind of question is not being asked often enough. Not, at least, by the likes of Swagger, whose sense of entitlement when it comes to taking up space out there on the rink is so great that he barely acknowledges the presence of other skaters, let alone the plight of those who have become “spatially imprisoned” as a result of his own “power over mobility.” That this power does not necessarily spring from superior skill or fine bodily technique but emanates, rather, from something that underlies and informs the bodily – that is almost *pre*-bodily, if you like – prompts me to go beyond the purely physical body when examining the relational dynamics at work in a “practiced place” which is constituted in and through differentiated mobility, as is the *Atrium le 1000*. To this end, I conceive of this space as a swirling mass of gendered attitudes and linked bodily compartments, personifying those attitudes most prominent

on a typical ‘DJ Nite’ in order to stress the very real and tangible presence that Attitude with a capital ‘A’ has out there on the ice.

In animating these attitudes, I endow them with the same qualities that Alphonso Lingis (2000) assigns his “dangerous” emotions. Lingis’s notion that our emotions create a kind of energy field around us and his insistence that, more than our physical attributes, it is the force and charge that our emotions release that constitute “the very visibility of a body” (17), lends itself well to my own conception of bodies interacting haptically when skating around the rink:

The hilarity, the fear, the rage, the relief, the agony, the desperation, the supplication are what are most visible about those we look at...[This is what] intrude[s] into the perceptual fields and practical concerns of others. Our emotions reorient others, disturb their trains of thought, seep into the blueprints of their projects, contest them, and afflict them with misgivings and self-doubt...Every pleasure we indulge in and every pain we suffer exerts power over others. (16-18)

Small wonder, given all the turmoil and commotion going on here, that Lingis sees the emotions as ‘dangerous.’ But what is also significant about Lingis’s take on the emotions is that the forces that are discharged by our respective pleasures and pains and that manage to exert “power over others” have their source in the environment. Thus, there is a kind of reciprocity at work here: a cycle whereby the forces of nature – “the troubled ocean currents...the continental plates shifting and creaking...the whimsical fluttering of butterflies” (18) – surge through us and we, in turn, channel all that unleashed energy and “free mobility” (19) into an outward (and outwardly emanating) display of emotion. On the one hand, Lingis’s lush and sensuous descriptions of this symbiotic and productive relationship between nature’s forces and the force of our emotions resonates with Deleuze and Guattari’s flow- and intensities-driven evocations

of affect. On the other hand, his inclusion of our emotional states *within* the realm of affect not only takes a dramatic turn *away* from their thinking, but touches within us something deeply personal – something tender and raw and inescapably recognisable – which is precisely that aspect of our lusts and our passions, our bodily appetites and our experiences of the erotic, that Deleuze and Guattari want to provide us with a line of flight *out of*. It could be ventured that Lingis’s introduction of the differentiated individual experience into a philosophical take on the world which ‘roots’ itself in something as intransient, as impersonal, as “the swirling winds over the rotating planet” (18), offers more to feminist poststructuralists than do Deleuze and Guattari’s “modes of individuation” across wholly de-personalised energy fields of flows and intensities. Certainly, Lingis’s “ethno-philosophical” take – a take in which human beings, as Stephen Muecke (1999) describes it, form “energised articulations with landscapes, animals, bedrooms, kitchens, computer terminals and other machinery” (5) – is a line of flight that could be investigated further. Though as Joanna Frueh (2001) cautions, even Lingis’s framing of that personalised body emerges from a decidedly male experience of the world – a point that is returned to in Chapter 7.

For the present purposes, however, and given that the emphasis of this project is on affect in its impersonal, unattached and unnamed manifestation, my interest in Lingis lies more in how he puts his emotions into play in the world than in what he has to say about their place and role *in* that world. Hence, I limit my borrowing from Lingis to this one aspect of his work on the emotions: applying his understanding of a force that is more visibly present than the body’s own physical contours to the realm of Attitude in order to better grasp how gendered dynamics operate in a site that brings physical

bodies so overtly into contact with each other; feeling the full force of that energy field as macho Swagger cuts across my path and I find myself grappling with my own mixed feelings towards this attitude.

6:2 The Rink as a Swirling Mass of Attitudes

Attitude...1. Position of the body, as suggesting some thought, feeling, or action. 2. State of mind, behaviour, or conduct regarding some matter, as indicating opinion or purpose...[<F <Ital. *attitudine* <<LL *aptitudo*...fitness <L *aptus* fitted, suited. Doublet of APTITUDE.]. (Funk and Wagnalls 1980, 94)

Attitude, as this dictionary definition has it, is a “position of the body” assumed consciously or unconsciously, and suggestive of “some thought, feeling, or action.” Within overarching Attitude there exist numerous attitudes. These latter, Funk and Wagnalls go on to inform us, refer to the particular thoughts, feelings or actions being suggested. That to *assume* an attitude is also to *indicate* “opinion or purpose” points to the performative nature of this bodily stance or pose. With regard to the pose, Barthes (2000b) highlights the self-consciousness involved in its assumption when he suggests that:

I constitute myself in the process of “posing,” I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image.
(10)

Though the pose to which Barthes refers here is the one that we *strike* when being photographed (when having our picture quite literally *taken*), this idea of creating for oneself another body through the medium of the pose – another physical presence that, having struck it, then gets taken away from us (in the camera, for display elsewhere) – resonates with both the initial performance of attitude and the lingering residue that it

leaves behind in its wake. For if the ease with which we speak of certain people ‘having’ or ‘giving’ attitude (as in, “Man, does she have *Attitude!*” or “Hey! Don’t you give me that *Attitude!*”) emphasises just how much we see attitude as something that is *other* to ourselves – as something to be possessed or alternatively, to be given away – it is the impression that attitude *makes* which lasts, tending to hang around much longer than does the body that originally *had* it or *gave* it. This, at least, is an apt encapsulation of Attitude’s appearance, passage, and legacy as it skates around the *Atrium le 1000* on a ‘DJ Nite.’ Incidentally, its very aptness is equally...well...*apt*: for as the dictionary definition offered above also reveals, attitude has its roots in the Latin word, *aptitudo*, which denotes physical fitness as well as inherent suitability. If the routes that doublets *attitude* and *aptitude* have travelled to enter language since their original inception are different, those routes intersect once again out there on the rink, albeit in contestable and often contradictory ways.

Comport...1. To conduct or behave (oneself)...**comportment...**
Behaviour or bearing; deportment...[< F *comporter* bear, behave < L *comportare* <com -together + *portare* to carry]. (Funk and Wagnalls 1980, 277)

To comport (oneself) and its noun form, comportment, as Funk and Wagnalls explain, spring from the Latin word *comportare*. Bringing into collusion the act of ‘carrying’ (*portare*) and the state of ‘togetherness’ (*com*), comportment as we commonly use it resonates far more with its French root, a bearing or a behaviour, than with its burdened-down Latin forerunner. Then again, this might depend on just who is doing the comporting. Iris Marion Young (1990), for example, argues that whereas men tend to carry their bodies as if they were “the media for the enactment of [their] aims,” women are more likely to experience their bodies as “a fragile encumbrance” (146-

147). Furthermore – and here we bring *attitude*, *aptitude*, and *comportment* together – she suggests that whereas the space that most sporting women *carry* their bodies around in is a “constricted space” born of our “imagination” and the barriers that it erects, and this irrespective of their personal ability or talent (146), most sporting men, though “by no means superior athletes,” will go to considerable efforts to fill up the available space with *a bearing* that “more often display[s] bravado than genuine skill and coordination” (146). In other words, attitudinal comportments – whether carried around like an encumbrance or performed as behaviour or bearing – would seem, according to Young, to go hand in hand with gender.

Gender 1. *Gram.* a) One of two or more categories of words (especially nouns and pronouns) or affixes based upon differences of sex or absence of sex or sometimes upon other distinctions (as of animateness or inanimateness), each category having distinctive forms for the words or affixes themselves or for the words modifying them. Thus, in English, gender is indicated by pronoun reference (*he, she*, etc.) by prefixes and suffixes (*aviator, aviatrix*, etc.), or by completely different forms (*bull, cow*, etc). **Natural Gender** is a classification based on actual sex (**masculine gender, feminine gender**) or absence of sex (**neuter gender**)...2. *Informal* The condition or quality of being of the male or female sex; sex classification: a humorous use. 3. *Archaic* Classification; kind; sort. [*<OF gendre < L genus*]. (Funk and Wagnalls 1980, 555)

Or perhaps not quite as hand in hand as all that. For if gender, according to Funk and Wagnalls’s *weighting* of this definition, is primarily a grammatical term, and “natural gender,” as they go on to assert, is synonymous with being of the male, female, or sexless (!) sex, one has to wait to use the word “informally” before one can even *begin* to address what is entailed when one lives in this world as either a male or a female. And even then, the implications are hazy. For though the gendered “condition” or “quality” of this existence is, by inference, at least rendered *different* as a result of being sexed male or female, the assumption built into this definition is that how one lives that sexed

existence is but a product of one's biological status – a straightforward marriage based on natural selection and mutual attraction which is not only *made* in heaven, but apparently “humorous” into the bargain. In other words, this dictionary definition hardly gets to the heart of the matter: failing to recognise the ways in which gender, as de Lauretis (1989) elaborates, is a “representation,” even if it still has “concrete or real implications, both social and subjective, for the material life of individuals”; failing to point out how the very representation of gender is also “its construction” (3). If this, as de Lauretis goes on, makes everything that we encounter throughout our lives an integral part of the construction of gender – the families we grow up in, the media we consume, the schools we attend, the workplaces we haunt, the sporting venues we frequent – she insists that the construction of gender is equally affected by those practices and discourses that counter and/or deconstruct those hegemonic representations that bombard us on a daily basis (3). This, de Lauretis explains, is because “gender, like the real, is not only the effect of representation but also its excess” (3). And this excess, according to de Lauretis, is “what remains outside discourse as a potential trauma which can rupture or destabilize, if not contained, any representation” (3).

If this ‘potential trauma’ opens up an escape valve inside/outside/alongside the space of representation – not so much a case this, to cite Deleuze (1995), of “escaping ‘personally’ from oneself” but rather, of “allowing something to escape, like bursting a pipe or a boil” (19) – neither this excess nor the space of representation that it destabilises are easily conceptualised, let alone tangibly *grasped*. Here, and following Judith Butler’s likening of the *idea* of gender to a “performance that has no prior

reality,” Jane Arthurs and Jean Grimshaw’s (1999) suggestion that *as* an idea, gender is “compatible with other post-modern theories of signification where the gendering of bodies is constructed as *a series of masquerades*” (3, my emphasis) proves useful. With this in mind, let’s go down to the rink: slip into some blades, step out onto the ice, and see what kind of gendered bodies are *masquerading* out there this Saturday night.

Oh boy... There they go again. Swagger and his slightly less offensive sidekick, Bravado, taking up way too much space (and in so doing, disrupting the general flow through space), while stalling Hesitancy and her clingy friend Timidity – largely as a result of Swagger and Bravado – feel space closing in around them and freeze, precipitating, somewhat unfairly, an equally disruptive blow to the flow. Meanwhile, Entitled – no mere recreational skater this, this is ‘Ah Figah Skaatah’ – executes a space-grabbing Double Toe Loop. Echoing the seagulls in the animated feature, Finding Nemo, Entitled’s notion of space is simple: “It’s Mine, Mine, Mine.” Strangely, Entitled gets away with hogging space. Nobody – not even Swagger – wants to mess with those picks.

My gendering of Swagger, Bravado, Hesitancy, and Timidity in the passage above is deliberate. So too is my conspicuous *lack* of gendering of Entitled – an attitude which, for reasons that I speculate upon presently, seems to traverse the usual gender lines when performing figures and jumps out there on the ice in a *recreational* context, anyway. If, at that point, I also speculate on what gets left *out* of this deliberately stereotypical depiction of gender – picking up, for instance, on its rooted-ness in a simplistic and unquestioned *binary* sex-gender system – suffice to say, here, that it does offer a fairly accurate picture of how Attitude plays itself out in the largely

teenage/young adult crowd to be found at the *Atrium le 1000* on a typical 'DJ Nite.' Certainly, it is a scenario that resonates with Iris Marion Young's (1990) discussion, in her landmark essay, "Throwing like a Girl," of how our gender-based sense of entitlement when it comes to occupying space either propels us into space or inhibits our movements within that space – thus, the boy puts his whole body into his throw, whereas the girl catches herself, holds back, just at that crucial moment when she should be letting go. Directly challenging Merleau-Ponty's situating of intentionality in the motile yet genderless 'I can' body, and in so doing highlighting the danger of theorising out of a (male) body that unquestioningly assumes its universality, Young states:

Feminine bodily existence is an *inhibited intentionality*, which simultaneously reaches towards a projected end with an 'I can' and withholds its fully bodily commitment to that end in a self-imposed 'I cannot'. (148, emphasis in original)

Young's observation, albeit without explicitly intending to, brings into question the capacities and potentialities proclaimed by the similarly genderless Deleuze-Guattarian 'can do' *doing* body, as discussed in Chapter 8. It also, as Jean Grimshaw (1999) suggests, captures well that sense that women so often have of 'living' their bodies in a state of "ambiguous transcendence," whereby "the body moves towards a task, yet is also a burden, which has to be both dragged along and protected" (105). However, Grimshaw's add-on to Young, in which she stresses the importance of recognising how moving in ways that reach the limit of one's own physical capacities can, whether intended or not, end up "oppressing" or "terrorizing" others around you (108), does point to what she sees as a blind spot in Young's analysis. Challenging Young's tendency to consistently see girls and women as the underdogs of the sporting world,

Grimshaw argues that in her very welcome attempt to inject some much needed gender-talk into Merleau-Ponty's universal-male-body-meets-the-environment equation, Young does tend to "idealize masculine movement" in a manner reminiscent of Simone de Beauvoir (105). On the one hand, this glorification of the male body's movement means that Young underestimates how "men's full occupation of the maximum possible amount of space around them may be oppressive and inhibiting to others" – that is, to women (107). On the other, it means that Young tends to ignore areas where women are less inhibited, hence more fluid in their movements, than are men.

As it happens, it is Jean Grimshaw's own movement into the sporting world in her forties that informs her critique of Young. As she describes this adventure and its accompanying revelations:

Learning to move my body in new ways and acquiring a far more discriminating knowledge of its capacities and limits led me, phenomenologically, to feel that I 'inhabited' it differently. I acquired a new bodily orientation, which felt more integrated and mobile, and which led me to project myself differently into the world, [no longer feeling like]... 'I' and 'my body' pulled against each other. (111)

Not only does Grimshaw's journey from proverbial couch potato to born-again workout demon give her a new appreciation of her body, enabling her to feel "comfortable" in her body "for the first time in [her] adult life" (112). That the activity that this feminist scholar so enthusiastically embraces is aerobics also forces her to confront the negative press that this particular physical activity has received. For aerobics, as Grimshaw points out, is one of those 'feminised' physical activities that has generated an alliance of strange bedfellows: the general sense that it is 'too girly' – a bubbly world of spandex, pony tails, and pop music – causing it to be derisively

dismissed by the masculinist sporting world, whilst feminists like Susan Bordo (1993) and Sandra Lee Bartky (1998) see it as a prime example of the kind of body-conscious disciplinary regime to which women have historically been subjected, and that inevitably leads to ‘body image’ related problems like anorexia, bulimia, and exercise dependence. Not that the concerns of these latter are unjustified. Critiquing, for instance, a series of ParticipACTION Public Service Advertisements designed to encourage young girls to take up figure skating – a prime example of one such ‘feminised’ sport – Margaret MacNeill (1999) rightly points to how this government-sponsored initiative’s all-too-easy drawing on the obvious connection between the *figures* in figure skating and the female body as *a figure* – “You’ve started skating again?”...“Yes, I’m working on a new figure” – seriously undermines the work being done by a number of physical educationalists and healthcare workers to break this (sometimes fatal) link. As MacNeill explains:

The series encourages young women to change their bodies through activity. The word play around ‘figure’, melding the action of skating designs on ice and the aesthetically slim bodies of athletes in this traditional female sport, narrowly reproduces a notion of healthy femaleness focused on appearance. (222)

Whilst acknowledging the importance of critiques such as this, the (guilty) pleasure that Grimshaw (1999) takes in aerobics – not to mention the very real bodily benefit she derives from her passionate involvement in it – prompts her to seek out what the female body might gain from moving in a ‘feminised’ space that has unreservedly been designated as ‘hers.’ This is an important shift, and one that brings into question Young’s framing of the female body as that which must continually strive (and inevitably fail) to do *as well as* the male body through doing *the same as* the male body, as if throwing like a boy is *the* measure against which all throws must be measured. If

this challenge to the idea that there exists *a* standard measure against which we must constantly compare ourselves resonates with Laurel Richardson's refusal to use terms like 'alternative' or 'experimental' when talking about research approaches that merely *differ* from those taken to be the so-called 'norm,' as discussed in Chapter 4, what Grimshaw importantly alerts us to in Young's work is the absence of a theoretical positing of the female body that draws not on its failure to measure up, but on its particular strengths and capacities.

In an attempt to address this oversight, as well as to point to how the gendering of sporting spaces is not always the one-way street that Young makes it out to be, Grimshaw – without explicitly naming it as such – introduces the notion of 'flowing like a girl' (107). Though aware that in making this move, she runs the risk of essentialising female (and male) movement through space in much the same way as does Young, Grimshaw is willing to go that route, if only to highlight how a physical activity that is built around what female bodies supposedly do well – *flowing* rather than *throwing* – and which in turn builds a culture and space around that capacity – the aerobics class as opposed to the baseball game – is likely to create an environment in which girls and women feel freer about extending their bodies into the available space than do boys and men. In other words, though the girl might hold back when throwing a ball out on there on the baseball diamond – a space that has come to be gendered as male – it may well be the boy who holds back whilst doing aerobics. And whether this failure to reach the limit of his own physical capacities comes of feeling intimidated as others flow into the space around him, or whether it comes of a simple lack of ease with regard to letting his own body flow, what this failure suggests is that the gendering of

bodies, movement and sporting spaces is far more complex than Young would lead us to believe.

On the one hand, this added complexity goes some way to explaining why figure skating Entitlement, whether male or female, does not hesitate to make the *recreational* ice space, anyway, his or her own. In a sport in which females are hyper-feminised and males often seen as effeminate (Adams 1993), perhaps non-elite figure skating does not so much erect protective walls around gender as turn a blind eye to the seepages that occur under, over, and around those walls. And Entitlement knows this, strutting his/her stuff across his/her rink. If Entitlement has made it this far as a ‘faggot’ on figure skates, if Entitlement’s skimpily-clad sequined body can survive the kind of knocks and blows that those tough guy hockey players in their gladiator gear will *never* know, then Entitlement is damned if s/he is going to give over *even an inch* to Swagger. On the other hand – and like the mussel that opens up when plunged into a pot of boiling water – the added complexity that accounts for Entitlement’s sense of entitlement also allows us more room for manoeuvre as we work towards reconfiguring a sporting space that, like the *Atrium le 1000* on a ‘DJ Nite,’ has already become gendered. This reconfiguration, which I take up in the next chapter, comes of introducing *into* that space a body – the swaggering midlife female trick skater – whose approach to movement and whose mixing of skate technology and its associated practices overtly challenge a number of established gender codes.

Though even prior to or in the absence of such a reconfiguration, the all-too-obvious links that I make between gendered bodies and differentially mobile attitudes and

comportments in the Swagger-meets-Timidty passage are not meant to be taken as fixed tropes. Nor, for that matter, do they do proper justice to the broad spectrum of often unrecognised genders, attitudes and comportments that are quietly and unobtrusively operating away in the interstices between these more blatant examples of gendered ‘masquerade.’ Such interstices, de Lauretis (1989) suggests, should not be seen as operating *outside* the “represented space” of gender (26). Rather – and borrowing from film theory – she urges us to see the interstice as a concurrently existing “space-off” that runs *alongside* those spaces that have already made their way into more constructed notions of gender (26). One of the benefits of operating in the ‘space-off’ is that it enables one to be at once part *of* the picture, at once wise *to* the picture: simultaneously hailed by the stereotypes that concretise gender, and set adrift by the experiential body that lives it. For if the stereotype, as Barthes (1977b) insists, is “that emplacement of discourse *where the body is missing*, where one is sure the body is not” (90, original emphasis), what is significant about the kind of writing that privileges the stereotype – Barthes’s ‘Work’ or Kristeva’s *phenotext* – is that in its over-reliance on that word or idea “without magic, any enthusiasm, as though it were natural” (Barthes, 2000b, 406) it sometimes ends up revealing what it tries so hard to conceal. Thus, I draw attention to the overtly obvious so as to disturb some of the assumptions that all too often become associated with the actual *assuming of* such attitudes and comportments.

In this context, let’s take another look at Swagger. For of all of these embodied on-ice attitudes, it is Swagger that affects me viscerally: repelling, unnerving and enraging me, but still, drawing me in. This is a somewhat perplexing interpellation for a midlife born-

again skating fiend of the ‘embrace-the-ham-within’ credo. This does not quite fit with the undersized tomboy/hide-in-the-locker-room adolescent/grew-up-and-found-feminist theory – phew! – doctoral student, for whom swagger has habitually been associated with gangs of cool and disdainful teenage boys. For the ‘qualities’ of cool and disdain, as Lou Stovall (2001) reminds us when recalling *his* experience of being part of that particular demographic, are manifested in and through the corporeal swagger. Aged fourteen, headed for high school, pumped up by the self-belief that he was as cool as “a chunk of ice” and knowing that “the walk was everything,” Stovall describes this walk as “something between a slide and glide, without skates, and a little hitch to the left or right” (133-134). Into this mix you “add a bit of swagger.” Not too much, mind: “Too much looks silly if not totally stupid” (134). Aha! So that’s it. Just a bit, no more. Nothing excessive. Swagger, it seems, demands restraint.

Restraint is not, however, synonymous with ham. Nor does it resonate with the ‘*excessive* researcher,’ even if those references to ice and to skating are not wasted on her. These points I return to in Chapter 8, but for the moment the situation is this: me, mid-forties, feeling hailed by swagger and trying to figure out why. Feeling not entirely alone in this situation, accompanied as I am by 50s-something art historian turned bodybuilding fanatic Joanna Frueh (2001) and her strutting, sweating, sprawling midlife female bodybuilder friends who, in swelling, have not only found an “intellectual and psychic...[and] physical swagger,” but have discovered that this newfound swagger of theirs actually balances them – “from mind to torso to footsteps” (79). Feeling, at the same time – and for all that I am in awe of this band of former “invisible matrons” (65) turned highly visible muscle queens – somewhat dwarfed in their company...somewhat

bogged down by their excessive corporeality. A feeling that I do not have, incidentally, when I delve into the world of Jeff Howe's (2003) disenchanted and angry young skateboarding males and recognise – in that release of rebellious energy that comes of drawing lines on city surfaces, of soaring through the air – the release that I experience, and *only* experience, when I skate. In other words, these new affinities forged through sport-induced swagger clash and collide, are rife with contradiction. What I do know is that recreational ice skating has given me access to this attitude, made it attainable even. Teenage boys are interested in me, even talk to me, now that I do tricks. However, I am still not convinced that in its current masculinised embodiment I actually want to wear swagger, or indeed would wear it well.

Still, it is a nice way to think about swagger, about attitude – as something that can be *worn*. In suggesting this, I pick up on Marcia Ian's (1995) rhetorical question, "How do you wear *your* body?" (75) – a question provoked by a reflection on the corporeal being-in-the-world realities of the hyper-muscular female athlete, and the sense that in our bodies, as in our gender, we are all in drag (76). And so I begin to 'try on' attitude, play around with it: seeing, in the communal swagger of a kitted-up Junior AA girls' hockey team, the possibility that attitude can be 'changed into' in the locker room through the simple act of becoming uniformed, or uni-form¹¹; wondering, as I consider Joanna Frueh's (2001) delicious reflection that "burly girls throw their weight around, just for the hell of it" (71), whether this process of Becoming Swagger for hockey-playing women and girls could be attributable, in part, to the 'burlying-up' that comes of putting on all that protective, gladiator-like, equipment. Seeing, too, in my latest skating bruise, a 'painful badge of pride' that, like a stamp on your hand at a club

entrance, gives you access to the House of Swagger. Seeing, finally, in my tough girl saunter as I skate across the ice after scoring a goal whilst playing ringette – a game humiliatingly created as ‘a hockey for girls’ – the possibility that swagger can come of being momentarily and gloriously transformed into what Dorothy Allison (1996) describes as the “meat and bone and liquid song of my own gasps, the liquor stink of stubborn sweat, the sweet burn of sinew [and] muscle” (66).

Oh yes, Swagger feels good out there on the rink, feels a lot better than girlish Timidity or Hesitancy...Perhaps, in part, because everything ‘girl’ in sport – girls’ skates, girls’ rules, girls’ push-ups, throwing like a girl, a hockey for girls – is somehow the default version of, hence inferior to, that which is ‘boy.’ So how to go about challenging this reality – for a reality it is, however unfair and unfounded it might be – without continuing to get caught up in a glorification of male movement and the male body reminiscent of de Beauvoir? How to take on a swagger, without reinforcing what Frueh (2001) refers to as “the gender maintenance game” (81)? Because even if there is a lot of work to do here –

Swagger...1. To walk with a proud or insolent air; strut 2. To boast; bluster. – *n.* Expression of superiority in words or deeds; braggadocio... [Prob. < Scand. CF. dial. Norw. *svagga* to sway]. (Funk and Wagnalls 1980, 1351)

– it remains that yes, I want to swagger...I want a *braggadocio*! But I want it to be a feminist swagger: a swagger that neither glorifies masculine movement in space, nor inhibits anybody else’s movement through that space.

Chapter 7: Swaggering Like a Feminist

7:0 Introduction

In the first section of this chapter I turn to the elite ‘Ladies’ singles figure skating circuit, using Ellyn Kestnbaum’s (1995) notion of a ‘feminist’ figure skating routine as a starting point for beginning the work of reconfiguring swagger into an attitude and comportment that skating (and other sporting) feminists can comfortably “wear” (Ian 1995). Drawing on Joanna Frueh’s (2001) conception of the pleased female orgasmic body, Judith Halberstam’s (1998) idea of a playful and active exchange between male and female masculinities, and Mary Louise Adams’s (1993) discussion of the gender ‘border case’ skater, a new way of moving and *enjoying* one’s midlife female body on ice begins to emerge. Within this new paradigm, skates are a key concern. I thus use the latter part of this chapter to take a closer look at this hyper-gendered piece of sporting equipment: examining the differences between a ‘girls’ skate and a ‘boys’ skate in light of Teresa de Lauretis’s (1989) “technologies of gender”; drawing on Michèle Martin’s (1991) account of women’s ‘delinquent’ appropriation of the telephone during the early stages of its development to examine how a technology’s gendering can change as a result of the unintended uses to which it is put by persistent and *active* users. I conclude with the suggestion that a change of skates, though not in itself a revolutionary step, does hasten the emergence of the swaggering midlife female trick skater and the surfacing of a potentially revolutionary approach to movement both on-ice and beyond.

7:1 Reconfiguring Swagger into a Feminist Attitude

In working towards a theoretical conception of what might constitute a *feminist* female singles routine at the elite level of ‘Ladies’ figure skating, Ellyn Kestnbaum (1995) begins by asking the following question:

Is it more feminist for female skaters to emulate men, skating in ways that have been defined as masculine, emphasizing power and triple jumps? Or is it more feminist to emphasize what the female body can do better than the male? (69)

Though she looks at this question from a number of different angles, what Kestnbaum eventually comes up with is not so much an answer to *this* question, as a new way of framing it so as to avoid the all-too-easy slippage into a binary, hence reductive, logic. If the primary binary in singles figure skating revolves around “the perennial debate over the predominance of artistry or athleticism” (55), Kestnbaum argues that in coding the former as feminine and the latter as masculine, skaters are forced to construct a “performance persona” (56) that not only reflects this gender dichotomy, but ends up perpetuating it. To break this cycle she calls for “more active representations of femaleness” (69) that, rather than merely *challenging* existing gendered stereotypes in skating, actually *sever* the association of ‘feminine’ to appearance and being an object of beauty – that is, *a skater* – and of ‘masculine’ to action and, as Nike would have it, *just doing it* – in other words, *skating*.

Having established the conceptual basis for a more feminist form of figure skating, Kestnbaum then turns her attention to practical matters. Basically: scrap the athletic/aesthetic divide and get everybody, men and women, just skating; scrap the glamour outfits and get those women into something akin to what other female athletes

wear, like a simple leotard and some stretch pants; scrap the concept of the female skater as “a work of art” and start treating her as an “artist” (70); scrap the dying swan and lovesick Juliet numbers and start putting together routines that are alternatively political, silly, self-mocking, irreverent, or fun; scrap all that being “the object of the gaze” (75) stuff and start staring – *glaring* – back. Not that a few of the top level female skaters out there have not already taken some of these steps. Katerina Witt, for example, is cited by Kestnbaum as a skater who consistently pushed the envelope on the elite ‘Ladies’ figure skating circuit with her activist routines (Ode to Sarajevo) and her unconventional (Robin Hood instead of Maid Marian) outfits (72). Likewise, there are those – Japan’s Midori Ito and ‘bad girl’ Tonya Harding, for instance – who have pushed the athleticism agenda by introducing into their routines triple axels, combination spins, and even the occasional illegal back flip (Surya Bonaly). But on the whole, suggests Kestnbaum, such deviations from the hyper-feminised norm go unrewarded on the podium and hence, are considered *too risky* by aspiring world class female skaters, their coaches and their trainers. For these skaters to keep taking such risks, Kestnbaum argues, it is imperative that significant changes occur within “the economy of spectatorship” (56) that positions female skaters and determines their value – that is, everything from the way they are judged to the media coverage they receive to the expectations that are placed on them by their fan base.

Here we encounter an interesting notion of risk. As if the jumps and flips that these athletes perform are not risk enough, as if anybody, as Kate Rounds (1997) puts it, would dispute that “only the most accomplished athlete could even begin to skate at the Olympic level” (155), it remains that in the world of women’s figure skating, the risk

lies not so much in *being* athletic as in letting the judges, the media commentators, and the spectators in on the secret. As Rounds explains:

[Their] athleticism...is something to be hidden, not flaunted. If you have any doubts, just look at what the women wear when they compete and then picture Martina Navratilova in a skating costume. (155)

If this obligatory camouflaging of one's athleticism puts a whole new spin on the notion of 'compulsories' within figure skating, the incongruity of Martina in one of those minimalist sequins and frills numbers cannot be denied. That said, tennis too judged Martina's hyper-muscular body to be too overtly athletic for the women's circuit when she joined it back in the 1970s, just as France's Amelie Mauresmo's similarly strong and muscled body continues to attract derisive comments on that same circuit today. That both of these tennis players are lesbians could explain, in part, the fear that their hyper-muscularity generates in a sporting world that is largely homophobic, and that is all-too-ready to connect a so-called 'masculine' female body to a sexual orientation that 'strays' from the heterosexual norm (Hargreaves 2000, 149-150). On the other hand, when Martina Navratilova first joined the women's tennis circuit she was not yet 'out,' which suggests that the criticism she encountered is equally symptomatic of a society that prefers its female athletes to look and move like 'real' women, which means that not only is the physical corporeality of their bodies strictly monitored but equally the way that they move those bodies, making any open display of "attributes long defined as masculine – skill, strength, speed, physical dominance, uninhibited use of space and motion" (Cahn 1994, 279) a somewhat risky undertaking. All of which leads one to ask whether the risk it takes to flaunt one's athleticism if one is female is peculiar to the aesthetic sport of figure skating, or whether it extends to *all* sports – even if, in the case of figure skating, better camouflage skills are required given the skimpiness of the

costumes and the blatant displays of femininity *on display* in the actual routines. Though to answer this question adequately would require a whole other thesis and is not my intention here, I do want to draw on the line of inquiry opened up by Kestnbaum and Rounds in their attempts to reconfigure female figure skating into an activity that is less hyper-feminised, and apply it to my own notion of a feminist swagger.

First, then – and to borrow from Kestnbaum’s idea of disrupting the gender coding of one’s ‘performance persona’ – one could venture that purely *recreational* status of the wannabe swaggerer affords her a freedom that her elite figure skating counterpart does not enjoy. Left to perform her Mohawks and crosscuts *as she pleases, for whom she pleases* – for the audience (inasmuch as those rink-side *flaneurs* and lunchtime diners and homebound commuters and food court vendors can be *called* an audience) is not *hers*, is not *owed* anything by her – the midlife female trick skater is released from the ‘economy of spectatorship’ and can play by her own gender rules. In this way, her ‘performance persona’ becomes something to be lived, as opposed to lived up to. Today the femme, tomorrow the butch – in playing around with these more stereotypical examples of gender performance, in trying out tried and tested personas as one would try on a hat, these personas in themselves become less of a prison and more of a research laboratory. In their passage from rigid typecasts to playful tropes, they also gain a new kind of potency. Not the potency that comes of conformity and emulation – of joining the flock – but the potency that comes of flouting conventions, subverting gender (and age) expectations, and boldly glaring back. Joanna Frueh (2001), for instance, has likened the act of older female bodybuilders “performing” their muscle to feminist performance art, suggesting that although bodybuilders do not create

“consciously parodic or ironic pieces,” their displays of rippling corporeality do bring to the public’s attention a largely unexplored aspect of the aging female body’s agency in much the same way that the feminist performance artist’s transformation of her own body into ‘art’ enables her to “investigate, expose, or even enjoy cultural representations of women” as well as “challenge female stereotypes and models of feminine propriety” (96).

On the one hand – and harkening back to Barthes’s insistence that ‘pure enjoyment’ ceases when one makes of one’s art, one’s body, an exhibit – this not always *deliberate* act of gender and age insurgence on the part of Frueh’s bodybuilders has its price:

Somatic experience, the bodybuilder’s private art, becomes public – cultural discourse, aesthetic event and communication – when she performs. (120)

On the other hand, this movement into discourse, evented-ness and communication means that the older female bodybuilder’s unintentional rebelliousness – much like the midlife female trick skater’s unavoidable visibility when she performs down at the public rink – does garner other pleasures: making her into what Frueh refers to as a “risky body” who is “soul-and-mind-inseparable-from-body” (59); rendering that body simultaneously “grounded and gliding” (80) – connected to a bodily politics, to the discourses that her “purposive” exercising both challenge and generate (60), yet also “fluid” enough to slip away into “an interiority that is tissue- and soul-deep” when she needs to temporarily escape even her own observation (79). This is not to say that important differences do not exist between Frueh’s midlife bodybuilders and the midlife female recreational trick skater. For one, the bodybuilder’s focus is primarily on the corporeal sculpture that she constructs of her own muscle and sinew, whereas the trick

skater's interest lies more in how she might effectively mobilise those muscles so as to leap more exultantly, glide more gloriously, fall less dangerously. Thus, whilst the former lives with the seeming paradox of 'purposively' pumping iron in the name of 'purposeless' pecs and biceps, the latter is questioned not so much in relation to her motivation as to her method – "Why don't you just do all those things on figure skates?"

At the same time, the midlife female trick skater finds in Frueh's description of this bodybuilding alternative to invisible matron-hood the kind of "unreasonable enthusiasm" (68) for an activity that not only resonates with her own passions and pleasures, but that suggests to her that just because time, society and even space seek to "matronize" the female body and her movement, she does not have to cooperate. Equally importantly, what the midlife female trick skater learns from her hyper-muscular bodybuilding sister is that striking an attitudinal pose need not always result in an 'othering' of the self: in the creation of a second body – what Barthes (2000b) sees as that overly self-conscious and statically image-bound body – that, when it peers back at you from a self-portrait or pays an unwelcome visit as you reread an old diary entry, makes you cringe with embarrassment, feel "disgusted" and "irritated" with the self that put itself out there, all puffed up and posing, in the first place (479). In a sense, it all comes down to where you are located when you strike that pose, and whether in striking it you unravel – become exposed – or alternatively become more integrated, more robust. As locations go, for instance, one might venture that the place and positioning of the Barthesian *poseur* is a relatively good one: a comfortable place, an entitled and secure positioning which, much like macho Swagger's positioning out there

on the rink on 'DJ Nite,' goes largely unquestioned until ruptured – disrupted and made a mockery of – through the kind of 'othering' experience of which Barthes speaks. The older female bodybuilder, on the other hand, enjoys no such privileges, has only limited options: without her performative muscles, she is relegated to invisible matron-hood, is considered to be past her 'sell-by' date; with them she is seen by many as "an abomination," a source of "discomfort" inspiring "hatred and disgust" (Frueh 2001, 59). Though not always easy to live with, this uncomfortable place and positioning, it does on the bright side make any Barthesian self-loathing in the form of 'disgust' or 'irritation' with that *other* self somewhat redundant. What posing does for Frueh's older female bodybuilder, in other words, is bring her closer to inhabiting just one body, to being just one self. In showing off excessive muscles that create in their incongruity – not as muscles *per se* but as muscles attached to this particular aging female body – one of those "in-between" complications of matter and forces (Stivale 2003, 40), the older female bodybuilder does not become a second self: a rather pompous and self-important self at that which, when pricked by an awareness of that excessive self-consciousness, finds itself rapidly deflating. No, what she becomes through the pump and the swell is more fully *a* self. This is not *the* self society assigns her. This is not *a* self that sits comfortably with societal conventions and gendered and ageist preconceptions. Rather, this is a self that actively embraces her in-between-ness: choosing to flaunt, not shy away from, that which makes her an anomaly; using the pose as a conscious tactic to stage her own defiant self-actualisation.

If this new understanding of what it means to pose, to assume an attitude, to take risks, to become a performing 'risky body,' makes the midlife female trick skater's

reconfiguration of swagger into a feminist attitude a more *viable* undertaking, the connection that Frueh (2001) makes between strutting one's stuff and a particular brand of female and feminist pleasure that is derived from physical exertion adds a certain *gôût piquant* to an already tempting proposition. In developing this notion of a "sacral joy" found through bodybuilding that not only "shapes an intellectual and psychic" strut, but "a physical swagger...as well" (81), Frueh takes issue with Alphonso Lingis's (1994) conception of the orgasmic body, suggesting that in framing it as a figure that unequivocally "decomposes, becomes dismembered, dissolves" (Frueh 2001, 83) he might well describe a male experience of *jouissance*, but does not adequately account for what the female body experiences when being pleased or more importantly, when pleasuring itself. In suggesting that the orgasmic *female* body, unlike Lingis's "melting, ... parts felt separately from other parts" orgasmic body, is a body "beatified by integrity" (83), and through shedding light on the term *integrity*'s Latin roots – *integer*, which means 'intact,' and *tangere*, which means 'to touch' (83) – Frueh works towards a specifically female conception of bodily pleasure. In this conception, the body's 'intactness' is demonstrated through its positioning not as a lack – a dispersal – but as an abundance, "a fulfilment ready to be more fulfilled" (84). Similarly, its 'touchingness' is established through an understanding of "thingness," whereby bodily meaning is created not through the processes of objectification – through become distanced (dismembered) from itself – but rather, through "thought made physical" as when the actual body gets down and tactile¹². In this state of being in which *being itself* is "a state of gratification" (80), the idea of 'counting reps' as one pumps iron (as a bodybuilder) or does laps (as a recreational ice skater) goes out the window. For the act of counting is, Frueh contends, a measure of productivity, hence a "protection *from* pleasure" (83,

my emphasis). And if there is one thing the older female bodybuilder is *not* prepared to spend valuable time pursuing, it's a pleasure detractor. As for what she *is* prepared to do with 'her' time:

I perform calf raises, seated rows, squats and military presses more slowly than most people and linger, "wasting time," longer between sets than many experts recommend. This leisure is time to feel my muscles swelling. I love to swell like that...Swell and swagger: the words "erection," "phallic," and "masculine" don't apply here. (81)

Several points emerge from this luxuriously dense passage. The first relates to the notion of time, and a twinning of terms – time as *leisure*, time as voluntarily *wasted* – that speaks to a refusal on the part of the older female bodybuilder (in this case, Frueh herself) to bow to the pressure of time's demands, to kowtow to the 'experts' with their authoritative ideas around time *management*. This defiance of the steady and relentless march of what Kristeva (1995), echoing James Joyce, refers to as "Father's Time" (204) is picked up again in Chapter 8, when I show how Kristeva's notion of the *chora* provides the (by that point *fully* swaggering) midlife female trick skater with a rhythmic and *riant* milieu in which to try out new ways of experiencing bodily pleasure through fully *inhabiting* time, as opposed to merely *accounting for* (through *counting out*) its passing. In such a conception, I argue, the very idea of 'wasting time' has no meaning, for time is always abundantly, voluptuously, full. In such a conception, I maintain, the qualifier 'free' does not have to precede 'time' for time to be considered *as* leisure, as discussed in relation to 'the recreating body' in Chapter 5. What such a conception does not deny, on the other hand, are those very real pleasures that come of productively counting reps or repetitively producing laps: pleasures that, if *different* from those being discussed here, still offer the 'purposive' exerciser who pursues them rich rewards. However, these pleasures and the route one must take to attain them are well

established: a key component both of those sporting models that espouse a kind of protestant work ethic approach to play, such as “the performance principle” (Loland 2004, 113), and of those models that purportedly embrace a more fluid approach but which more often than not end up perpetuating the same old meritocratic values, as my discussion of the recognised ‘flow man,’ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, in the chapter that follows highlights. In other words, I am drawn to a conception of pleasure and time that lies outside – *alongside* – these other approaches, and that acknowledges that in the eyes of these others, the simple act of *taking* the time to linger is seen as an act of cocky defiance – and I use the word *cocky* deliberately here.

For as Frueh suggests in the final line of the passage cited above, words like *swell* and *swagger* are already so loaded with masculine nuance and imagery that to disassociate them from these connotations of maleness, even if these latter do *not* apply to the older female bodybuilder’s experience of swelling and swaggering, is a difficult and perhaps even counter-productive task. After all, quips Frueh, do we really *want* those male metaphors? And in ascribing them to our own bodies, do we risk “simply maintaining gender’s rigid grip on our imaginations and behaviours” (82)? On the other hand, and as the ongoing evolution of ‘queer’ terminology reveals to us, words can take on new connotations and enjoy greater or lesser degrees of potency as a result of how they are used and by whom. If this suggests that the older female bodybuilder or the midlife female trick skater might, through persistently strutting bodily and crowing defiantly, succeed in disassociating swagger – and why not *cocky* too? – from its phallic and phallogocentric links, it also follows that as she simultaneously swells out of pleasure

<p>In all daring there is an element of tact: knowing just how far too far you can go.</p>	<p><i>Jean Cocteau</i></p>
<p>When I can't come skating, I feel terrible. I organise my workday now so that I can get away as fast as possible and rush to the rink before it closes. Usually, I run all the way here, I just can't wait to get here.</p>	<p><i>Nathalie</i></p>
<p>There are only three elements essential to life...Desire, disorder and danger...Otherwise, it's not life.</p>	<p><i>Manon Briand</i></p>
<p>This skating... It's like being a drug addict. When I can't get to the rink, I put my head in the freezer just to smell ice, just to feel the cold of ice. Or I put ice cubes in my mouth, just to taste the sensation of ice.</p>	<p><i>Lisa</i></p>
<p>As in an orgy, the total personality is involved, reeling blindly toward annihilation.</p>	<p><i>Georges Bataille</i></p>
<p>I've just perfected my cherry flip, and I think I'm in love. It started out as just a superficial fling, a kind of dabbling with Deleuze-Guattarian <i>Becomings</i> and <i>BwOs</i> that, like a holiday romance on a Greek island where neither of you understand each other but you can't quite walk away from each other either, just FELT so right. Okay, so on the one hand we didn't seem to have anything in common – I mean, I'm a doctoral student writing about ice skating and they're these bigwig French poststructuralist <i>anti</i>-philosophers trying to deterritorialise the world...to reterritorialise it...<i>you name it!</i> On the other hand, I couldn't just let them go. Not when the most evocative description of skating was to be found in their text. And now it's happened. Today! After several thwarted attempts, and through the very concrete act of skating, I've finally found my way into those abstract and highly convoluted philosophical writings of theirs! Suddenly the interplay of those striated and smooth surfaces, of those flow conjunctions and lines of flight, make sense!</p>	<p><i>Skating Field Notes, January 23, 2005</i></p>
<p>One can never consent to creep, when one feels an impulse to soar.</p>	<p><i>Helen Keller</i></p>

Figure 7.1: Leap

with what her body can now do and pleasures out of swelling her body *tout court*, these words begin to become ‘other’: falling out of their current place and positioning in the existing symbolic order; taking the aging female body quite literally with them – attached *to* them – as they jostle for their place in the sun; creating new connections between *soma* and *logo* that fly in the face of traditional patriarchal twinings and in so doing, confound and delight.

Bringing a feminist twist to ‘the disorganised body’ à la Barthes – that vibratory body of sensations, of burning pain and molten pleasure – what this swaggering and crowing aging female body also manages to do is to incorporate a politics into her at once explosive, at once integrated, acts of bodily self-gratification. Within this revised understanding of the disorganised body, the public forum – that place where ‘pure enjoyment’ supposedly ends – becomes not only a necessary site in which to enact her politics, but the one place where she *can and does* experiment, where she *can and does* take risks. In stepping outside – *alongside* – the acceptable boundaries of gender and age performance, in becoming that complicated and jumbled anomaly of words, acts and connotative meanings, the recreational female midlife trick skater is free to swagger like a feminist precisely *because* she has no pre-established position or place to be expelled from as she turns herself into a spectacle, precisely *because* her ‘pure enjoyment’ cannot be touched by that crippling self-awareness that robs the exhibitory Barthesian amateur performer of ‘his’ pleasure. Thus armed with her swagger, she can now *grow into* a positioning that Ellen Kestnbaum’s (1995) elite female figure skater cannot *yet*: a positioning that embraces its ‘on the edge’ status; a positioning that cares little that it has already been relegated to the scrapheap of those who ‘do not fit.’

In the sporting world, access to this scrapheap of the physically fit who do not fit can be gained through participating in a gender-coded activity in a manner that does not conform to what is expected, or is conferred because one's gender and one's activity of choice are seen to be a mismatch – as in female and wrestling. Such a positioning in sport can be understood to be occupied by what Mary Louise Adams (1993) terms the gender “border case” – a concept that she borrows from Mary Poovey's (1988) study of gender in nineteenth century England, and that describes those bodies or instances that “have the potential to expose the artificiality of the binary logic” (2) of a given setting or era through their failure to conform to that logic. Adams's own “border case” interest is Canada's four time World Champion men's singles figure skater, Kurt Browning. What she shows us is how in spite of his undisputed athleticism and exceptional on-ice talent, Browning's efforts to “meet dominant standards” of maleness in sport will never be fully rewarded in part because he competes “in a ‘girl's’ sport” (Adams 1993, 177), in part because he continually troubles hegemonic representations of maleness through incorporating into a tough guy persona like Humphrey Bogart, say, an aesthetic on-ice sensibility that makes Bogart just ever so slightly ‘other.’ Adams convincingly argues that what Browning's murky positioning in the borderlands of gender can at least reward “those of us who are intent on changing gender relations” (178) with, however, is an important insight into how through “nipping and tucking” away at this ‘logic’ one “bit at a time” (177-178) – this, incidentally, also being the *modus operandi* of the “border case” sporting body – we can eventually wear that logic down.

In the case of Browning, such nipping and tucking was facilitated by being located in a ‘girls’ sport.’ Already on the outside of ‘acceptable’ male sporting practices, he enjoyed

a freedom to play that his elite female counterparts, trapped within the ‘safe’ confines of a hyper-feminised sporting activity, do not. If this freedom is one that the swaggering midlife female trick skater shares with Browning, what this playful tactic on the part of the ‘border case’ sporting body also returns us to is Lugones’s (1998) definition of conversation, with its stress on the importance of “the unanticipated response” (156). As suggested in the opening chapter of this thesis, the only interesting conversations in Lugones’s mind are those that carry the promise of the unknown: those conversations that do not follow a predictable path and which alternatively thrill or dismay for the simple reason that there *is* no predetermined endpoint or *telos*. Seeing the moves associated with trick skating as Lugones-style unpredictable conversations, then, and positing these moves/conversations as constitutive of those in-between spaces in sport out of which new ways of comporting oneself whilst participating in physical activities can emerge, we can posit the feminist swagger *as* one such comportment: not a case of imitating male swagger, but of making swagger other; a prime example, if you like, of Judith Halberstam’s (1998) contention that new modes of masculinity can emerge from how females *do* masculinity, which in turn feeds back into how males *themselves* do masculinity, thus opening the door to what Halberstam describes as “an active matrix of exchange between male and female masculinities” (276). Within this new in-between configuration of swagger, and to return once again to the dictionary definition of swagger as offered at the end of the previous chapter, the physicality of this attitude as rooted in its Norwegian origin *svagga* – ‘to sway’ – becomes more pronounced as the assigned traits that have since become attached to swagger – ‘proud,’ ‘insolent,’ ‘superiority’ – recede away.

What is important to remember in all of this, too, is that in occupying that in-between space, the swaggering midlife female trick skater complicates as much through *what* she does – “What *is* that you’re doing anyway? Because it sure isn’t figure skating, but then it’s not hockey either” – as *who* she is: that recreational midlife female miscreant, out there on the ice turning tricks. It is a complication, moreover, that might just explain why strange things are happening out there on the rink on this particular ‘DJ Nite’: Swagger arching his back, extending his leg, stretching his body out into a passable, albeit self-mockingly so, arabesque – a pose, incidentally, that is known in ballet circles as an ‘attitude’ (Jacobs 1995, 52) – whilst Timidity, all shimmering tank top, tight jeans and spangle earrings, is taking off those figure skate rentals, marching back down to the equipment depot, and asking if she can exchange her *girls’* skates for a pair of *boys’*. All of which leads to another pressing matter: the gendered technology of skates.

7:2 The Gendered Technology of Skates

Skates, more than any other sporting equipment, and in spite of obvious and ever-escalating transgressions, remain hyper-gendered. More girls than ever might be playing hockey, boys have always figure skated, and female recreational skaters are increasingly releasing their feet from the tyranny of the narrow booted, trip-you-up spiked blade of the figure skate, and opting for the laid-back comfort of the hockey skate. However, figure skates continue to be referred to as ‘girls’ skates,’ hockey skates as ‘boys’ skates.’ And this typology still holds sway when it comes to how the average Friday or Saturday night *Atrium le 1000* ‘DJ Nite’ skater goes about renting a set of blades.

But then, these are hard things to shake off, these typologies – these connections between gender and technology. Kim Sawchuk (1992), for example, has drawn on Teresa de Lauretis’s ‘technologies of gender’ to consider how babies become gender-coded by their diapers: blue pampers for boys, pink pampers for girls. If, as Sawchuk suggests, this early interpellation into the sex-gender system is quite literally “*attached* to the body both to contain corporeal leakages and to fix gendered boundaries” (45, author’s translation, my emphasis) – it remains that blue is not inherently male, just as pink is not inherently female. In fact, these colours in themselves are not inherently anything. Once the connection is made between a particular strand of the sex-gender system and in this case, a particular tone in the colour spectrum, however; once that connection becomes widely accepted, is propagated, reiterated, and reinforced *ad infinitum ad nauseam*, then blue becomes connotative of everything ‘boy,’ pink of everything ‘girl.’ And it spreads. Into other colours. Into a whole range of gendered practices, attitudes and comportments, as when a patchwork of dirty beiges, greens and browns becomes army, becomes boy. Change the connection, though – switch it around – and the whole ‘structure of feeling’ around a particular colour changes. Armies of men go out to fight wars in pink fatigues, and pink is no longer ‘girly.’ Little girls in ballet classes *pas de deux* in jungle-toned tutus, and camouflage is no longer manly. Standard semiotics, all of this: signs, signified, signifier. Cultural, yes, and culturally specific. And all of this extends to skates.

At Murrayfield arena in Edinburgh, Scotland, for example, the only skates available for rent are pink and purple fibre-glass figure skates. Most boys in Canada, steeped as they are in their country’s hockey culture, would not be seen dead in them. In Edinburgh

everybody who goes to the rink wears them: male and female, from the biggest and toughest to the mildest and tiniest, not only because this is all there is to choose from, but because there are no gendered prohibitions around skates. Around other sports and sporting equipment, yes: football, netball, rugby; national sports all; each one accompanied by its deeply entrenched and strictly observed gender codes. But figure skates, because there is no widespread culture of hockey, because they have escaped gendering in Edinburgh, are free in this environment to just be skates. Perhaps therein lies an exciting route out of this particular gender tyranny. But for the swaggering midlife female trick skater, it is still not quite route enough.

Sandra Lee Bartky (1998) has observed how “the properly feminine woman must never allow herself to sprawl into the available space” (17). Keep this in mind as I give you a brief and informal lesson in skate technology. On a ‘boys’ skate’ – a hockey skate – the fit is loose and the blade is rounded. To propel yourself forward you push outwards: swinging your body from side to side; riding your blade in a kind of rodeo-like, rocking horse rhythm. On a ‘girls’ skate’ – a figure skate – the rigid tight boot and the ram-rod straight blade forces the skater to make small, stiff, space-saving strokes. Here, it is the pick in the front that helps you to inch yourself daintily forward or, if you dare to break out and make a run for it, to catch you out violently and send you flying. So back to Bartky, and the question that begs asking here: Can anyone actually sprawl, much less achieve a swagger, on girls’ skates? Apart from the exceptional Kurt Brownings and Alexis Yagoudins who can make those bladed boots of theirs do whatever they want them to do, can anyone look tough and imposing on a pair of figure skates? In other words, the very technology of the skate serves to reinforce stereotyped ideas around

how females and males should move their bodies and occupy space. At the same time, however – and as Michèle Martin's (1991) detailed history of the late nineteenth century emergence of another gendered technology, the telephone, reminds us – the gendering of technologies is never static, and nor are the technologies themselves beyond appropriation.

Early on, for example, commercial developers of the telephone identified urban businessmen as the primary users of this technology, and hence targeted their marketing campaigns at this particular demographic. Pitching it as a tool destined for the 'serious business' of keeping the nation *in* business and assigning it, accordingly, with the gender designation of 'male,' women's use of the telephone for private and casual purposes was not only frowned upon, but likely to result in the female user being disciplined (143). For in addition to being 'guilty' of what those behind this technology's development saw as wasting "valuable time" through "unprofitable chatter" (163-164), the female telephone user's "idle talk and...gossip" (164) was also seen to be breaching the "correct etiquette" surrounding telephone use, as elaborated by those men in charge of the technology and as designed to "prevent women from using these technologies for "undesirable" and "dangerous" practices" (151).

The fear underlying these attempts to curtail the 'subversive' activities of 'delinquent' female users (who, in spite of the warnings, seemed intent on making full use of the telephone) was twofold. First – a practical consideration – was that women's appropriation of the telephone during business hours would cut into the valuable working day of those men trying to make use of it for profit. If this fear was somewhat

allayed when it was discovered that these latter were not actually taking up the telephone as a working tool, preferring the 'men only' exclusivity of their smoking lounges and sporting clubs to conduct their business, the fact that this fear was there in the first place serves to reinforce Frueh's point that to 'waste time' in the pursuit of 'non-productive' pleasure not only presents a threat to the patriarchal order, but can be seen as an important act of feminist resistance. The second fear – more a surveillance issue, this – was that women would use the telephone to conduct private conversations and to arrange illicit – that is, *non-chaperoned* – rendezvous'. In a society that sought to control urban middle and upper class women's every word and movement – for this is the demographic that would have had access to a telephone at that time – the telephone was seen as just one more step down the slippery slope; as but another example of modern technology's determination to push women, hence society at large, to the brink of moral decay.

Sound familiar? Not only does this late nineteenth century rhetoric around the emergence of the telephone sound like the early twenty-first century rant of a Middle America evangelist; in its desire to both protect and use *as* protection the notion of a "perfect and idealized femininity" (Mayne 1995, 89), this rhetoric resonates with the aims and discourses of today's 'Ladies' figure skating circuit, as discussed earlier in this chapter. However, if Frueh-style 'gender maintenance' is the name of the game being played in both of these scenarios, the story of the telephone did not end there. For as Martin (1991) goes on to explain, women's persistent and unrepentant acts of 'delinquency' combined with the telephone companies' eventual realisation that the *big* money actually lay in tapping into the 'idle chit-chat' market (170) eventually meant

that the telephone became re-gendered as a female technology. If one of the downsides of this technological example of a *gender reassignment* is that the commercial interests that drove it were not accompanied by an equally dramatic about-turn in terms of how women's communicatory patterns were viewed by society (171), a predictable offshoot of this re-gendering is that the landline telephone – much like girls' push-ups – is regarded today as somewhat of a 'soft' technology. This, unfortunately, is what tends to happen to those technologies that are gendered as female. On the other hand, what the story of the telephone demonstrates is that the original uses and users for which certain technologies are designed can change as a result of the unintended uses to which they are put by a group of determined and *active* users. In other words, not only could a pair of hockey skates be re-gendered (or even un-gendered) through the subversive uses to which they are put by aspiring midlife female trick skaters; what these latter users' appropriation of this technology for their own purposes could also lead to is an eventual reconfiguration of the so-called 'hockey' skate's actual purpose – a point I pick up on in the next chapter when engaging with de Certeau's (1984) conception of the tactical consumer who "makes do" in order to effect social change.

Though on the surface it seems far too simplistic to suggest that Timidity could become Swagger by simply changing her skates, it strikes me that a new set of blades might have a significant impact on how space gets negotiated out there on the rink when Swagger and Timidity next meet. Furthermore, it is my contention that in the art of trick skating – a sporting activity that has not yet become gender-coded – and in the figure of the swaggering midlife female recreational trick skater – a sporting body who challenges and subverts traditional on-ice gender roles – Timidity might discover a way

of moving on those new skates of hers that does more than simply *incorporate* that which has traditionally been associated with male performance – be it out on the rink or in the realm of the everyday – into her own. For this, I maintain, is the trap into which so many new and emerging activities that celebrate their so-called ‘break’ with that which is traditional fall. I am thinking here of Troy D. Glover’s (2003) account of rave culture, in which young women are temporarily freed from the *burden* of gender whilst out there on the dance floor: in part because they wear clothes that are “baggy” and “androgynous” (312) – in other words, clothes that de-sexualize them as women and render them boy-like; in part because the ecstasy consumed to enhance the trance-like sense of community and ‘brotherly’ love that epitomises the rave experience also kills the male sex drive (315). I am thinking here of Midol and Broyer’s (1995) account of the “new” status of the body, both male *and* female, in France’s whiz snow sport culture¹³: a body “associated with a gender liberation” in that it challenges the “tenseness in men and the lack of strength in women” (208); a body that, as a result of this freeing from traditional movement patterns, becomes “energetic but fluid” whilst *also* managing to remain “cool” in attitude and “slender” in physique as it clips on “the boards *they call “guns”*” (208, my emphasis). On the one hand, there is something decidedly appealing about the bodies that inhabit each of these youthful and youth-oriented cultures: in their de-sexed and de-gendered state, they do manage to dance away the night or sail down a mountain unencumbered. On the other hand, there is something deeply troubling about the *way* that they reach this nirvana: the young women, as usual, conceding more than their male counterparts; ‘becoming-boy’ (style-wise, attitude-wise and corporeally) tipping the balance over ‘becoming-girl’ (fluidity) as they all slide trance-like into never-gender land.

If this is a dubious kind of freedom in terms of the kinds of *newly* gendered bodies it produces – not so much new, perhaps, as everybody embracing an ever-so-slightly feminised masculinity; not so much an instance of subversive gender-bending, it seems, as an occasion to bring on the de-politicised, unthreatening gender-blender – it is also one that raises the question of what kinds of bodies, male *or* female, are being celebrated here. That these bodies move with a confidence and prowess that makes them, in Dorothy Allison’s (1996) terms, pretty much immune to ever falling down is an issue that I tackle in the next chapter, opening in so doing a space for the skating body that swaggers not because it does what it does so well, but because it is not afraid of its own fallibility. That these bodies are also invariably youthful is my second challenge to them, and one that I take up in the conclusion of this thesis: seeing in the swagger of the *midlife* skating body the emergence of an attitude and comportment that jars with its more typical young male embodiment, and that alerts us as it wreaks its disruption both to where the liberatory potential in aging might lie, and to how very *un-*alternative a number of these so-called ‘alternative’ cultures, sporting or otherwise, in fact are.

Chapter 8: Becoming Movement

8:0 Introduction

Drawing on her interoceptive, proprioceptive and haptic senses, the swaggering midlife female trick skater does not so much copy moves and hunt down affect as *become* movement and affect, allowing herself as she twirls, leaps, swerves to avoid collision and sometimes falls to become but one element in a fluid interplay of ice, blades, bodies, music and air. *Interoceptivity* – that is, her newfound ability to perceive “the visceral working and felt intensities” of her “interior” body (Fisher J. 1997, 6) – has given her, like born-again aerobics demon Jean Grimshaw (1999), a “new bodily orientation,” making her feel “more integrated and mobile” so that she and her body are no longer “pulling against each other” (111-112). Likewise, she has learnt how to mobilise what she now knows about her body in terms of the *proprioceptive* – that is, its outward movement into a wider network of “spatial relations” (Stivale 2003, 45) – to become, like one of Joanna Frueh’s (2001) midlife female bodybuilders, an “agent of her own pleasure” (81): an “aesthete” simultaneously grounded in, and gliding through, space (80). If entering into a *haptic* relationship with others out there on the “sensory field” that now describes the rink has made her *sense* space in terms of “the proximal” as opposed to “the distal,” what the loose “physical bonds” that are fleetingly “created and ruptured” as a result of this more “chemical” understanding of how people come together and negotiate each other in a sporting space of affect (Stivale 2003, 43) have allowed her to *see* is that space, like movement, is far more transitory and interactive than she would have previously believed it to be. This is a conception of space that takes into account choreographer William Forsythe’s proposition that *inhabiting* space

is not about pushing forward *into* space or *invading* space but rather, about “leaving your body in space” (Brandsetter 2000b, 124) – and seeing what happens when you do. It is a conception of space that resonates with Michelangelo’s idea of seeing the angel in the marble, and then carving until you set that angel free. But it is also, as argued in the previous two chapters, a conception that must actively challenge the idea that spaces, like bodies and movement, could ever be set a-swirl without first taking a careful look at how gender impacts and informs all three of these sites – and this whether they are considered as sites that are separate the one from the other, as in more traditional philosophical discourses, or as one and the same, as in poststructuralist thought.

In this chapter I revisit some of those concepts discussed in previous chapters and bring them into dialogue with a few new ones in order to explore further the defining features of the swaggering midlife female trick skater’s process of becoming movement. This process entails, as I argue in the first section, becoming a fluid, relational and potentiality-based *doing* body that conceives of itself less as a singular *body* in movement than as a *bodies* in movement – an idea that draws on Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) blurring of the flesh-and-blood body’s frontiers through the notion of haecceity, but that expands their conception so as to incorporate the body that actually *feels itself feeling* as a result of things not going so well as it participates in a sporting activity. This latter body, I argue in the second section, must embrace rather than evade the fall – not only to get better at what it does (in this case, skate) but because falling, in this new conception of what it means to join the poststructuralist flow, to be in the zone, is a crucial aspect of becoming movement out there on the ice. Here, I juxtapose flow psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) surprisingly positivist and highly

prescriptive account of the sporting body finding flow through an almost tyrannical – hence somewhat paradoxical – regime of disciplinary control, with Gabriele Brandstetter’s (2000b) fluid and poetic descriptions of falling *as* flow. These latter, in incorporating the *folly* of falling into the realm of bodily flow, shed light on Roland Barthes’s (2000b) idea that in “accompanying” his fall such that he falls “excessively,” he turns his fall into an act that on the one hand, hurts less, but on the other, enters the realm of the self-conscious spectacle.

If all of this evokes images of the clown, it is a clown that takes its cue from Michel de Certeau’s (1984) trickster – a concept that I explore in the third section of this chapter. Here, I propose that the swaggering midlife female *trick* skater’s reconfiguring of bodies, movement and space through her particular “ways” of “making do” (29) out there on the ice resonate with de Certeau’s reading of the consumer trickster who, through creating “cross-cuts, fragments, cracks and lucky hits in the framework of a system” (38), manages to “sketch out the guileful ruses of *different* interests and desires” (34, original emphasis). I also suggest how the trickster’s privileging of time-based tactics over space-invading strategies signal an important conceptual shift – not only with regard to how the swaggering midlife female trick skater moves her body on ice, but equally in relation to this thesis as a whole. With this in mind, I conclude the chapter by looking more closely at Kristeva’s (1995) notion of “women’s time”: comparing first one of the key tropes Kristeva uses to explore this notion, the womblike *chora*, to Deleuze and Guattari’s egg-like *Body without Organs*; drawing on Kristeva’s (1980) understanding of the semiotic *chora* as rhythmic “riant spaciousness” (283) to elaborate an understanding of movement and relational dynamics out on the rink based

on inhabiting time through bodily rhythm, as opposed to demarcating space through the extension of one's body into it.

8:1 The Doing Body

Jennifer Daryl Slack (2003) suggests that the *doing* body is best understood in terms of its “capacities,” and these in the context of that body “in relationship” (10). To this end, the focus is on the body’s “capacity to affect and be affected,” its “capacity for movement (or rest) with particular speed (or slowness),” and its “capacity for particular intensities and sensations” (10). If this relational and potentiality-based conception of the body comes close to describing how it sometimes feels to be gliding along inside/outside/alongside my own becoming midlife female trick skater body – a body continually redefined in terms of its capacity for doing what was previously unimaginable – it also forces us to think the body less in terms of what it *is* and more in terms of what it *does*. This, as Christa Albrecht-Crane and Jennifer Daryl Slack (2003) explain, means asking the following two questions: “What can a body do?” and “Of what affects is a body capable?” (192). If this line of questioning and way of thinking the body is inspired by Deleuze and Guattari, it is worth noting that Nietzsche, too, speaks of capacity, insisting that happiness is not some “thing” out there waiting to be stumbled over but rather, that it is “the *capacity* to live one’s life actively – affirming the particularity or specificity of one’s moment in time” (Colebrook 2002, 19, my emphasis). Though such a positing of the body cannot deny its fleshly materiality and its gendered location within a particular historical, social and political context, as explored in the previous two chapters, and though it cannot be assumed that just because happiness is *not* to be found in “some true world above and beyond the world

that appears to us” (Colebrook 2002, 19) it will necessarily result of every flow-based relationship we enter into, what these descriptions of capacity and the actively *doing* and *being done to* body do suggest is that in some cases – and I would argue that the swaggering midlife female trick skater’s body is one of them – we can learn more about that body by conceiving of it not as an individual entity, but as a “mode of individuation” (Slack 2003, 10).

Thinking the body as a “mode of individuation” means that the singular flesh and blood body that continuously produces anew and creates anew is still integral to the process of bringing *it* – the body as that *particular* individuated mode – into becoming. Being integral, however, does not mean that that singular body is necessarily identifiable. This, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), is the part that we humans all too often fail to grasp: mistakenly believing that we can distinguish ourselves *from* that “mode of individuation” or haecceity; seeing haecceity as something that we humans weave in and out of, come together in and meander away from, as if it consisted “simply of a décor or backdrop” against which to situate ourselves, or of “appendages” to “hold things and people to the ground” (262). On the contrary, and as Deleuze and Guattari go on to emphasise, haecceity is to be understood as “the entire assemblage in its individuated aggregate” (262). This means that we humans (and everything else for that matter) just swirl around “as longitude and latitude, a set of speeds and slownesses between unformed particles” (262) within it:

Climate, wind, season, hour are not of another nature than the things, animals, or people that populate them, follow them, sleep and awaken within them. (263)

Constituted in it and through it and at the same time, constitutive of it, it is not surprising that this idea of everything entering into composition with everything where nothing can be separated out lends itself so well to the ‘thisness’ of skate meeting ice meeting bodies meeting speed meeting hot meeting music meeting sweat meeting air meeting light meeting you meeting me down at the rink. And nor is it surprising that Deleuze and Guattari treat our participation in haecceity so matter-of-factly –

You will yield nothing to haecceities unless you realize that that is what you are, and that you are nothing but that. (262)

– and take our desire to *be* a part of it so much for granted:

You have the individuality of a day, a season, a year, *a life* (regardless of its duration) – a climate, a wind, a fog, a swarm, a pack (regardless of its regularity). Or at least you can have it, you can reach it. (262)

And why, indeed, would anybody *not* want to reach it: this sense of being at one with the environment, of being nothing more than velocity and sensation, of feeling such connectedness to everything and everyone that the self as we have traditionally been taught to recognise it ceases to matter, to even exist? Is this not, after all, why we seek out certain ‘extreme’ sporting experiences? Is this de-selfing of the self not what Whiz Snow Sport Culture’s 1978 flying kilometre champ, Cathy Breyton, is referring to when she speaks of “the harmony by which the limits of the body blend with the environment, when skis have stopped vibrating and begin to glide, when it leaves the zone of real time and enters the unreal” (Midol and Broyer 1995, 208)?

Then again, perhaps it is not so much a case of *wanting* or *not wanting* to reach it, as finding a means and ensuring the right kind of conditions whereby we *can*. For sporting experiences can equally serve as major impediments to reaching such an integrated

understanding of our body in relationship to our surroundings and to others, and this whether these experiences are termed ‘extreme,’ just seem ‘extreme,’ or do not even touch on the ‘extreme’. What these experiences reaffirm as nothing else can is one’s entrapment within a body that not only recoils from the material surfaces with which it comes into contact, but which – in its recognition of dislocation and apartness – can feel a stranger even to itself. Such experiences – and both recreational ice skating and recreational trick skating certainly offer up their fair share of them – are sometimes attributable to *inexperience*: a left foot that refuses to step over the right foot so as to effect a cross-cut on one’s ‘bad’ side; an inability to grind one’s blades into the ice in order to execute a stop; a clumsy recovery when another skater unexpectedly cuts into one’s path. Or they can be induced by a mismatch between self and material or physical conditions: a blade that keeps catching or a boot that is ill-fitting or an ice surface that yields up surprises. In all of these cases, it is the individual body that *feels itself feeling* that shatters that sense of connectedness to and (dis)integration into a whole that exceeds the self. Moreover, the sensorial triggers that break the spell of oneness with the environment and provoke this body’s moment of excessive self-awareness do not in themselves have to be particularly acute or remarkable: they can, in fact, be quite banal.

Barthes (1977b), for example, maintains that his body *only* exists when it experiences “light” physical pain – a headache – or “mild” pleasures of the “sensual” kind. If his body is completely free of pain or pleasure, then he does not feel his body at all. If the pain or pleasure becomes too intense, then his body slips into the realm of hallucination – becomes a “seat of intense transgressions” (60). In measured amounts and as *coenesthesia*, however – that is, in degrees and forms that foster a general awareness of

the body *as one's own* (Funk and Wagnalls 1980, 262) – Barthes's (1977b) everyday experiences of “temperate, accessible or remediable” (60) pain and pleasure are what “individuate” his body and make its existence known to him (60). Insisting that this individuated body of his is far from heroic, barred as it is from “being able to glorify itself with any danger” (60) through its charmed side-stepping or conscious avoidance of ‘extreme’ pains and pleasures, what this moderately *doing* body compels us to question is whether the body that *feels itself feeling* must forever remain excluded from reaching that Deleuze-Guattarian (1987) *un-place* where individuality has the fluid corporeality of “a day, a season...a swarm, a pack” (262), or whether there is some other way of getting there. For to deny this *feeling itself feeling* body access to this *un-place* is to suggest that only those bodies that are so good at what they do that they have ceased to feel themselves doing it – the Cathy Breytons of the whiz sport world, those recreational trick skaters for whom a crosscut, a stop, a sudden change of pace and direction have become ‘second-nature’ – will ever know this experience of un-being through becoming.

On the other hand, to even consider that this body could know such an experience is to open up a space: a space in which brief moments of freedom from being might no longer be limited to the experts and the accomplished; a space that might not be dependent on *not* feeling yourself feeling – for even the experts and accomplished have those days where a boot pinches or a blade sticks or the ice buckles – but that embraces, rather, the idea that to stumble and fall and to feel your body feeling is not to be excluded from haecceity, but to find other ways of incorporating and (dis)integrating your individuated *feeling* body into it. In other words, beyond the personal discomfort

of sore boots, beyond the material hazard of that crack in the ice, beyond the gendering of spaces and skates as discussed in the previous two chapters, the aim here is to reach that un-place where even the *feeling itself feeling* body might become movement as it finds itself, among other revolutionary acts, falling into flow.

8:2 Falling into Flow

Falling is commonly seen as an irksome and unwelcome disruption: a temporary glitch in that which was previously going so well, proceeding as planned, making good progress until *whoops* – out of nowhere the proverbial slip on the banana peel. Accompanied by a sense of humiliation, of mortification, of shame, the fall is that thing we hurriedly pick ourselves up from, dust ourselves down from, peer around apprehensively after, hope nobody saw. More than just a physical slip, it is our descent into ignominy, our slide out of uprightness in all senses of the word. A cause for celebration in the Barthesian (1975) world of writing – “Pleasure in pieces; language in pieces; culture in pieces”...Oh, bliss (51) – the same does not apply to the world of sport. For example, the fall in elite-level female figure skating, as Judith Mayne (1995) explains, is more than *just* a fall. Breaking the “idealized spectacle of femininity,” exposing spectators to “the potential acting out of the *failures* of femininity” (83, original emphasis), the ‘simple’ act of falling signals a good deal more:

Falling becomes an indication of a variety of syndromes that are presumed to be particular obstacles to female athletes – poor self esteem, fear of success, terror of the spotlight. (83)

In a society where figure skating, as discussed in the previous chapter, is acknowledged as one of those sports that keeps “female athleticism within safe boundaries,” in part through setting itself up as a kind of display case in which “the grace and femininity to

which women in this culture are presumed to aspire” is blatantly exhibited, in part through its constant emphasis on “the grace and the prettiness of skaters” (83), this fall *from grace* is indeed worrying: not only for the female skaters who must uphold this image of a “perfect and idealized” (88) femininity, but also for the whole machine behind this particular example of highly mediated gender construction.

There are, however, two enabling cracks in this seemingly well-sealed scenario. The first is identified by Mayne, seeing in what she believes to be the “secret enjoyment” experienced by many female spectators as they take in “the spectacle of the fall” (88), the stirrings of a collective consciousness all-too-ready to accept the failure of that particular version of femininity. The second, I argue, lies in the hands of those actually doing the skating: growing out of Mayne’s assertion that it is “the *fear* of falling on the ice [that] represents a discomfort with spectacle and public exposure in general” (83, my emphasis). In other words, it is not the fall itself that creates a female skater’s discomfort around being in the spotlight, around being the subject of public scrutiny. Rather, it is the fear that she *will* fall that looms ominously: a fear that might be best overcome by, well, *just doing it*. For once done, the illusion is shattered. In other words, and in contrast to Dorothy Allison’s (1996) body that has never forgotten itself – that perfectly toned and tuned athletic female “creature” who is not afraid to fall down “but somehow doesn’t” (64) – the swaggering midlife female trick skater is the ‘critter’ who not only *does* fall, but *must*.

Falling:

The pattern of chance that [the] fallible remembrance of movement opens up. (Brandstetter 2000a, 26)

Or again:

The loss of equilibrium and the disruption of skilled movement. (26)

Falling, then, simultaneously implicates and implies the following: chaos, a faulty memory, an opening, an imbalance, a blip in the otherwise smooth application of skill. All ‘attributes,’ incidentally, that Barthes’s assigns to the writerly fragment. All features, as it happens, of Barthes’s affect-charged *texte de jouissance*. That falling is intrinsically connected to the limbs in that we tend to fall *off* of them not only reinforces this link – limb deriving from the Latin *limbus* which means “hem” or “edge” (Brandstetter 2000b, 108), which is precisely where Barthes likes to sit *in* language; it also helps to illustrate Barthes’s (2000b) point that it is “the seam...the fault, the flaw” (406) *between* language as culturally conformist (‘the Work’) and language as bodily and destructive (Text), *between* standing (on limbs, on edges) and lying (on the ground, on the ice) that is erotic, that is interesting. Furthermore, and as Brandstetter (2000b) points out, limb is also connected to *limbo* – that indefinite realm between heaven and hell (108). But a letter removed from its fallible leggy root, to be *in limbo* is in effect to be *nowhere*. This not only suggests that the fall that comes of limbs – edges – having momentarily forgotten themselves is a kind of transitory *un-space*, *un-time*, that manages to “redistribute,” as Barthes (2000b) would have it, the language of culture (405), or as the swaggering midlife female trick skater would have it, the attitudes and compartments of rink culture. Such a conception also fits with Barthes’s particular vision of utopia, which is a ‘non-time’ and ‘non-space’ better conceived of as an *atopia*, in that it allows us to temporarily ‘fall out’ of history (412).

On the one hand, what this discussion of limbs, edges and seams reinforces is how disorganised trick skating and organised forms of skating like figure skating fold into each other: the former requiring the latter in order to *stay* interesting, in order to *remain* in that in-between space that resists the fall into an established practice, into Culture. On the other hand, it also explains why ‘place-less’ tactics, not ‘headquarter-based’ strategies, are the domain of the swaggering midlife female trick skater and why the trope of the trickster befits and becomes her, as discussed in the next section. As for the fall itself, which is equally the domain of the swaggering midlife female trick skater, falling here implies more than just the self-belief to *let* oneself fall because, pace Allison, one believes even more deeply that one will not. *Au contraire*, to speak of falling is to unequivocally accept that one *will* fall, and indeed *must* and *does*. For falling is the only way to find that edge, that seam...And having found it, to continue to ride along it. Not only because falling, as two times singles figure skating Olympic gold medallist Dick Button asserts, is where you improve –

There is a popular fallacy that falling down is the mark of a poor skater. But the truth is that when one stops falling, he [sic] has probably *stopped* improving. (Gutman 1995, 41, my emphasis)

– but because falling is, quite simply, your fastest route into the ‘in-between.’ It remains, however, that falling hurts. Not, perhaps, whilst you are riding that edge, sliding along that seam, careening inside/alongside that in-between gap without beginning, without end – in other words, *falling*. But what about when you *do* hit rock bottom, as hit it you must. What then?

Barthes (2000b), for his part, minimises the effect of the impact – and by extension, the impact of the effect – through self-consciously *guiding* his fall into the realms of excess and the spectacle:

This morning, around eight, the weather was splendid. I had an impulse to try M.'s bicycle, to go to the baker's. I haven't ridden a bike since I was a kid. My body found this operation very odd, difficult, and I was afraid (of getting on, of getting off). I told all this to the baker – and as I left the shop, trying to get back on my bike, of course I fell off. Now by instinct I let myself fall *excessively*, legs in the air, in the silliest posture imaginable. And then I understood that it was this silliness which saved me (from hurting myself too much): I *accompanied* my fall and thereby turned myself into a spectacle, I made myself ridiculous; but thereby, too, I diminished its effect. (488-489, original emphasis)

Silliness, then, becomes Barthes's saviour. A saviour that is *not* afforded the elite female figure skater when she falls – not *yet*, anyway – but which *is* afforded those of us who have nothing much to lose *in* falling beyond a temporary loss of face; beyond the physical comfort of *not* feeling our body feeling. If this makes silliness an option which, whilst not discounting the very real risks to and discomforts for the corporeal body that falling can entail, is at least *open* to the swaggering midlife female trick skater, it is also an option that helps her to continue her work of reconfiguring swagger into something 'other' than its current masculinised embodiment. For recall Lou Stovall's (2001) recollection of his male teenage swagger, as discussed in Chapter 6: a swagger that gave him access to the realm of cool precisely because it was *not* "excessive," precisely because to give your swagger "too much" of a swagger was to look "*silly* if not totally stupid" (134, my emphasis). Quite obviously, silly does not belong in the world of teenage boy cool. Which makes it all the more appealing to the swaggering midlife female trick skater: applying it to her swagger so as to create a space in this attitude for an outrageously and entirely inappropriate brand of excessiveness. If excessiveness

equally accompanies her approach to field research, as discussed in Chapter 3, Barthes makes an interesting move when he flips this act of *accompanying* one's body (as it falls, as it goes forth into the research site) on its head. No longer a case of the body taking the trait – in this case, *excessiveness* – along with it as it voluntarily or involuntarily plunges into the fray, what we now have is the trait enabling the body to move differently *into* that space through this very act of accompaniment: rendering, in so doing, the body's fall less painful; turning this fall (and by extension, the research process) into a self-conscious spectacle.

On the one hand, this notion of the fall as mediated by the faller so as to transform it *into* a spectacle resonates with the purposeful and *learned* fall of the clown in pantomime. On the other hand, the unexpectedness of the unplanned fall injects into it the added dimension of spontaneity that the pantomime fall does not have, and this in turn makes a demand on the casual faller's body that is not demanded of the clown. Grappling with this inconsistency between falling *into* spectacle and falling *as* spectacle, Gabriele Brandstetter (2000b) asks whether it is possible to let the body fall “out of the order of equilibrium...without just simply acting it out” (124). Speculating on how the “conventional representation” of a fall as offered by the pantomime clown might help us to better understand the act of falling more generally, Brandstetter questions whether there can be such a thing as “a “skilled” demonstration” of genuine bodily “disorganisation” (124). Clearly, Barthes's fall *into* spectacle is an attempt to impose some sort of order over a body that has fallen into disorder. As for whether the fall that results exemplifies ‘simply acting it out’ or speaks to ‘a *skilled* demonstration of disorganisation,’ however, is less obvious. For indeed, though the distinction

between these two options is fairly subtle, it is a distinction that none-the-less significantly alters the implications of both. For whereas ‘simply acting it out’ suggests a conscious and imitative engagement with the fall that is reminiscent of the sporting rules of engagement as inherent in Giamatti’s (1989) ‘conventions’ or MacIntyre’s (1981) ‘practices,’ as discussed in Chapter 5, the notion of a ‘skilled demonstration’ does allow for an intervention that takes its cue from the body, not the mind.

With regard to the first option, then, such a conscious and meditated approach to folly fits with Barthes’s idea of textual flow, and his assertion that in its smooth communicatory delivery and its ability to blind us to language’s insidious workings, as discussed in Chapter 3, one can confidently assume that where the prose flows, the body is not. That Barthes uses his own fall to turn himself into a self-conscious form of spectacle suggests that the company he sends in to accompany his fall is of the cerebral kind, rendering the fall itself compatible with what *he* sees as a flow that is regimented, constrictive and reactionary. That recognised flow guru Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) would appear to agree with him is perhaps the biggest surprise, however. Especially, that is, given the favourable attention that the latter has received for having pushed the importance of wellbeing and happiness *through* bodily flow to the forefront of a sporting agenda more in tune with the Olympian mantra of ‘higher, faster, stronger.’ But wait. What is Csikszentmihalyi doing, in that case, calling the first section of his chapter on the body in flow by those exact same words – “Higher, Faster, Stronger” (96)? And why, moreover, have sports, dance, the martial arts and even *sex* been reduced to “modalities,” whilst those who partake in these ‘modalities’ must submit their bodies to “refined” and “disciplined” training regimes so as to “develop the

skills they require” in order to avoid what becomes of one’s body – “a lump of rather inexpensive flesh” – when one does not (97)? All right, so perhaps Csikszentmihalyi is *their* man, not ours: ‘their’ referring to the sporting establishment with its on-going attempt to ‘scientize’ sport so as to render it both practically and theoretically ‘credible,’ as discussed in the opening chapter of this thesis; ‘ours’ being the swaggering midlife female trick skater, who was hoping to find in ‘the flow guru’ a language and sensibility that would reflect and evoke a visceral and sentient experience *of* this bodily phenomenon. Csikszentmihalyi, however, is clearly in that other camp: insisting that ‘flow’ is a matter of teaching the mind “how to control the body and *its* senses” (94, my emphasis); painting a worrying picture of what happens when those wayward senses are left to their own devices:

When left undeveloped, the senses give us *chaotic* information: an untrained body moves in *random* and clumsy ways, an insensitive eye presents ugly or uninteresting sights, the unmusical ear mainly hears jarring noises, the coarse palate knows only insipid tastes. If the functions of the body are left to atrophy, the quality of life becomes merely adequate, and for some even dismal. But if one takes control of what the body can do, and learns to *impose order* on physical sensations, entropy yields to a sense of enjoyable harmony in consciousness. (95, my emphasis)

Within this chillingly alarmist passage, it is hard to know what should be singled out for italicised emphasis: the litany of corporeal fates that befit or befall the “untrained” body – *insensitive, clumsy, ugly, uninteresting, unmusical, coarse, insipid, entropy* – or those words that speak to Csikszentmihalyi’s greatest fears – *chaos, randomness, a lack of order*. My decision to go with the latter speaks less to my disappointment over Csikszentmihalyi’s framing of flow, than to my desire to highlight the striking similarity that exists between Barthes’s view of textual flow and Csikszentmihalyi’s view of bodily flow. In fact, they differ only in their opinion of it, the former finding

little to redeem flow – beyond, that is, a less painful conclusion to toppling off his bike – whereas the latter finds neither fault nor flaw in this mind-driven exercise in totalitarian bodily control.

Csikszentmihalyi's faultless and flawless flow does, however, bring us back to Barthes *before* he learned how to fall: Barthes riding perilously along the fault-line, the flawed seam, in the pre-flow bliss of that *other* fall; a fall that accompanied *him* out of time, out of space, out of history, even, and off into his *atopian* sunset. And with this return, a new door opens: picking up where Barthes was left dangling; seeing if in the excessiveness of the swaggering midlife female trick skater, the fall can be rescued from the grips of self-conscious spectacle in much the same way that the Barthesian pose was relieved of its pompous staginess when assumed by the performing and self-pleasuring older female sporting body in Chapter 7. In effect, I am not as ready as Barthes to give up on the liberatory potential of flow. Granted, such liberation is not to be found in the mind-over-matter flow of a Csikszentmihalyi. But it just might lay waiting in the body-based demonstration of 'skilled disorganisation' as suggested by Gabriele Brandstetter.

In developing her notion of a body that would appear to simultaneously fall and flow without slipping into the kind of predictable patterns and conditioned responses that turn Barthes so vehemently *off* flow, Brandstetter (2000b) draws on choreographer Meg Stuart's notion of a "corporeal stutter" (124) and performance artist Laurie Anderson's notion that the apparently smooth flow of walking is but the body "catching" itself over and over and over and over...from falling (122). With regard to Stuart's stutter, this

speaks to the kind of improvisational qualities that the body itself houses and that, no matter how well versed the body is in a particular movement – a choreographed dance step, say, or a standard on-ice cross-cut – will inevitably surface when the body, on occasion and as it is wont to do, momentarily forgets itself. In this bodily takeover the passage may not be smooth but the stutt-stutt-stutt of the stuttering body restoring movement to its runaway off-the-tracks corporeality does manage to get that body back on track, and can be understood as a flow *of sorts*. Likewise, what Laurie Anderson describes as the “paradox” of walking as falling draws our attention to those “moments of transition” where what is confidently assumed – that one will successfully take the next step – can in fact be transformed into “an element of disorder” (122). Within such moments, the disorderly fall not only becomes possible; it also becomes a flow-based instance of bodily liberation – what Brandstetter describes as a “breathtaking experience [of] playing with the disturbance of balance, with the loss of control,” with what Forsythe describes as just “letting yourself evaporate” (124). Such a liberatory moment, according to Bernhard Waldenfels, is less a case of accidentally falling than of inhabiting a body that has truly given itself over to the “free fall”:

In falling, we touch the boundaries of our being. In falling over or falling down, we enter a movement that slips out of control. The body slips out of itself. (124)

This beautiful image of a body *slipping out of itself* as it experiences a temporary loss of control through falling resonates in many ways with what bodies are said to experience as they enter the zone. Here, then, we find a way to *fall into flow* – a flow, moreover, that has none of the regulatory qualities of either Barthes’s textual flow or Csikszentmihalyi’s bodily flow. In this “in-between space between bodily knowledge and lack of knowledge; between control and the failure of the controlling factor” (126),

it becomes possible for the swaggering midlife female trick skater *slipping out of herself* to dwell in an “interval” in which “the known and the repeatable simultaneously contain the turning point of unlearning” (126). At once challenging Allison’s (1996) idea that to *find* flow is to inhabit a perfectly toned and tuned athletic female body that neither falls nor forgets itself, at once providing the *feeling itself feeling* body of the non-expert, unaccomplished athlete a familiar and reassuring perch from which to test out those bodily boundaries (for is this “turning point” between *the known* and *unlearning* not where she sits, albeit tentatively, already?), what this *giving itself the slip* body affords the swaggering midlife female trick skater is the chance to be both integrated and motile. By turns the ham, excessively accompanying her fall so as to break its initial impact, by turns the trickster, sneaking out on that body (and here her ‘invisible matron’ status serves her well) so as to “sketch out the guileful ruses of *different* interests and desires” (de Certeau 1984, 36, original emphasis) in the stratified world of sporting practices, in existing conventions surrounding gender, age, and ‘alternative’ sporting bodies, what saves the swaggering midlife female trick skater once again is her *lack* of an established place and position *within* these various realms. As Michel de Certeau (1984) would explain it, “by an art of being in between, [she] draws unexpected results from [her] situation” (30). It is to the practices inherent in this art – the practices of “making do” – that I now turn.

<p>With arms wide the skater turns, leaving her breath like a diver's trail of bubbles.</p>	<p><i>Margaret Atwood</i></p>
<p>I I come I come here I come here to I come here to the I come here to the Atrium I come here to the Atrium every I come here to the Atrium every Tuesday I come here to the Atrium every Tuesday and I come here to the Atrium every Tuesday and Thursday I come here to the Atrium every Tuesday and Thursday and I come here to the Atrium every Tuesday and Thursday and sometimes I come here to the Atrium every Tuesday and Thursday and sometimes I come here to the Atrium every Tuesday and Thursday and sometimes Friday I come here to the Atrium every Tuesday and Thursday and sometimes Friday but I come here to the Atrium every Tuesday and Thursday and sometimes Friday but I come here to the Atrium every Tuesday and Thursday and sometimes Friday but I come here to the Atrium every Tuesday and Thursday and sometimes Friday but I come here to the Atrium every Tuesday and Thursday and sometimes Friday but I come here to the Atrium every Tuesday and Thursday and sometimes Friday but I come here to the Atrium every Tuesday and Thursday and sometimes Friday but I come here to the Atrium every Tuesday and Thursday and sometimes Friday but never on a Wednesday 'cause that's my swimming lesson day.</p>	<p><i>Danny</i></p>
<p>Works of the imagination – like life itself – consist of nothing but constantly revolving codes.</p>	<p><i>Roland Barthes</i></p>

Figure 8.1: Spin

8:3 “Making Do”

Sly as a fox and twice as fast: there are countless ways of “making do”.
(de Certeau 1984, 28)

In outlining the “countless ways” that the fox-like trickster engages in the art of “making do,” de Certeau (1984) is quick to point out that the primary tricks of the trade in this particular ‘art’ are not “strategies” – these being the domain of those who have a “proper locus,” a place of their own – but “tactics” – those “manoeuvres” of the “place-less” that are carried out “within the enemy’s field of vision” and “within enemy territory” (36). Though on first glance, “making do” would seem to be a risky and dangerous operation, what enables the tactical trickster to get away with these forays into “enemy” territory is that the enemy cannot make sense of what the trickster is doing there in the first place. No locus, much less any territory, to carry any stolen booty home to...Nothing, moreover, already *in* her possession that is worth going over there – *where?* – to cart back *this* way, the lack of an apparent motive on the part of the trickster means that her trespasses fall outside the enemy’s logic:

As in management, every “strategic” rationalization seeks first of all to distinguish its “own” place, that is, the place of its own power and will, from an “environment”...[which then] allows one to capitalize acquired advantages, to prepare future expansions. (36)

Outside of this logic, of course, is precisely where the trespassing tactical trickster or the swaggering midlife female trick skater likes to be. Neither a threat to what the place owner, the established sporting practice, already has, nor in possession of anything that the place owner, the established sporting practice, might want to acquire next, she is thus left more or less alone to create those “cross-cuts, fragments, cracks and lucky hits in the framework of a system” (38). Making use, too, of what the space-privileging

strategist tends to overlook – time – “the art of “pulling tricks” involves a sense of the opportunities afforded by a particular occasion” (37). If this means that the tactical trickster/trick skater remains ever alert to “the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favourable situation, to the rapidity of the movements that change the organization of a space, to the relations among successive moments in an action, to the possible intersections of durations and heterogeneous rhythms” (37), her underlying goal – for indeed, she does have a goal in spite of the place owner’s/sporting practice’s inability to *see* it – is to “create surprises” (37) and introduce some “play” into what the these latter take to be the durable and unshakable “foundations of power” within their strongholds, within their systems (38).

De Certeau, for his part, sees consumers of retail goods and of the media – those “unrecognized producers, poets of their own affairs, trailblazers in the jungles of functionalist rationality” (36) – as the ultimate tricksters, and their “productive ways” (38) as the tactic *par excellence*. As for what these consumers *do* as they roam the city or consume the media:

They trace “indeterminate trajectories” that are apparently meaningless, since they do not cohere with the constructed, written, and prefabricated space through which they move. (36)

I will return to this notion of an “indeterminate trajectory” shortly. For the moment, I want to focus on how these ‘ways,’ whilst passing themselves off as “apparently meaningless,” also manage at the same time to be ‘productive.’ De Certeau suggests that these kinds of inconsistencies are in fact what make the process of “making do” so effective: in using “as their material the vocabularies of established languages (those of television, newspapers, the supermarket or city planning)” and by remaining “within the

framework of prescribed syntaxes (the temporal modes of schedules, paradigmatic organizations of places, etc.)” (36), consumers are free to move around unnoticed *in* these systems –

To circulate, come and go, overflow and drift over an imposed terrain, like the snowy waves of the sea slipping in among the rocks and defiles of an established order. (34)

– whilst at the same time, their ways “use, manipulate and divert” these spaces (37). Functioning in much the same way as Barthes’s disruptive fragment, these ‘ways’ seek not to steal somebody else’s space or create a new space but simply to introduce a revelatory hiccup into the smooth flow of existing space. They are, as de Certeau proposes, “the practical equivalents of wit” (38).

“Making do,” of course, has its problems. Neither a case of building the house with the master’s tools or of building the house with new tools (Lorde 1981), here there is no house at all: tenable, one imagines, if you are a privileged white male (or female) philosopher who already has a house. Not so good if your particular strand of defiance requires a computer to design some posters on, a printer to run them off, some shelves on which to store those posters, and four strong walls and a roof to keep the rain (and your opponents) out. One might venture, here, that “making do” is the privilege of the leisured: a good way to explore one’s liberatory potential if one is a recreational ice skater with some ‘free time’ on her hands; a good deal less attractive when one’s very liberty is at stake. Wit may well be charming, but it does not charm the bailiff. That said, the viability of “making do” can also depend on whether you want ‘in’ or ‘out’ of the system. A leaning towards the former probably explains, for instance, why Katherine M. Jamieson (2003) prefers to carve a *new* space – a “middle” space – for her

Latina baseball players who play the ‘All-American’ game of baseball on largely white teams in the United States, rather than risk leaving them to “make do” out there in the rain.

To carve this middle or “mestiza” space, Jamieson draws on Chela Sandoval’s (1998) notion of a “differential mode of oppositional consciousness” – that is, an approach to resistance that breaks apart “two-term or binary divisions of human thought” (356) and that offers, in its place, a continually shifting ‘topology’ of thought that overtly recognises the false, hence fragile, sense of security that ‘fixed’ classificatory systems lend *all* of us – the oppressed as well as the oppressors. This observation enables Jamieson (2003) to start from the premise that *everyone* is in “a state of flux” (4), and to posit that within this “mestiza” space in American baseball, Latina players use words as well as “a multitude of embodied acts” (6) to resist the exclusionary politics of binary inside/outside thinking whilst negotiating for themselves a more fluid and flux-based positioning within the existing structures, conventions *and* prejudices of baseball. Like de Certeau’s trickster, these Latina baseball players still draw on what Sandoval (2000) refers to as “tactical weaponry” when “intervening in shifting currents of power” (58): tactics that, as Jamieson (2003) explains, often play around with one’s own fragmented identity when a particular aspect of that identity has been attacked – “I’m Mexican today. I’m not Black today. You’re not bothering me.” (13). By using such tactics, Jamieson argues, Latina players not only “defy classification at the hands of [their] teammates” (12); they also contribute to an overall reframing of the very notion of a subject position: highlighting how subjectivities are “like the debris in an ocean tide moving within and against social, cultural, and political currents”; showing how

through an “intermingling of the constantly shifting tide and the temporarily stable sandy base,” new kinds of “citizen-subjects” are produced (14).

The ultimate aim here, however, is to dig one’s self more comfortably *into* the dugout, as opposed to do something different with the bat and the ball whilst out there on the playing field. In other words, if Jamieson takes the route of developing a *middle* space in order to create *another* space to that in which baseball’s hegemonic ‘you’re either with us or against us’ discourses circulate – and this, no doubt, because her Latina baseball players are already *in* that hegemonic world and want to use their tactics to *stay* in it more comfortably – de Certeau (1984) is more interested in our actual passage through a shared and common space – a passage, this, that more closely resembles that of the happy-to-be-*without-a-space* swaggering midlife female trick skater as she circulates out there on the rink. Suggesting that this passage can alternatively colonise or liberate, de Certeau insists that the “line” serves the former whereas the “trajectory” facilitates the latter. This, de Certeau argues, is because the trajectory, like the tactic, is oriented around time. This means that the trajectory’s passage through space is to be understood as “a temporal movement” through it, as opposed to the spatial organisation of it (35). Less solid than that representative “line” of which maps are made, and which, in its ability to be “seized as a whole by the eye and read in a single moment,” succeeds in “flattening out” what was once a “temporal articulation” of a place (35), what the trajectory speaks to is that succession of movement-ed moments that can best be understood as “operations” or “acts” taking place *in* time (35). Such operations are unscriptable: they resist the line that attempts to trace them out as a path through the city, a journey across the ice; they see the line that marks their passage as a mere “relic,” nothing more than a “remainder” – a reminder? – of that which was once

volatile, uncertain, of the moment. Whereas operations and the trajectories along which they travel only fill space (fleetingly) in order to make full use of time, lines bestow an intentionality and ambition to their passage that is just not there. For one, this sense of a latterly assigned purpose belies the basic *raison de ne pas être* of the tactical trajectory, which is to resist being “reduced” to its “graphic trail” (99). Secondly, and as discussed above, what distinguishes the practice of the tactical trajectory – “making do” – from other practices is that, for lack of a space of its own, “what it wins it cannot keep” (37). So much for intentionality! So much for ambition! Left to float around – skate around – in what amounts to its very own ‘nowhere,’ time becomes the trajectory’s friend. Not, in this case, a time marked out by *Atrium le 1000* opening and closing hours, by the hockey season or the dates of this year’s figure skating ‘Nationals’ or ‘Worlds.’ No, *that* time is the time of striation, of organised and organising sporting spaces, whereas *this* time – the tactical and mobile trajectory’s time – is a time that exists in the “cracks” between that other time: in those “*chance* offerings of the *moment*...[that one must] *seize* on the wing” (37, my emphasis).

Chance, moment, seize. Three words, these – three descriptors of that de Certeau-ian “crack” – that speak to a notion of time that privileges that ‘stolen’ hour sequestered away for our ‘guilty’ pleasure over the 9-to-5 and 5-à-7 numeric shortcuts that circumscribe our working and après-work day; a time that favours the happenstance over the happening, the flash over the pan, the reflex over the reflection. But what it must also allow, this other time – beyond a fleeting and ephemeral and all-too-brief respite from or challenge to time “as planning, as teleology, as linear and prospective development” (Kristeva 1995, 205) – is a milieu that one can expand into, can swell and

spread into, and in so doing, fully inhabit. This is not a territorial and horizontal kind of expansion reminiscent of Swagger's filling of space that ends up 'colonising' space, and leaving less space for others. Quite the contrary, it takes up no physical space at all, this corporeal expansion into those stolen moments, this bodily merging with mutineer time. What it does provide the midlife female trick skater with, though, is a milieu to linger aimlessly whilst purposively moving: a kind of transient and provisional fuelling station where to 'keep' time is not to hoard it to yourself, but to feel it with your body.

In this rhythmic milieu, aimlessness and purposive are not opposites but composites: just as the skater needs to simultaneously control her body and let her body go if she is to balance on skates, thus bringing these two seemingly contradictory states into cahoots with each other, the necessary 'fold' between lingeringly inhabiting time and occupying *one's* time with productivity render somewhat superfluous the whole idea of 'wasting' time – and just *whose* time are we referring to in this latter case, anyway? In other words, whether you are one of Frueh's strutting and swelling older female bodybuilders or a late nineteenth century 'delinquent' female telephone user or a swaggering midlife female trick skater, what you find in this milieu is an *understanding* of time that is not only just that – more understanding – but that resists the more constraining aspects of temporality through its embracing of ambiguity. This milieu resonates with Kristeva's (1984) notion of the *chora*: that "nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated" (25) and which, as the hub of the semiotic and affective 'other half' of language, coexists alongside the symbolic order whilst rupturing and unsettling it.

8:4 “Women’s Time”

Kristeva (1980) borrows the term, *chora*, from Plato’s *Timaeus*. However, whilst Plato posits it as the womb-like “mother and receptacle of all things” which frustrates as a result of its “invisible” and “formless” bearing, its “mysterious” ways, and its “incomprehensible” workings (6), Kristeva (1984) rejoices in this indeterminacy, arguing that in that the *chora* “denotes an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation,” therein also lies the advantage it has when it comes to slipping unannounced past the vigilant eye of representation, when it comes to sidestepping geometry’s uncanny “spatial intuition” (25-26). In other words, the rhythmic *chora* for Kristeva is where the revolutionary potential in language lies: sending rupturing pulsions through words which would rather curl up and settle into stasis; creating new articulations through these continuous bursts of “instinctual drive,” of “joy ripped with pain” (Kristeva 1980, 184). For this is precisely what Kristeva (1984) considers “rhythm” to be: an endless cycle of ruptures and articulations (26) that make the body *felt* in language, and that make *of* language a ‘skilled’ demonstration of disorganisation reminiscent of Meg Stuart’s ‘corporeal stutter,’ or of Laurie Anderson’s understanding of walking as a continuous cycle of falling and then ‘catching yourself’ falling.

What is also important about this rhythmic milieu is that as your personal motile medium, part of its job is to teach you how to move. At one level, this is reminiscent of Deleuze’s insistence that the water is your best instructor if you want to learn how to swim: the person receptive to what the water’s undulating waves and tugging undercurrents can teach her about moving her body in it quickly gaining access to the water’s secrets and to keeping herself afloat in a manner that the person imposing her

strokes and kicks *on* the water never will (Colebrook 2002, 135-136). At another level, the *chora*'s instructional capacities resemble those of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) *Body without Organs*: that egg-like milieu of experimentation that you carry around with you at all times and which, as it swings "between the surfaces that stratify it and the plane that sets it free," allows you to "find potential movements...produce flow conjunctions...try out continuums of intensities" (161) – in short, to keep *becoming* rather than just *be*.

Here, though, we encounter the basic difference between Kristeva's conception of affect and its workings and that of Deleuze and Guattari: for whereas Kristeva (1984), whilst conceding the *chora*'s lack of a stable positioning within the realm of the symbolic – within language or representation – does see it as "generated in order *to attain* to this signifying position (26, my emphasis), Deleuze and Guattari (1987) pin no such aspirations on their *BwO*. On the contrary, they insist that though complicit with the organisation of the bodily organs into "the organism" – into representation – the *BwO* goes to that place unwillingly, quite literally "howling":

They've made me an organism! They've wrongfully folded me! They've stolen my body! (159)

In other words, if the *chora* and the *BwO* share similarities in that neither of them *are* space nor are even *in* space but describe, rather, the very circulation of intensities and pulsations, of bodily drives, of energy and matter *across* that space, it remains that Deleuze and Guattari's *BwO* is a somewhat more volatile configuration than is Kristeva's *chora* – drawing on the nihilist writings of hothead thinkers like Antonin Artaud and Friedrich Nietzsche to fight off *signification* tooth and nail, whilst

Kristeva's *chora*, a far more cooperative beast, angles for a seat alongside it. This attempt to establish a healthy working relationship between affect and language, between the semiotic and the symbolic, is, of course, Kristeva's principal contribution to both linguistics *and* psychoanalysis. Challenging Lacan's notion that there is a violent and abrupt break with the nurturing and semiotic body of the mother as the child enters into language and joins (the father in) the realm of the symbolic, Kristeva has – as discussed in Chapter 3 – gone to great lengths to show how bodily semiotic drives are not so much *left behind* when the symbolic takes over as *usurped by it*, hanging in there none-the-less to do their essential if often unseen work of injecting words with vitality and meaning just as words, in turn, provide the drives with a linguistic expression in the symbolic order. What this means is that the mother is not left behind either but lingers on in us in the form of the intangible *chora*. If this in itself distinguishes the *chora* from the *BwO* – the latter's connection to the mother becoming permanently severed as it “tears from the organic form of the Mother an intense and destratified matter” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 164, my emphasis) – the act of ‘tearing’ that accompanies the *BwO*'s definitive cut with the past and the mother as it morphs into its “present experimentation” (164) bears little resemblance with Kristeva's (1984) always-present and always-integral “mother's body,” which persists as a kind of “ordering principle of the semiotic *chora*” (27). Kristeva's configuration of affect, then, is a distinctly female and matrix-like one. In effect, the *chora* connotes for Kristeva “the mother's unrepresentable (unsymbolizable) body” (Still 2002, 315), just as rhythm itself is “enigmatic” and “feminine” (Genosko 1998, 30).

This feminisation of ‘mysterious’ affect through locating its source in the womblike *chora* opens up a gap for thinking the whole concept of time differently: a reconfiguring of what Kristeva (1995) refers to as “Father’s time,” with its linear logic and clocklike precision, into a more feminine- and maternally-based concept of time – “women’s time” – that revolves around “the cyclical” and “the monumental” (205). By cyclical, Kristeva refers to the kinds of repetitive rhythms associated with the (maternal) body and with nature which, though subject to a “shocking” kind of “predictability,” can offer the person receptive to their workings an experience of “resplendent visions and unnameable *jouissance*” (205). By monumental, Kristeva refers to an “all-encompassing and infinite” kind of “temporality” which has so little to do with the temporality of “linear time,” that even the use of the term ‘temporality’ to describe this eternal “women’s time” that ruptures the “mastery” *over* time that linear approaches encourage does, as she insists, “seem inappropriate” (205). At the same time, some feminists have taken issue with Kristeva’s emphasis on the biological and reproductive (and by extension, heterosexual) aspects of femaleness in her conception of a specifically “women’s time,” not only in terms of where she situates this ‘revolutionary’ reconfiguration – the ‘womblike’ *chora* – but equally in terms of who is excluded from this conception and just what becomes essentialised. However, because for Kristeva it is not, as Toril Moi (1985) points out, “the biological sex of a person...that determines their revolutionary potential” – in other words, their ability to write or read, to move or tell time in accordance with the vocal and kinetic rhythms of the *chora* – but rather “the subject position she or he takes up” (12), she equally attracts derision from those feminists who see her as having “collapsed” both the category of “female” and the feminist struggle against “patriarchy” into a generalised and perhaps overly theoretical

contestation of just one “centralized power structure” (Moi 1985, 164). As Moi comments with regard to this rejection of a distinct masculine/feminine dichotomy on Kristeva’s part:

The strength of this approach is its uncompromising anti-essentialism; its principle weakness the somewhat glib homologization of quite distinct and specific struggles. (164)

This sense that Kristeva has abandoned the feminist cause in the name of a “feminist vision of a society...where the fact of being male or female” is no longer relevant (172) is reinforced by Kristeva’s (1995) somewhat haughty dismissal of distinctive forms of female writing to emerge in response to the phallogocentrism of existing language – the *écriture féminine* movement, for example, as practiced by philosophers such as Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray – and her suggestion, albeit without naming names, that such writing not only leads to a divisive kind of separatist politics but perpetuates the kind of binary thinking from which revolutionary writing is *supposed* to liberate us (220). That Kristeva has tended to hang out with ‘the boys’ for intellectual stimulus and companionship – most notably, Roland Barthes and Philippe Sollers – does not help her case either, though as Kristeva (1980) herself insists, hers is a brand of revolutionary politics that resists *all* identity categories, rendering irrelevant in her eyes not only her intellectual companions’ ‘boy-ness,’ but her feminist colleagues’ ‘femaleness’ too:

I am quite dedicated to the feminist movement but I think feminism, or any other movement, need not expect unconditional backing on the part of an intellectual woman. I think the time has come to emerge out of the “for-women-only” practice, out of a kind of mythicizing of femininity. (10)

If it is these kinds of comments that raise the heckles on many a feminist’s back, Kristeva does create confusion by, on the one hand, locating her revolt against the

“logical mastership” (202) and “closed loop” (203) of “Father’s’ time” and the “tyrannical, despotic Name-of the-Father” (163) realm of language in the ‘womblike’ and ‘maternal’ *chora* whilst, on the other, disassociating herself from all forms of biologically-linked essentialism, including feminine ‘mythicizing.’ These confusions and her uneasy commitment to feminism aside, Kristeva’s notions of a time which is bodily and rhythmic, favouring “volume rather than [the] line” (205), and of a *chora* which is a configuration of “riant spaciousness” (283) that turns “the thread of time” into “an unlikely “topology”” (201), do lend themselves to a more temporally-based understanding of the skater’s personal on-ice approach to movement, and of the rink and its dynamics in and of themselves.

For example, they can bring new insight to *Atrium le 1000* skater Nathalie’s description of her ‘bubble’ – that place where she likes to situate herself whilst skating so as to be simultaneously *a part* and *apart* in relation to others circulating out there on the rink. Conceiving of Nathalie’s bubble as the *chora*, what it affords her whilst she skates are both a rhythmic wall of protection from the symbolic order that hails and imprisons her at her job, as a parent, as she thinks back on her unhappy childhood, even out there on the rink as some unwanted conversation doggedly pursues her, as well as a rhythmic entry point back into the symbolic order when she wants to chat, unload on another skater about her day, draw up a shopping list as she circulates, compose a mental letter of resignation to her boss. In ‘tapping into’ her *chora* – for the idea of ‘making’ herself a *chora*, as one does in the case of the *BwO*, is no longer applicable given that her *chora* is already with her, has never left her in the first place – Nathalie can skate both *inside* and *alongside*, at once the integrated midlife female body à la Frueh, at once the

‘slipping out of itself’ body suggested by Bernhard Waldenfels. In other words, if movement, as Jaana Parviainen (2002) argues, is located *not* in the ‘I’ that moves but rather is out there already circulating, waiting for the ‘I’ to hop aboard, then the *chora* – Nathalie’s ‘bubble’ – can be understood as the ‘I’’s own personal rhythm section.

Staccato for some, rolling drum beat for others, what is important to remember about Nathalie’s “rhythmic agency” (Kristeva 1980, 205) – about this new conception of time that fills, fuels and fulfils her – is that it is bodily, as opposed to of the mind, and that it is like no other skater’s. Tuning her into the musicality of her body, helping her – if she listens to it – to make the beat within her jive (or clash) with the beat going on all around her, it is the *chora* that enables Nathalie – and by extension, the swaggering midlife female trick skater – to either tumble into *jouissance* or glide peacefully along with *plaisir*. And what we would hear if *we* could listen in on Nathalie’s ‘bubble – listen, as Nathalie can and we cannot, to the rhythmic beating of her *chora* – would be the beat of the times that Nathalie has lived through (TVs blaring, cars honking, cell phones ringing, in other words, the makings of Barthes’s historically-contingent *form*) and the beat of her own life (father shouting, a childhood skipping game, the purr of her cat, those imagination- and memory-soaked experiences that speak to Barthes’s evolution of a personal *style*). Kristeva suggests that this process of listening to one’s own time – to that blend of historical time and personal time that beats within the body and gives our skating, our writing, our reading, a form and style all of its own – enables the listener to treat herself “as a sonata” (207). She also provides a compelling way into this new approach to listening *and* to time:

We tend to forget that when a twentieth-century-minded person listens to the Eroica, for example, he/she is *listening to time* as Beethoven

experienced it when he heard the armies of the French Revolution; the rhythmic hoofbeats of their horses, the borders they opened, and Europe brought together for the first time thanks to the canons. (207, my emphasis)

All to say that music like texts like skating bodies contain a time that tells quite a different story to that which notes in a musical composition, words in a book, or strokes out there on the rink, relay. At another level, what this link between the personalised *chora*'s motile and rhythmic sensibilities and its passage in and out of the broader affect of the rink might also explain – another thesis – is why skating just does not feel the same without music.

At the same time, though, and precisely because Kristeva so firmly rejects any stable positing or positioning of her basically 'unrepresentable' *chora*, it is also possible to expand the notion of the *chora* to account for the rink in its entirety. In questioning what skating communally in a *chora* might look like – bodies moving across the ice not as horizontal trajectories but as vertically-pulsating rhythmic patterns, bodies navigating other bodies not as travelling projectiles but as musical circuits of rupture and articulation – we can begin to 'bend' our thinking about bodies and movement away from the usual spatial imagery and metaphors towards a more temporal understanding of what it means to move our bodies in a sporting space of affect – and this whether it is a space strategically allotted *to* us, or a space tactically stolen *by* us. Likewise, the *feeling itself feeling* body need not feel excluded from this more stuttering stop-and-start configuration, especially when one incorporates into it Nel Noddings's (2003) suggestion, whilst sketching out her personal vision of a feminist ethics based in relatedness and caring, that "affect... allows for the possibility of our looking at

ourselves feeling – that is, of our being aware of ourselves feeling” (132). Stressing that though there *may* be “a direct object involved in our feeling,” this is far less important than “our *relatedness* to this object” (132, my emphasis), Noddings argues that affect, then, can be understood as “the relation, or our recognition of the relation, that induces [it]” (132). Noddings’ own particular affect of interest is “the affect *we call* joy” (132, my emphasis) – her hesitancy to name it belying the obvious enthusiasm she has for this “delightful” (147) ‘unnamed Thing’ that “often seems to sweep over us...[as if] triggered by something” but that seems, simultaneously, “to arise from something beyond the immediate object” (133). But what is most important to Noddings is that this ‘Thing’ we call joy, in its capacity as affect, both “*accompanies* our recognition of relatedness” and manages, through “its occurrence and recurrence,” to “*maintain us* in caring” (147, my emphasis). Such accompaniment and maintenance *in* and *across* and *through* joy, I would venture, is the feather in the swaggering midlife female trick skater’s cap: opening her to on-ice relationships that are lasting but fluid; releasing in her a capacity for caring which, whilst sensitive to who might be circulating out there on the rink with her, does not stop her from swaggering rhythmically, vertically, pleurably, languidly, uproariously, outrageously, excessively, like a feminist.

Chapter 9: Opening Doors

9:0 Introduction

This concluding chapter is not so much a tying up of loose ends, as an opportunity to play around with stray ends – a process which, if far more fitting of the messy girl I am, also allows me to revisit this thesis’s key theoretical and methodological landmarks without falling prey to the unbearable heaviness of boredom. Put bluntly, I hate conclusions. I am not very good at them. By the time I reach this point, I have said everything I want to say. Besides which, the whole notion of ‘closure’ makes no sense to me: our society’s current enthusiastic embracing of ‘closure’ as the salve-all to everything from a relationship gone wrong to collective post-911 trauma striking me as trivialising at best, paralysing at worst. In life, as in trick skating, as in writing about trick skating, the only ‘end’ worth striving towards is the “creation of ever divergent ends” (Colebrook 2002, 57).

After a brief synthesis of what has come before, then, and bearing in mind a few of the inroads that this thesis has made into some of the little or lesser explored terrains in the realms of sporting bodies, sporting spaces, and scholarly writing about these bodies and spaces, I devote most of this conclusion to a consideration of what the swaggering midlife female trick skater, her skaterly cohort, and their newfound knowledges acquired *about* movement *through* movement might contribute first, to our understanding of the communicating body, and second, to how we might think differently and approach innovatively the question of the aging female body as a participant in sporting activities but equally in other domains of life. My aim, here, is

not so much to resolve these issues, as to push them forward for further and future inquiry. Not that resolution would be possible even if space *were* permitting, which is not the case, and if there were no grounds to Deleuze's maxim that the only productive problem is that which has no evident answer, which I do not believe to be the case either. Briefly pursuing these other lines of flight, however, does open the door to post-doctoral ventures – ventures which, whilst continuing to work towards more visceral and sentient ways of doing academic scholarship, also manage to destabilise the swaggering midlife female trick skater with a whole new bag of tricks.

9:1 Retracing

We live amid surfaces, and the true art of life is to skate well on them.
(Ralph Waldo Emerson¹⁴)

In this thesis I have used the Barthesian 'figure' to help make a case for writing that skates, and introduced the 'figure' of the swaggering midlife female trick skater to help untangle how bodies in movement might be conceived of in a variety of theoretically and practically exhilarating ways. If both of these figures have as a primary task the disruption of that which has consolidated into Culture, into a practice, the on-going drift in this thesis between the philosophical and the methodological is one of the organising threads along which I have strung my ideas: outlining in the first chapter my desire to challenge the surprisingly static nature of so much academic writing about sport through interweaving my own experience as a skater into a scholarly exploration of bodies out there on the rink; using my sprawling analysis of key concepts like *affect*, *passion*, *pleasure*, and *feeling* in the second chapter to test the waters of a terrain defined less by its impermeable borders, than by its tendency to spill over into an array of physical

activities, writerly disciplines and intellectual domains. Picking up on this spirit of reciprocity in Chapters 3 and 4, I proceeded to draw on two of the philosophical mainstays of this project – Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva – to turn inside and out those ‘matters methodological’ that are all too often relegated to a few perfunctory pages in a thesis: indulging my passionate interest in the bricks and mortar that go into the building of a research project, whilst simultaneously extolling the virtues of ‘excessive’ research practices and ‘*jouissance*’-evoking reading and writing processes. The main purpose of these opening chapters was to grapple with the relative absence of the moving body in both writing about sporting activities and in language more generally, and to explore the extent to which a focus on elusive affect might help not only to incorporate this ‘missing body’ back into these realms, but to challenge traditional representational formats as well.

Having laid out the philosophical and methodological underpinnings of this project, I began the work of unravelling my chosen terrain in order to further complicate it. To this end, my focus in the fifth chapter was on bodies in movement: using the trope of “the disorganised body” (Barthes 1985), amongst others, to bring to the fore the particular joys and challenges to be derived from participating in an activity like recreational ice skating, whilst also shedding light on those “internal goods” or “goods of excellence” (MacIntyre, 1981) commonly associated with the rule-bound and far more conventional, not to mention *researched*, realm of organised sport. Recognising at the same time what this universal body left out, my focus in the sixth and seventh chapters was on how spaces, like bodies and movement, become gendered, and how we might reconfigure these sites, along with the gendered technologies that are assigned

them, either to break those gendered associations that restrict and restrain, or alternatively to create entirely new associations that serve to *complicate* rather than *contain* matter and forces. I then mobilised the swaggering midlife female trick skater in her capacity as a ‘border case’ vigilante “making do” in the in-between cracks of the sex-gender system to bring these bodies and spaces together in Chapter 8: using their merging to reconceptualise how we might move our bodies to our best advantage in communal sporting spaces in order to become movement and affect; stressing how this is a movement and affect that, rather than ignoring gender as has been the tendency of so many of the poststructuralist theorists who address these realms, actually draws upon gendered situated knowledges – bounces them around and plays with them – in order to reconfigure the bodies and spaces that inhabit these spaces.

Opening the door to gender also forced a questioning of the ways we pleasure ourselves through our participation in physical activity and sports, the suggestion that luxuriating in the slow and sensuous swell of one’s body whilst ‘pumping’ iron might be preferable to busily ‘counting’ reps managing to take some of the wind out of Nietzsche’s capacities-based route to happiness. That the sensation of flow afforded by the latter might only be accessible to the highly accomplished sporting body enabled the emerging swaggering midlife female trick skater to make yet another intervention: picking up on Barthes’s (1975) exposé of the personal and societal perils of literary flow in order to question the very desirability of the glide; using the trope of the fallible – *fall-able* – body to briefly explore the concept of flow in general, and the relationship between bodily flow and textual flow in particular. This led me to introduce the seemingly paradoxical proposition of the *feeling itself feeling* body *falling into flow* – a

move that challenged the idealized and somewhat elitist approach to sporting movement that prevails in our expert- and expertise-driven society, just as this newly constituted body's alignment with de Certeau's (1984) tactical trickster over the space-grabbing and practice-based strategist challenged the institutions that bolster such approaches. Here, my drawing on Julia Kristeva in order to re-conceive of the rink as a site of 'poetic language' and posit the swaggering midlife female trick skater as its 'revolutionary subject' opened a new door: seeing, in the swaggering midlife female trick skater's joyous realisation and active embracing of the rhythmic musicality of her body, the potential to not only renegotiate her place within the symbolic order and structure of the rink, but to "bring about changes in the symbolic order itself" (Lechte and Margaroni 2004, 108); seeing, in the new forms of individual bodily comportment and communal space negotiations to emerge out of her intervention important insights into where the liberatory potential in so-called 'alternative' sporting activities might lie. In a sense, one could venture that the swaggering midlife female trick skater and her innovative on-ice moves serve as a kind of prototype for a new form of sprawling feminist bodily movement that allows one to constantly stretch the limits of one's own capabilities, without impeding anybody else's freedom of movement within that same public sporting space of affect. Though some of the ideas underlying this prototype have been explored by feminist body theorists and dance theorists alike, I am not aware of any scholarly sports studies work that attempts to convey, through writing, how such an approach to movement is both felt and lived. This, then, is my final contribution in this thesis: to create writing that skates; to see what doors open up when we look at the acts of skating and writing and to a lesser extent, reading, through the capricious lens of affect.

9:2 Communicating

In an essay entitled “Mediators,” Gilles Deleuze (1995) makes the following observation:

All the new sports – surfing, windsurfing, hang-gliding – take the form of entering into an existing wave. There’s no longer an origin as starting point, but a sort of putting-into-orbit. The key thing is how to get taken up in the motion of a big wave, a column of rising air, to “get into something” instead of being the origin of an effort. (121)

Deleuze’s observation then turns to puzzlement. In an age when sporting practices are leaning more and more towards this idea of getting taken up by the wave, of getting away from the very *idea* of origins, let alone the idea that there is but *one* of them, why is it, he asks, that the philosophical approaches being mobilised to analyse our world – and this includes our sporting practices and their concomitant cultures – continue to work from an origin-based understanding of the human condition, to endorse the universalising stance of “eternal values” (121). In other words, asks Deleuze, why have philosophers not also been taken up in ‘the movement of the big wave’ trend?

Whilst my experience of the philosophy of sport scene in Britain, albeit limited, does concur with Deleuze’s view of the state of philosophy more generally – and this a good twenty years after Deleuze in fact wrote this piece – I would extend his line of questioning to the forms of scholarly writing being used to ‘capture’ those very sports of which he speaks, asking why they too have not moved with the flow. But I would also provide a tentative answer to his question, at least as it pertains to the analysis of sport: venturing that he need only look to the demographic that makes up the vast bulk of philosophers of sport to begin to understand why a white male perspective that feels perfectly well represented by philosophies that speak to universal origins and eternal

values continues to be constitutive of this intellectual corpus; reminding him, furthermore, that until other kinds of bodies start partaking in and being embraced by these wave-based activities – bodies that are not inevitably young, taut and male but sometimes aging, sometimes flabby, sometimes female, or any combination thereof – then we are unlikely to see anything all that different or even of much interest emerging in terms of the way that these sporting activities are philosophised *or* written.

In this thesis I have presented a picture of the recreational ice skater and her swaggering sister, the midlife female trick skater. I have suggested what they can teach us not only about innovative ways of moving our bodies in space, but equally about thinking and writing these ways in a manner that addresses the gap at least *identified* by Deleuze, if not as penetratingly explored as one might hope. I now ask what these recreating and trick skating midlife female bodies that still feel and still fall and yet perceive of themselves more as a *bodies* in movement than as an individual entity can tell us about the communicating body: a body increasingly branched into a communicatory wave in which points of origins are less important than the dynamics of rhizomatic diffusion and reception; a body that at the same time continues to rely on person-to-person contact – shouts, whispers, laughter, smiles, kisses, handshakes, hugs – in spite of what the social scaremongers would lead us to believe about a world that only speaks to itself through the mediatory medium of a screen, that has lost the tactile relationships of the everyday.

For what is important to remember about these recreating and trick skating midlife female bodies is that, though they may merge their bodies with others and their environment when skating, they still forge real friendships through going to the rink:

falling in love with fellow skaters, continuing their on-ice relationships off-ice, going home to other lives comprised of non-skating people and non-skating activities. In effect, they have found a way to reconcile these two ways of living – the one about being, the other about becoming – and have discovered, in so doing, that the two are complimentary, can co-exist. Likewise, they have started to reconfigure gender not only through consciously challenging the hyper-feminised trope of the female figure skater, but through less conscious acts of play: experimenting with different ways of wearing it, fashioning it, shaping it; sometimes casting gender off to become a part of the poststructuralist swirl, sometimes picking it up again and trotting it flauntingly – even mockingly – across the ice. What remains to explore is whether a new approach to understanding skating dynamics, as discussed at length in this thesis, and a new way of writing about these dynamics, as practically experimented with throughout this thesis, can inform the way we think and write about bodies communicating in other ways – on telephones, over the internet, as part of that big “imaginary community” (Anderson 1991) that encounters itself each morning as it sits down across the nation to read the newspaper and drink a cup of coffee. Furthermore, what might this *bodies* in movement look like when applied to these communicating and media-consuming bodies, both individual and public? Certainly, any conception of such a *bodies* has to take into account that letting oneself become flow or fragment, depending upon how one sees it – of giving one’s *self* over to a world understood as intensities and velocity, as disorganised bodies and *Bodies without Organs*, as shifting absences and presences, as vocal and kinetic rhythms – can be frightening. As Virginia Woolf (1992) comments with regard to Mrs. Dalloway’s walk through the park, “She always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day” (9) – this, incidentally, being the same

Virginia Woolf who, as Toril Moi (1985) comments, consciously exploits “the *sportive*, sensual nature of language” (9, my emphasis) in order to better challenge the “metaphysical essentialism underlying patriarchal ideology” (9). But these frightening if necessary dangers aside, there is at the same time something deeply exhilarating – even liberating – about seeing life, the act of skating (and why not the act of communicating, too?) as a way of opening oneself up to those moments of *jouissance* that wash over you, sweep you up and away, make you at one with everything that is swirling around you to the point that you do not feel passion, but *are* passion, you do not sense affect, but *are* affect, becoming haecceities, wearing halos, pumping pleasure, inhabiting rhythm, reconfiguring time, knowing a happiness that, if rare, does open you up to a possible world.

Unfortunately, the mediated world in which we live – what Kristeva disparagingly refers to as our impoverished and soulless Information Society – does not always afford us such an opening. As Kristeva comments with regard to our society’s tendency to use the media “to get a short-term fix through imbibing clichés,” this kind of quick and easy salve might be “temporarily calming,” but in the long run, such passive reliance on the mediated spectacle does begin to “take the place of personal imagination” (Lechte and Margaroni 2004, 117). But there are ways out of this dystopia. As even Kristeva herself concedes, “We can work with and against these images to develop the kind of imagination that does not stifle the passions, but sublimates them” (117). Moreover, these ways of working need not always be about reinventing the wheel but can equally be about doing something more inventive *with* it.

Some of these ways have already been touched upon in this thesis: for example, in the application of those insights culled from Martin's (1991) account of the re-gendering of the telephone to a sporting technology like skates, as discussed in Chapter 7 (something that communication studies can bring to sport studies), or in the extension of Chela Sandoval's (1998) notion of differential consciousness to Katherine Jamieson's (2003) study of how Latina women negotiate a place for themselves in the hegemonic world of American baseball in order to revisit de Certeau's (1984) notion of media consumers "making do," as discussed in Chapter 8 (something that critical race theory can bring to sports studies can bring to communication studies). Not only do these 'ways' speak to an active and generative reciprocity between scholarly fields that demonstrate, more than any conference title or call for papers ever can, the absolute necessity of 'building bridges' across the disciplines; they also speak to the process of breaking down what Doreen Massey (1993) refers to as 'the spatial imprisonment' of others (on skating rinks, through unequal access to communication networks) whilst participating vibrantly and fully in sporting *and* communicating activities, as discussed in Chapter 6. In an effort to bring these two activities into dialogue at yet another level, and in so doing introduce a future 'way' that I foresee inventively working the wheel so as to resist what some see as the inevitable plunge into dystopia, I turn finally to the aging body, arguing that in this body's tendency to be excluded from both of these realms one finds a potentially revolutionary line of flight back into them.

9:3 Aging

If trick skating affords my swaggering midlife female body the occasional explosion of *jouissance* – a temporary gateway into becoming movement – there is an aspect of this

experience that has thus far slipped between the cracks of this thesis. This concerns age and aging: an issue flagged by the inclusion of ‘midlife’ in my positing of this new and emerging skaterly body and alluded to when discussing gender through the lens of Jean Grimshaw’s (1999) midlife arrival on the aerobics scene and Joanna Frueh’s (2001) strutting and swelling midlife female bodybuilders, though never fully addressed in terms of how its lurking presence challenges the generally youthful framing of sporting bodies, whether male *or* female, and to an even greater extent the inevitable twinning of ‘youth’ and ‘male’ when it comes to ‘alternative’ and ‘extreme’ sports. For if the words *swagger*, *female*, and *tricks* do not usually come together in discussions of the latter, the addition of *midlife* into the mix confounds: creating a peculiar if productive kind of tension. Such tensions are extremely good for sport – both the sport that goes on out there on the rinks and the playing fields, and the sport taking place in the academy. Moreover, these tensions have begun to be explored in innovative and exciting ways: in Kitrina Douglas and David Carless’s (2005) beautiful auditory performance pieces that emerged out of a government-sponsored, university-based, *scientific* research investigation into how older women in Cornwall, England, engage in physical activities, for example; in Joanna Frueh’s (2001) evocative collection of nude self-portraits and photographs of other older female bodybuilders displaying their muscled and sinewy and eroticised torsos. If the poetry that springs from the voices of the ordinary women featured in the former reminds us of the need to go out into the field and collect those stories that emerge from the true margins of the sporting world, and of which linear time will soon rob us, the “monster/beauty paradox” that renders the truly extraordinary bodies featured in Frueh’s photographs “uncategorizable” (59) alerts us to just how limited our conception is of what the older female body can look (and act) like. But if,

as a result of this short-sightedness, the “deliberately built” (59) older female body becomes “the sign and embodiment of [our] confusions and dilemmas,” what is equally significant about this body that “violates categories” (59) is that in making herself so visible, she renders equally visible the inherent arbitrariness of those “supposed oppositions and dissonances” like “youth and age, the feminine and the masculine, touchability and dominatrix toughness” (60). These revelatory powers, combined with the “blend of discomfort and lust” that her aesthetically and erotically “over-articulated” (59) body arouses, make of her – along with other aging female bodies that refuse to ‘fit into’ the categories made available to them – a fascinating and complex site of study. Not that there have been many takers in this area, which as Kathleen Woodward (1999) comments in the introduction to her anthology, *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations*, is not only puzzling, but an important site of inquiry in and of itself:

Our disregard of age is all the more curious because age – in the sense of *older* age – is the one difference we are all likely to live into. Thus one of our most urgent tasks is to understand why we have kept the subject of aging at arm’s length, that is, we must understand ageism itself. (x, original emphasis)

In more ways than one, then, the tensions brought to light by the *active* aging female body are crying out for further exploration. But these tensions also bring me back to Barthes: to the power that comes of falling out of/with the symbolic order; to the pleasures he bestows on language that disrupts. For what Barthes teaches me with regard to my positioning in the world and the pleasures I derive from being in the world is this: I cannot see what I take so much for granted, what I am so entirely immersed within. I can only keep reproducing it and in so doing, reinforcing it. I become more and more the self that society has made me, and the *plaisir* I am accorded through

buying into this mutually dependent relationship – through deriving conscious enjoyment through this articulation of self and society – is all part of this process.

I am reminded here of a friend's comment that at the age of ninety-seven, she no longer understands her nation's humour. Comedians used to be funny but now, when she turns on the television, not only do they fail to make her laugh; they no longer make sense to her either. Aging has left her behind, so to speak: the more she has progressed chronologically, the more she has slipped back into a place where self and society no longer connect. Somewhat ironically, the more distance she creates between herself and the socially and culturally specific symbolic order that once ushered her into a world where, through language, she could make sense, the more she feels herself alienated from the symbolic order which, with her or without her, continues to march relentlessly on. In a sense, this distancing of her own subjectivity from the society and symbolic order that begat it is a cyclically reinforcing phenomenon that accompanies aging in our time: her culture is no longer *hailing* her as it once did – “Hey! Look over here! This is *your* life we're talking about!” – and my friend, in turn, does not feel particularly compelled to wave back at her culture. Not that ‘her’ culture, ‘her’ humour, were ever necessarily reflective of her own life, her own experiences. Not that all those bumptious mother-in-law jokes – those brash ‘that-ain't-no-lady-that's-my-wife’ jokes – that once set the nation a-cackling and probably made *her* laugh, even, actually spoke to anything that resonated with her life as a female growing up and aging through the twentieth century. But still, there it is: she could “wear” the male gaze, slipping into it as one would a cape or a shawl in order to effectively “decode” the meanings assigned cultural products within a patriarchal society, and hence participate fully *in* that culture (Bignell

1997, 186), whereas aging is a different kind of outfit – one in and out of which it is much more difficult to step. In one sense, this makes of my friend an outcast: sitting there blankly as the comedians do their thing; condemned to retreat back into the pre-symbolic world of incomprehensible babble not, as some might all too quickly conclude, because of any deterioration of her ability to speak and understand but because, quite simply, she has been left behind in *her* time, in *her* ‘structure of feeling.’ In another sense, however, we can posit my friend as the ultimate rebel: no glimmer of a smile, no attempt to even make one, as she sits there taking no pleasure from the comedians’ antics and jokes, sits there wondering where all the good humour has gone; my friend who, in every way *except* that she goes to that place of exclusion unwillingly, epitomises the Barthesian avant-garde revolutionary.

In Japan, surrounded by a language he did not understand, Barthes experienced an awakening of his other ways of comprehending the world – his sensory and affective capacities – and felt freed as he had never felt freed before of the heaviness of his own culturally- and symbolically-burdened subjectivity. Which leads me to ask: Is it only in a foreign land, whilst immersed in a foreign language, in a state of voluntary exile, that we can rejoice in this respite from those pleasures that are only afforded the symbolically-savvy self? Or can we find some way of rejoicing in the foreign-ness that the familiar has been endowed with as we age, finding pleasure in what we cannot understand, a pleasure that we might locate in the realm of *jouissance*?

Bearing in mind, then, my friend’s potentially revolutionary ‘fall out of time,’ and picking up on Kate Bornstein’s (1993) notion of the “gender outlaw” – an entity who

mixes gender codes and plays around with gendered behaviours in order to challenge those practices associated with and constituted through the performance of what she sees, in the categories of ‘man’ and ‘woman,’ to be a stiflingly limited range of gendered options – I open the door to the ‘age outlaw.’ Whether voluntarily, like the midlife female trick skater, or through no volition of her own, as in the case of my television comedy consuming friend, the ‘age outlaw’ manages to throw a wrench into those taken-for granted (of sporting bodies and their associated practices, of the nation and its constitutive humour) that are part and parcel of belonging, and that make of you what must – if we are to take our lead from that which has been excluded – be seen as an ‘age inlaw.’ In disrupting the smooth flow of sport, of televised comedy, the ‘age outlaw’ does not create another sporting practice, another kind of humour, to take its place. Rather, her satisfaction lies in the actual disturbing of practices, whether through *not* buying into the sequined, hyper-feminised and invariably youthful trappings of ‘Ladies’ figure skating as she executes (or botches) her cherry flip on her hockey skates, whether through *not* laughing along with everyone else at the joke. Though this might seemingly be pointing to a way of living that is defined by negativity – by that age-old positioning of the female body as absence, as lack – what might help the ‘age outlaw’ to feel more vitally present is to think herself as not so much outside of the youth-oriented culture that keeps slipping further and further away from her, but rather – and to pick up once again on de Lauretis’s notion of a feminist ‘space off’ – as skating, channel-surfing, *alongside it*. In the case of the swaggering midlife female trick skater, this understanding of her ‘place’ on the rink might allow her to continue skating gracefully or ungracefully into older age – the choice as to which option to take, the glide or the fall, remaining dependent on which best enables her *bodies* to become

movement and experience *jouissance* at any given moment. As for my friend, coexisting alongside her nation's humour as opposed to dwelling in a place outside of it might prompt her to see comedy where it is not: in the 'serious business' of televised sport, say, or in the seemingly endless and seamless commercial 'breaks' that accompany those televised sporting spectacles and that speak to sport's insidious complicity with the corporate world.

All to say that there remains much exciting work to be done in the area of aging female bodies and the ways they take or make their pleasures. For the moment, though – and in order to bring this present work to a close – I want to emphasise once again how the pleasure to be had in a recreational activity like trick skating and the liberatory potential to be realised through it lies not in its consolidation into a practice, but rather in its ability to keep riding on those unruly (un-ruled) and unconventional (convention-less) wings which give it flight. This is not to say that the swaggering midlife female trick skater has no practice. Rather, her practice – like de Certeau's "making do" – consists of drawing on what already exists to create not so much *something new* as a 'way' of *newly doing* pleasure, passion, and gender; of surreptitiously and guilefully selecting "fragments taken from the vast ensembles of production in order to compose new stories with them" (de Certeau 1984, 35). As a figure, she functions much like the Barthesian fragment: breaking the smooth flow of the existing narrative; spinning bodily tales that are not designed to last, to become fixed in a 'Work' – a canonical repertoire – of their own, but which are given wings so that they can continue to *do* their work as 'Text,' as that ever-experimenting and ever-playful "methodological field" at once inside, at once alongside, the realm of writing (Barthes 1977b, 157). Borrowing

some moves from figure skating, some skates from hockey, some sparkle from *Winners* and some grunge from *The Salvation Army* store, the ‘new stories’ she composes might be as simple as a bunny hop that morphs into a hockey stop, or as tricky as a pick-less cherry flip-waltz jump-toe loop combination. What is certain is that these transitory stories have a different look and feel to them than those oft-told and rarely revised stories (and when revised, as with the fazing out of compulsory figures from Olympic figure skating competitions, so much bureaucratic palaver!) that make up the vast ensemble of production that we know as organised sport, and from which the fragments that constitute them are drawn. What is less certain is how they will continue to evolve as more and more people partake in them and as different kinds of sporting bodies become a part of them.

Such uncertainty, of course, is desirable. And this applies across the board: whether we are talking about emerging ‘alternative’ sporting activities like trick skating, or existing but disorganised sporting activities like recreational ice skating, or established and organised sporting activities like figure skating and hockey, or even – perhaps *especially* – the scholarly writing that charts all of these stories new and old. Indeed, this thesis has been an argument for uncertainty: urging us to see in those eruptions, disruptions and interruptions that burst open the tight seams of academic writing the tentative emergence of sporting bodies that are actually moving, the nascent peeps of sporting spaces coming to life; asking the reader to ride roughshod through the often contradictory minefield that is gender in a poststructuralist world of *Bodies without Organs* and matrix-like *choras*, that is midlife in a terrain where invisible matrons turn into hypermuscular bodybuilders whilst their 97-year-old sister turns on the television

and does not laugh. It has striven to set the swaggering midlife female trick skater happily a-glide through a dizzying and electrified array of liberating lines of flight, impersonal intensities and flow-based becomings, only to bring her back down with a thump as she confronts a body that must fall to find its way into a new kind of zone. So much uncertainty, yes, but an uncertainty that I believe to be generative: propelling the skaterly researcher to continue playing both on ice and off of it; skimming precariously along the slippery surfaces of understanding; always moving; never frozen.

Endnotes

¹ My thinking around notions of the visceral, and the way I engage with this concept both theoretically and methodologically in this project, are informed by Kim Sawchuk's extensive work in this area.

² Among these, I am especially indebted to fellow trick skaters Kim Sawchuk and Janice Donato. Both have been an infinite source of inspiration: Kim for her ongoing philosophical discussions both on and off ice, as well as her wonderful support and guidance through all things academic; Janice for having got me into skating in the first place, and for having paved the way for the rest of us through her enthusiastic and talented lead.

³ Of particular importance to this project are those studies that map traditional representations of sporting bodies (Birrell and McDonald 2000) and that look more specifically at gender and queer issues in sport (Wedgewood 2004; Caudwell 2003; Broad 2001; White and Young 1999; Young et al 1994; Mewett 2003; Lock 2003; Elling et al 2003; Iannotta and Kane 2002; Fusco 1997; Hargreaves 2000), sporting communities (Theberge 1995; Palmer 2001; Gruneau and Whitson 1993), the world of figure skating (Adams 1993; Baughman 1995; Kestnbaum 1995; Grenfell and Rinehart 2003; Rounds 1997) and ice hockey (Hall 1999; Belanger 1999), the realm of 'alternative' sport (Rinehart and Sydnor 2003; Wheaton and Beal 2003), the dynamics inherent in female bodybuilding cultures (Moore 1997; Roussel et al 2003; Roussel and Griffet 2000; Wesely 2001), and issues of space in sport (van Ingen 2003; Jamieson 2003).

⁴ I am indebted to Line Grenier's enticing introduction to these concepts in her Joint Doctoral Programme in Communication 'Discourse Analysis' seminar in the fall semester, 1999.

⁵ As noted in "Quote of the Day", *The Gazette*, Montreal, July 9, 2006, A1.

⁶ Here, I borrow from J.L. Austin's (1975) *How to Do Things with Words*, in which he explores the notion of language as action.

⁷ Precision is a form of figure skating in which 8 to 32 skaters – generally adolescent girls – perform exactly the same steps and moves in time to a piece of music, often in long cabaret-like lines. It is now officially referred to as synchronized skating and though practiced world-wide, is largely dominated at the competition level by teams from Quebec and Ontario. It has yet to be

recognised as an Olympic sport. In an attempt to maximise a team's synchronicity, coaches sometimes 'weed out' a girl whose body has either failed to reach, or has grown in excess of, the average height and weight of others on the team, and this regardless of that particular girl's talent. This blatant example of disciplining the female body has not, to my knowledge, been examined. That said, precision itself is rarely even mentioned in books about sport, so perhaps it is not surprising that scholars have not taken it up as a site that could shed important light on gendered bodies and sport.

⁸ As quoted in *National Arts Centre Dance Programme Booklet, 2004-2005 Season*, Ottawa, Ontario.

⁹ As quoted in *Stars on Ice Program, 2002*, Toronto: Optium Inc.

¹⁰ Created in 1963 in North Bay, Ontario, this on-ice sport is played on a regulation-sized hockey rink with long straight sticks and a hard rubber ring, and involves two teams of five players each (three forwards, two defences and a goalie) trying to out-spear and out-skate the other team in order to score the most goals and win. Originally designed as a more 'ladylike' alternative to hockey that would appeal to girls' *supposed* natural propensity for cooperative and relational games play – a lot of obligatory passing of the ring over lines – and their *apparently* superior fine motor skills – a ring that requires spearing as opposed to a puck that is pushed along – ringette has survived as a popular game amongst girls and women (and of late a few men) in Canada, even though hockey has once again, as during the 1920s-1940s, become more welcoming to females. The game has spread to parts of the United States and Europe, and it has also evolved over the years. For example, originally played in figure skates, these are now banned – the picks were eventually seen as too dangerous – and hockey skates are compulsory. Some rules, however, hang on: players are required to step 'ladylike' onto the ice via the door leading off of the bench, rather than leap over the sideboards onto the ice as in hockey. Similarly, body checking is not allowed. Strangely, my own experience of playing both ringette and hockey suggests that the former is certainly as rough, if not rougher, than the latter. Very little academic research has been done on ringette, and it would make for a fascinating study of how a game deliberately gendered as female from its inception evolves over time, and how this evolution compares to that of other so-called 'girls'' sports like netball. But here's a gender-bending conundrum: whereas in hockey you have to wear 'stockings,' it's in ringette that you get to wear the 'pants.'

¹¹ My thanks to Kim Sawchuk for bringing to my attention this aspect of the uniform. With regard to the *uniformity* of uniforms, and maintaining his view that sporting competitions are but escapist, hoax-filled illusions offering temporary relief from ‘the real,’ Giamatti (1989) says that, “Uniforms may be *uniform* and thus useful in telling apart the sides, that is, in distinguishing the two parties to this mock dispute [the rule bound game] that is about to be settled, but uniforms are also costumes, important for identity, colourful, designed to enhance ease of performance – a life strenuously lived *as if*” (67, original emphasis).

¹² This linking of touch to female pleasure has also, of course, been famously explored by Luce Irigaray (1999) in her essay, *This Sex Which is Not One*, where she proposes that a woman, unlike a man, ““touches herself” all the time, and moreover no one can forbid her to do so, for her genitals are formed of two lips in continuous contact... that caress each other” (354). Though this notion of the ‘always touching’ autoerotic female body does reinforce Frueh’s argument that female orgasmic pleasure needs to be theorised differently from that of the male, my interest for the purposes of this thesis lies primarily in how the female body’s relationship to touch impacts the pleasure she derives from participating in a sporting activity, even if this pleasure does incorporate an element of erotic excitement, and even if it does fall into the realm of the self-pleasuring female body.

¹³ Whiz snow sport culture, as Midol and Broyer (1995) explain, is the term used in France to denote a sporting movement that sprung up in the early 1970s when a group of skiers calling themselves the “conscientious objectors of traditional ski” challenged the training regimes of the French Ski Federation, and proposed in their place “more playful practices [that]...promoted the concept of “fun” that should be experienced in the here and now” (207). Embracing the same kind of daredevil, live-for-the-moment, values espoused by ‘hot dog’ skiers, and later snowboarders, here in North America, the “avant-garde groups” (210) that constituted the whiz sport world sought to go ever “faster and higher” on their mono-skis and whiz surfboards – an aim largely achieved through creating “an intimate dialogue” with the snow and the mountain, these latter being “perceived as living entities, at once dangerous and benevolent” (207). That whiz sport culture has still not been fully recognised by “official” sporting institutions in France suggests to Midol and Broyer the extent to which this breakaway movement “challenge[s] the unconscious defenses of the existing order through which French society has defined itself for the last two centuries” (210).

¹⁴ This quote appears in Gutman 1995, 147.

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Appendix 1

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I agree to participate in a doctoral research project being conducted by Linnet Fawcett (linnet.fawcett@sympatico.ca ; (514) 482-XXXX) in the Department of Communications Studies at Concordia University, Montréal, Québec.

A. Purpose of Research

I have been informed that the purpose of this research is to explore how people who either skate or work at the *Atrium le 1000* feel about skating and/or this skating rink, and to use what they say during on-ice and off-ice conversations to animate a style of writing that evokes a sense of movement and/or to animate an analysis of the body as it moves through a public sporting space more generally.

B. Procedures

I have been informed that informal conversations conducted with the researcher whilst skating or spending time at the *Atrium le 1000* will be loosely reassembled and recorded in a notebook afterwards, and that small portions of these conversations may appear in the researcher's doctoral thesis, either as part of short poetic texts or as prompts informing the researcher's overall analysis. I have been told that my name will be changed in the thesis.

C. Conditions of Participation

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose, my identity).
- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____